



Gold for Wilson; Pitchford & Ho reach final!

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Ross Wilson is Commonwealth Games champion, while Liam Pitchford and Tin-Tin Ho have the chance to also strike gold after reaching the mixed doubles final.

But Sam Walker will have to settle for bronze at best after he found Singapore's Gao Ning in imperious form in their singles semi-final.

Wilson defeated team-mate Kim Daybell in four sets to take the gold medal in the men's para singles – and it was an all-British podium as Josh Stacey of Wales won bronze.

It was a display of controlled aggression from Class 8 athlete Wilson, who gradually began to impose himself on his Class 10 opponent after losing the first game 11-7.

Daybell saved two game points at 8-10 in the second but, on the next game point, Wilson took his chance and always had the edge from that point as he claimed the next two games to get on to the top step of the podium.

Afterwards, Wilson said: "It's something I never really dreamed of . . . well it is actually, it's something I always dreamed of but it's something I never thought was possible.

"Playing Kim in the final, who's a great, great player, I didn't think it could have gone my way but in the end it did and I really brought out my best game.

"To give England a one-two is absolutely fantastic and that's what we came here to do."

He admitted it was a strange feeling to face his team-mate, adding: "The feelings around it are a bit different because you are playing against someone you train with all the time.

"It's strange to play a match against them but you've just got to try your best to go into the game the same way you would with any other match."

Daybell said: "You know each other so well and you always want the best for each other as well but obviously you want to win so it's hard to find that balance between competitiveness and friendship. Today he was just a little bit better than me and I'm proud of him."

"We came here to get the England one-two, which is exactly what we did. It would have been nice to go one step further but I'm glad it was Ross and then to get Josh in bronze as well was brilliant."

Stacey beat South Africa's Theo Cogill in the bronze play-off, seeing his opponent save a match point in the fourth and another in the decider but holding his nerve to win 3-2 (8-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-13, 11-8).



Pitchford & Ho will face Gao Ning & Yu Mengyu of Singapore in tomorrow's final after overcoming India's Sathiyam Gnanasekaran & Manika Batra in a thrilling semi-final.

It looked good for the silver medallists from Glasgow 2014 when they led 2-0, coming back from 10-8 down in the second with a run of four points in a row.

The Indian response was emphatic as they opened up an 8-0 lead in the third, Gnanasekaran in particular going through a purple patch when it seemed he could not miss. They took the game 11-5.

Pitchford & Ho led the fourth 6-2 but a wonderful forehand loop from below the level of the table by Batra seemed to spur on the Indian pair and they clawed back the deficit and went on to level the match.

England were always ahead in the decider and a thumping forehand winner by Ho gave them three match points. But that was just the start of the drama.

A run of four Indian points gave them a chance to get into the final. That point, and another match point, were saved by England. Another England chance went begging before, finally, they seized the next opportunity.

Pitchford said: "The first two sets were really good, then we had a lead in the fourth at 6-2 and she played a crazy ball and that sort of changed the match. 10-7 in the last, then we went match point down, but we kept to our tactics and kept playing our game and it paid off in the end.

"Glasgow's going to help us. We came away with a silver which was beyond expectations but it's always disappointing to lose in a final and I think we'll use that going into tomorrow's match to push us on if it's getting difficult.

"Anything can happen in a final. We've got a good chance and we're playing well enough to win it."

Ho had a message for her parents back in England and said her dad Charles would probably have been watching despite the unsocial hour.

She said: "I just want to say thank you. His passion for the sport is really inspiring and he's always so positive even when I'm down on myself. Both of my parents have been really great."

Gao Ning & Yu Mengyu beat Sharath Achanta & Mouma Das of India 3-2 (11-8, 9-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7) in the first semi-final. The final is at 1.15am UK time tomorrow.

Later, Walker was beaten 4-0 (11-5, 11-5, 13-11, 11-4) by Gao, the silver medallist from the last two Games, who will be aiming to go one better in tomorrow's final against Quadri Aruna of Nigeria. Walker will face Sharath Achanta of India for bronze at 2.30am UK time.

Gao took an early grip on the match and only threatened to let Walker get a sniff in the third set, when the Englishman saved two game points.

Otherwise, Gao's accuracy, control and anticipation were virtually flawless as, try as he did, Walker could not get through his defences other than with occasional flashes.

"I don't think I had my best day today," said Walker. "He was putting a lot of balls on the table and getting my strong shots back. I didn't feel so confident in my movement today.

"In that third set he just lost a bit of focus and made a few mistakes and let me get back in a little bit, and if I could have taken that who knows? But it was a tough match.

"Now I've got to get back mentally and prepare for tomorrow."

In the other semi-final, Aruna defeated Achanta 4-0 (12-10, 11-9, 11-9, 11-7).

Felicity Pickard was unable to add her name to the list of English medal-winners as she was defeated in the women's para bronze medal match.

However, the Class 6 athlete was always second favourite against a Class 10 opponent in Andrea McDonnell of Australia. Indeed, Pickard was the only non-Class 10 athlete to reach the medal matches.

The Burnley athlete had some great moments but McDonnell was able to use her greater mobility to manoeuvre the ball around the table and either set up winners or induce errors.

It was a double celebration for the host nation as Melissa Tapper defeated Faith Obazuaye of Nigeria 3-1 (7-11, 11-2, 11-6, 11-3) in the gold medal match which followed.



Felicity Pickard in the mixed zone

Afterwards, Pickard said: "I was hoping that when people see me, and me being Class 6 competing against Class 10 I just hope I can inspire other disabled people to go into sport. They can do it at any level, it doesn't matter about your disability."

She added that having the para and able-bodied competitions alongside each other and being part of one Team England – plus the support of the rest of the table tennis squad – had been important for the sport.

"It's definitely massive that people can see we work just as hard," she said. "Just because we're disabled, the same amount of work goes in. Just to bring us all together, we're no different."

"The whole experience has been fantastic, especially with Team England behind me and the full support of all the girls."

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Results

Mixed Doubles

Semi-finals

Liam Pitchford & Tin-Tin Ho bt Sathiyam Gnanasekaran & Manika Batra (IND) 3-2 (11-8, 12-10, 5-11, 8-11, 15-13)

Women's TT6-10 Singles

Bronze medal match

Andrea McDonnell (AUS) bt Felicity Pickard 3-0 (11-2, 11-6, 11-3)

Men's TT6-10 Singles**Gold medal match**

Ross Wilson bt Kim Daybell 3-0 (7-11, 12-10, 11-3, 11-7)

Men's Singles**Semi-finals**

Gao Ning (SGP) bt Sam Walker 4-0 (11-5, 11-5, 13-11, 11-4)

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