



Leading figures bemoan Peter Keen's decision to quit the LTA

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L leading figures in British tennis have expressed their shock and dismay after Peter Keen, the Lawn Tennis Association's interim performance director, announced that he would not be staying on after his contract expires in October.

Keen's initial appointment on a 12-month contract was not warmly welcomed, with Andy Murray expressing the prevailing opinion when he said: "I don't understand employing someone on an interim basis who doesn't know anything about



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consultation exercise.

Although he has set down some ground rules for the performance department, which LTA chief executive Michael Downey insists will remain part of the landscape in the long term, the frustration is that he will not be staying on to continue the work himself.



Michael Downey of the LTA | CREDIT: Getty Images

“It’s a shame because I liked the direction he was - going in,” said David Felgate, the former LTA performance director.

Meanwhile Dave Sammel, an experienced coach from the TeamBath-MCTA centre, spoke of “great disappointment as Peter’s clarity of mind and vision are immensely valuable”.



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Similar views were expressed by Barry Cowan, the Sky Sports commentator and a former member of the LTA's tennis performance committee. "The six months' work that Peter has put in on his blueprint will be quickly forgotten, even though it has been enthusiastically received by almost everyone who works in the British game," said Cowan.



"I have been very impressed with him as a person and also by his philosophy. But if people seriously think that Peter has left a legacy after six months, that's rubbish. His departure is hugely disappointing news just when it seemed that some hope was round the corner. We're back to square one again."

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Keen's decision leaves the LTA in a bizarre position. As we approach the three-year anniversary of Downey's arrival, he has still failed to establish any stability in the performance department. The unsuccessful experiment with Bob Brett lasted less than a year and now Keen has provided only a temporary solution, leaving the people working on the ground none the wiser about their future.



Bob Brett lasted less than a year at the LTA | CREDIT: Geoff Pugh

Yes, Keen's analysis – [which has swept away the Talent ID programme while advocating a return to between five and seven regional performance centres](#) – has been well received by both the LTA's board and its executives, but whoever is appointed towards the end of this year will no doubt have their own views.



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Why did Keen not want to be considered for the job on a permanent basis?

There are some personal issues that may affect the time he might be able to commit to the job, especially as he expects his successor to travel around these putative regional centres and work “in the trenches 24/7”, as he put it on Monday.



Meanwhile, there is some concern around the existing performance network that Downey’s priorities are too firmly directed towards - expanding participation. A new TV ad has been prepared for airing this summer, with a view to attracting seasonal players to fill the park courts in July and August. But where will such expenditure leave the resourcing of the regional centres?

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