

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Use: Saturday, 12 September 2009

Sinclair and Graham clinch historic Deaflympics gold medal

Anthony Sinclair and Catherine Graham made a superb piece of British sporting history on Saturday when they won gold in the tennis mixed doubles final at the 21st Summer Deaflympics in Taipei.

In doing so they beat Italian top seeds Gianpaolo Damiani and Barbara Oddone 6-4, 4-6, 6-3, ending the Italian duo's unbeaten run in the event that stretches back 20 years. The five time champions had won their first mixed doubles title in in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1989. Victory for Sinclair and Graham also secured Britain's first Deaflympics mixed doubles gold medal for more than 50 years.

Sinclair, 25, and 26-year-old Graham edged the first set against the Italians, but dropped serve in the final game of the second set to take the match to a decider. However, after finishing fourth in the mixed doubles at the last two Deaflympics, Sinclair and Graham were not about to end with any hard luck stories this time and secured a double break to give them a 5-1 cushion in the final set. Although the Italians recovered one break, the British second seeds steadied themselves and held their nerve to clinch the title amid jubilant scenes in the Great Britain camp.

Great Britain's first gold medal across any sport at the Taipei Deaflympics is a third Deaflympics medal in three Games for Sinclair, a licensed tennis coach in Bangor, County Down. Four years ago in Melbourne he made history by becoming Great Britain's first silver medallist in the men's singles for 40 years and went on to win the men's doubles bronze medal with fellow Briton Darren O'Donnell.

Meanwhile, Graham, who is also a licensed coach in Wiltshire, was winning her second Deaflympics medals after clinching bronze in the women's doubles in Melbourne in 2005.

However, there was disappointment for O'Donnell and fellow Briton Lewis Fletcher, who missed out on another medal in their men's doubles bronze medal play-off on Saturday. O'Donnell's bid for a second successive men's doubles bronze and Fletcher's quest for a medal from his first Deaflympics ended in a 5-7, 2-6 loss to Austrian duo Daniel Erlbacher and Mario Kargl.

Tennis is one of 17 sports being contested at the 21st Deaflympics in Taipei and one of eight sports in which Great Britain is represented.

More than 4200 athletes and officials from 85 countries will participate in the 21st Deaflympics Summer Games.

The Games run from 5 – 15 September, with the tennis competition taking place over eight days, until Sunday, 13 September at the Rainbow Riverside Sports Park in Taipei .

The Summer and Winter Deaflympic Games are the pinnacle in international competition for elite deaf athletes. Under International Deaflympic Committee criteria, to be eligible to compete athletes must have a proven hearing loss of 55dB in the best ear.

- ENDS -