



Wilson leads hunt for medals

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Thirteen British players including Paralympic champion Will Bayley (men's class 7) and Commonwealth champion Ross Wilson (men's class 8) are through to the knockout stages at the PTT Slovenian Open in Lasko.

They are joined by Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton (women's class 4-5), Fliss Pickard (women's class 6), Tom Matthews (men's class 1), Jack Hunter-Spivey (men's class 5), Paul Karabardak and David Wetherill (men's class 6), Aaron McKibbin and Billy Shilton (men's class 8), Ashley Facey Thompson and Josh Stacey (men's class 9).

Bayley looked to be heading for a comfortable win against Chen Silu from Hong Kong after taking the first two sets 3 and 4 but last year's Korean Open silver medallist levelled the match at 2-2 and from 5-3 down Bayley had to dig deep to win the deciding set 11-6 for a 3-2 win.

He followed that with a 3-0 win against the veteran Vladimir Anikanov from Russia and secured top place in his group with a 3-0 win against Rasmus Hansen from Denmark, the 21-year-old European Para Youth Games bronze medallist.

"It wasn't my best today," said Bayley, "but I've got to deal with where I am at and find my way through the tournament and use all my experience to try and win my matches. Sometimes you've got to play when you're not playing your best."

Wilson had to fight off a determined challenge from Parinya Keereerut from Thailand before coming through 3-0 (14-12, 12-10, 11-5) and then recovered from dropping the first set against the in-form Gyula Zborai from Hungary to beat the former world No 2 and silver medallist in Slovakia last week 12-10 in the fourth. He completed a good day's work with a 3-0 win against 14-year-old Vit Spalek from the Czech Republic.

McKibbin started his campaign with a 3-0 win against Abdul Malik Abdullah from Indonesia and then produced the performance of the day to beat the Rio 2016 Paralympic bronze medallist Piotr Grudzien from Poland 3-2 after trailing 8-3 in the final set. He finished top of his group after a 3-0 win against the tricky Lam Ka Wai from

Hong Kong.

"I'm very happy," said McKibbin. "To beat Grudzien was a great result as he is the Rio bronze medallist and I haven't played him for some time. I actually didn't think I played very well against him but mentally and tactically I was pretty perfect and if I hadn't been I don't think I would have won."

Shilton won the battle of the teenagers against 17-year-old Irishman Patrik Vaughan 3-0 and pushed the former world No 1 and world team gold medallist Emil Andersson from Sweden all the way in a 3-1 loss. He ensured his progression to the knockout stages with a 3-0 win against Arufuahirokazu Tateishi from Japan and reached the last 16 with a 3-0 win in the last 32 against Joshua Wagner from Germany.

Gilroy came through her first match against the Serbian Kristina Arancic 3-0 and followed that with a comfortable 3-0 win against Aleksandra Vasileva, the 20-year-old Russian European team silver medallist. She topped her group with a win against Jelena Sisic from Croatia in three close sets.

"I played really well particularly against Vasileva," said Gilroy. "She didn't get more than three points in any set which quite surprised me as normally it goes to five or I win 3-0 but it is usually a lot more difficult than that."

Shackleton began with a 3-1 win against the 25-year-old German Lisa Hentig, the world team silver medallist and was then far from outplayed by Borislava Peric-Rankovic, the Paralympic champion and world No 1 from Serbia, despite a 3-0 loss. She secured her place in the knockout stages with a 3-0 win against 16-year-old Irem Oluk from Turkey.

"I'm really proud of my performances today," said Shackleton. "I had a difficult start to the season and had a few performances I wasn't really happy with but in Slovakia and Slovenia in my singles I think I have really shown character in coming back and putting in those good performances again and challenging the top players."

In his first match, Welshman Matthews battled his way past the experienced Sylvio Keller from Switzerland in five sets, coming back from 9-3 down to win the first 14-12 and eventually taking the deciding set 11-7 after Keller had levelled at 2-2. The first two sets against Sung Joo Park could have gone either way but it was the Korean who took them both 12-10 and the German Open champion went on to take the match 3-0.

Hunter-Spivey had a comfortable win in his first match against the Dutchman Gerardus Van Grunsven and then came agonisingly close to a first win in 12 meetings against Ali Ozturk from Turkey.

The 22-year-old from Liverpool led 2-1 and had match point in the fifth set but the European champion and world team silver medallist just edged the deciding set 14-12 to take the match 3-2. Hunter-Spivey made sure of his place in tomorrow's quarter-finals with a 3-1 win against Ahad Bakhshaei Sarand from USA, the PanAmerican bronze medallist.

"The game against Ali was really tough," he said. "I think I played good – there are some things I can improve on but it was a really great game and to come so close to taking the European gold medallist is great and I feel that I can beat him."

Karabardak had to use all his experience to beat Matteo Parenzan, the talented 14-year-old European Para Youth Games bronze medallist from Italy, 3-1 and then produced some of his best play to beat Danny Bobrov, the 31-year-old European team bronze medallist from Israel, 3-0. The 32-year-old Welshman showed great character to withstand a fightback from Peter Molander from Sweden in his final match to win 3-1 and clinch top position in his group.

Wetherill recovered well from losing the first set 11-3 to beat 23-year-old Michael Azulay from Sweden 3-1 and secured top place in his group with a 3-1 win against Cristian Dettoni, the PanAmerican team gold medallist from Chile.

Facey Thompson was a 3-0 winner against Takuya Nakajima from Japan but found the former European bronze medallist Dezso Bereczki on his best form and the Hungarian was a 3-0 winner. At 2-1 down in his final group match against Lucas Dos Santos Carvalho, the 18-year-old PanAmerican silver medallist, Facey Thompson looked to be in trouble but the 23-year-old is maturing all the time as a player and he came back to take the

match 11-5 in the fifth.

Stacey received a walkover in his first match against David Jose Torres Pinto when the Venezuelan team failed to arrive and found the 23-year-old world No 9 Koyo Iwabuchi too strong in his second match that the Japanese world team silver medallist took 3-0. However, the 18-year-old Welshman bounced back with a 3-0 win against David Pulpan from the Czech Republic to secure his place in the last 16.

Pickard had a tough start to her women's class 6 singles event against the world No 2 Raisa Chebanika but she played well despite a 3-0 loss to the European champion and London 2012 Paralympic champion. The 23-year-old from Burnley booked her place in the quarter-finals with a 3-0 win against 20 year old Emelie Endre from Sweden.

Martin Perry just missed out on a place in the knockout stages of men's class 6. He lost his opening match to the world No 2 London 2012 gold medallist Rungroj Thainiyom from Thailand 3-0 and although he battled hard against Valentin Kneuss the Swiss player had just too much experience and took the match 11-9 in the fifth.

The singles medals will be decided later today.

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