



Rio heroes spearhead GB Worlds squad

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Paralympic champions Will Bayley and Rob Davies head a squad of 14 British athletes who will compete in the World Para Table Tennis Championships in Slovenia from October 17-20, which also includes this year's Commonwealth Games gold and silver medallists Ross Wilson and Kim Daybell.

Bayley will be defending the men's class 7 World title that he won in Beijing four years ago and despite achieving his dream of becoming Paralympic champion in Rio admits that he is still driven by his desire for more titles.

"To be honest, it doesn't feel much different to me going in to the World Championships as defending champion," said the 30-year-old world No 2 from Tunbridge Wells, "because I still feel that I've got a lot to prove as a player and a lot more to achieve.

"I'm just going there as one of 20 players in my class and I'll take every match as it comes. Everyone has a chance to win – we start at 0-0 so we'll see. I've been playing really well in the British League and beaten some good able bodied players and if I can take that form into the World Championships then that will be really good for me.

"I really want to have a major tournament where I play my top level. I didn't play my best in Rio but I somehow managed to pull through in close matches. Now I'd like to have a tournament where I play my best level – but if I play well or badly I still want to be in the moment and enjoy it."

Davies will be bidding to add the World championship to his men's class 1 Paralympic and European titles, having taken silver in 2014. The 34-year-old Welshman has only played one tournament since retaining his European crown last October but has reached the final of the last five major championships, winning four of them.

"I'm excited to go into another World Championships," said Davies. "I might not have had the ideal preparation but I'm really looking forward to the challenge and I'm improving day-by-day.

"Although the Czech Open last month didn't go according to plan I can still take a lot out of it because that is

why I went there – to see what I needed to strengthen. I know what I need to work on and hopefully I'll be stronger going into the Worlds.

"My record in major championships definitely does give me confidence and I enjoy the big tournaments. I like the atmosphere and I'm looking forward to getting out there and seeing what I can do."

Wilson has also been preparing for his first World Championships by playing in the British League and admits that becoming Commonwealth champion in April has given him the belief that he can challenge for more major titles.

"Winning gold in the Commonwealth Games has definitely helped me as it makes me realise I can compete at the very top level and perform when I need to," said the 23-year-old from Minster, who is currently ranked No 3 in the world in men's class 8.

"After the Commonwealth Games I had a massive confidence boost and it makes me feel a little more relaxed going into the World Championships. But I am hungry for more success and I think you always are as an athlete so I'm ready to go out there and do my best. Most of the top guys are around the same level and I just hope that my effort is good enough and I'm looking forward to seeing what I can do."

The British team also includes London and Rio Paralympic team bronze medallist Aaron McKibbin, World silver medallist Sue Gilroy, European silver medallists Tom Matthews and David Wetherill, European team champion Paul Karabardak and European team silver medallist Ashley Facey Thompson.

The full British squad is:

Will Bayley MBE, 30 years old (men's class 7) – Tunbridge Wells (home town)/ Sheffield (lives)

Paul Davies, 51 (men's class 1) – North Cornelly

Rob Davies MBE, 34 (men's class 1) – Brecon

Kim Daybell, 26 (men's class 10) – Sheffield/London

Ashley Facey Thompson, 23 (men's class 9) – London (Stratford)/Sheffield

Sue Gilroy MBE, 45 (women's class 4) – Barnsley

Jack Hunter-Spivey, 23 (men's class 5) – Liverpool

Paul Karabardak, 33 (men's class 6) – Swansea

Tom Matthews, 26 (men's class 1) – Aberdare

Aaron McKibbin, 27 (men's class 8) – London (Wandsworth)/Sheffield

Fliss Pickard, 24 (women's class 6) – Burnley

Megan Shackleton, 19 (women's class 4) – Todmorden

David Wetherill, 28 (men's class 6) – Torpoint

Ross Wilson, 23 (men's class 8) – Minster/Sheffield

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