

Jewish Deaf sportspeople in the top league

With only around 400 members, the Jewish Deaf community in the UK is very small, but it has its share of top Deaf sportsmen and sportswomen. The BDN names a few:

Martin Bogard: Martin Bogard began his badminton competitively when he was 18 years old and at his full-time college in Surrey. After his time at college he joined three different badminton clubs, in Essex, Middlesex and Kent, so that he could play for them in separate county leagues. Before Martin was married, he played badminton every day including Saturday and Sunday in matches and tournaments.

Martin and the late Rodney Fletcher were often playing against each other in the final of the British Deaf Championship. Martin was a member of the British Deaf Badminton team and gained many gold, silver and bronze medals in the World Games for the Deaf in Los Angeles in 1985, New Zealand in 1989 and Bulgaria in 1993. He won more medals in the 1st European Championship in Manchester in 1990 and in Copenhagen in Denmark in October last year. He was selected to represent Great Britain in the Maccabiah Games held in Israel in 1981 and again in 1989. The Maccabiah Games are the "Olympic Games" for the Jewish people. Martin was the only deaf sportsman out of over 4,000 who came from all over the world for the Games. He was honoured with a gold medal on both occasions.

Martin became a fully qualified badminton coach in 1986. He often helps and instructs deaf players during the British Deaf Sports Council's training sessions.

Malka Bogard: Malka Bogard, who is an Israeli, has been married to Martin for 17 years. She has played table-tennis and basketball for Israel in international competitions against Germany and Romania.

When Malka first came to England she had never played badminton before, but she learnt and improved her game so quickly she was selected to play in the World Games in Los Angeles and New Zealand with the British team. Malka managed to gain a bronze medal for the mixed event in New Zealand. Malka then decided to go back to the Israel team and for the very first time Israel was able to send a badminton player to the World Games in Bulgaria.

In May this year Malka will be playing table-tennis for Israel in the European Championships that will be held in Tel-Aviv, Israel.

Howard Woolfe, Ilan Dwek, Barry David: Among a number of Jewish Deaf chess players are three who have represented England in international tournaments. They are Howard Woolfe, Ilan Dwek and Barry David. They have also taken part for some years in the English Deaf Championships.

Bernard Polchar: The National Table Tennis Championships men's double event of 1994 was won by Bernard Polchar and his partner.

Some years ago there was a group of good Jewish table tennis players which won the British Table Tennis Championships, but only a few Jewish players are playing competitively at present.

Sharon Hirshman: 1993 was the very first time the British Deaf Sports Council had sent a basketball team to an international event since the British Jewish Deaf Sports Organisation had sent its basketball team to Israel in 1991.

1993 was the year of the World Games for the Deaf in Bulgaria and Sharon Hirshman was in the British team.



The British Jewish Deaf Sports Organisation's first ladies' basketball team to play in an international competition. They lost to Haifa Deaf Club in Israel. Photo by Jack Hart.

Jane Stryker: The only Jewish player to have played in the British tennis team at the World Games for the Deaf was Jane Stryker and this took place before the war.

Neil Kaufman: The only Jewish sportsman to be selected for the Great Britain Deaf football team was Neil Kaufman. Here he describes his experiences when he played for the Great Britain team in the World Games for the Deaf in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1969:

"The late Joe Goulding from Liverpool was the manager of the Great Britain football team. David Chaplow from Coventry was the captain. We played against the USSR, as it was called in those days. Great Britain was favourite to win the cup. We were leading 1-0 at half-time. Great Britain was popular with the spectators from other countries and they came onto the pitch and mingled with us during half-time. There were also television cameramen filming us. Poor Joe Goulding, the manager, was in a frenzy because he could not get his tactics talk going during the precious half-time. The Russian team, which was well-disciplined and organised, went to a quiet corner of the pitch for its tactics talk. After half-time, the Russian team scored 3 goals and won the match. We were knocked out of the tournament after only one match. It was the price we paid for being too popular!"



It must be rare for three brothers to play in the same football team. Top row: Andrew, Gerry and Frank Frankis. Below: Brothers Mark and Simeon Hart also play for the Jewish Deaf football team. Photo by Jack Hart.