



Vecko confident ahead of 'milestone' Worlds

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Posted On: October 16, 2018

British Para Table Tennis Team Performance Director Gorazd Vecko believes that his team is fully prepared and ready for the challenge of the World Championships which start tomorrow in Celje, Slovenia.

Although the 14-strong squad includes two Paralympic champions in Will Bayley and Rob Davies, as well as Commonwealth champion Ross Wilson and nine other athletes who have already won medals at world, Paralympic or European level, it is still a young team that has the potential to be even better in Tokyo 2020.

“We didn’t change very much in the way we usually prepare for a major competition,” said Vecko. “We had a training camp in Slovenia in September with a lot of good sparrers and athletes from nine different countries, which I think was even better than in previous years. Then we had a final preparation camp in Sheffield which also worked really well.

“For the first time I don’t feel that the athletes are really nervous before a major championship. In 2014, a week before we went to China for the last World Championships everything was wrong and they were struggling but this time they are more mature and understand what they need to do and how to be the best prepared.

“I think we have done the most to prepare them and the players have made the most of every opportunity we have given them and they are ready.”

With all the world’s top players competing in Slovenia, Vecko knows that competition will be fierce but believes that his young squad can compete with the very best.

“Obviously we are looking for medals,” he said, “and I believe we will take some medals. With the young athletes what I am looking for is an improvement in the world ranking – so if the players can beat someone ranked above them then it is a success for them.

“For example, Megan Shackleton and Fliss Pickard are competing in their first World Championships and are still young – so for them it is about getting experience and becoming familiar with major competitions. They could take a medal here but I believe they will be very important for our squad in the future and will definitely medal in

majors in the future.

“With two years to go to Tokyo this will be a very important milestone for us. For me it is very important to see where we are against the top players in the world. The World Championship is harder than a Paralympic Games because you have more players and more countries are fighting for medals, so it is a massively important tournament for us.”

The full British squad for the World Championships 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/Sheffield

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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