

# JONATHAN AGNEW



I hope I detect a definite hardening of attitudes at Wimbledon this year.

While Andy Murray and Laura Robson carried British hopes with them into the second week of the tournament, much of the focus remains on the overall failure of the Brits.

Finally, it seems the chronic lack of overall depth in the British game will not be allowed to be brushed quiet-

ly under the carpet as we celebrate the achievements of just one or two. Seven British players were awarded wildcard entries, and they were all knocked out of the first round.

Tim Henman is on the panel that chooses the wildcard entries and was just one of the former players who spoke out in frustration at the lack of British talent. He admitted it is difficult to find players who are good enough to be given a free run.

'It's almost hard to give them away', he reflected glumly. It is a familiar tale, of course, but this time there appears to be a real sense of enough is enough.

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) has an annual turnover in excess of £60 million and its annual bonus from Wimbledon in 2012 was worth another £37 million. Cash is not the problem.

Jo Durie, who peaked at number five in her career, described the lack in depth of young talent as 'crazy'. Arguing that neither loads of money nor the wonderful Wimbledon fortnight is proving to be enough,

she points to a failure in the system. Changes are afoot, with LTA chief executive Roger Draper moving on at a time that Sport England has repeated its threat to link funding with performance. And the LTA has every right to be concerned because, Murray apart, Britain does not have a single male player ranked in the world's top 200. Murray's win in

the US Open in 2012 raised the profile of British tennis hugely, but he cannot do it all by himself.

When Shane Warne bowled the ball of the century to Mike Gatting 20 years ago, Cricket Australia braced itself for a flood of aspiring wrist spinners

who would keep Australia on top of the world for years. There have been none.

Durie is quite right: sport can have its characters and a healthy income, but only when those essentials are added to an effective grass roots coaching system will it enjoy success.

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