



Bouron strikes gold in Mexico

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: June 07, 2019

Gold for Lucie Bouron in the women's class 2-3 singles event was one of five medals won by the British Para Table Tennis squad in the Para Copa Cristina Hoffmann in Cancun, Mexico.

Dan Bullen took silver in men's class 5 and there were bronze medals for Cellan Hall (men's class 5), Martin Perry (men's class 6) and Noel Thomas (men's class 2).

In her first match Bouron fought back from 2-1 down to beat Carla Maia Limp De Azevedo, the class 2 former Pan-American medallist from Brazil, 3-2 and followed that with a more comfortable 3-0 win against another Brazilian Juliana Christina Ferreira Da Silva. She lost the first set against the class 3 world No 12 Edith Sigala Lopez from Mexico 12-10 but came back to beat the Pan-American champion 3-1 and secured the gold with a 3-1 win against Mayumi Ozawa from Japan in her final match in the round-robin event.

"I'm really pleased to win gold," said 24 year old Bouron from Bracknell, who was winning her second international title after taking gold in Belgium in 2017. "I've had some good wins along the way and it's great to see areas I've been working on in training being implemented in my matches. I'm hoping to carry this forward now into the team event."

Men's class 5 produced an all-British semi-final when Bullen and Hall both progressed from their groups. Hall lost his first match 3-0 to the former Asian Championships team medallist Maitree Kongruang from Thailand but then came through in five sets against Leonardo Garcia Vazquez, taking the deciding set 11-3 after the Colombian had levelled at 2-2.

Bullen also battled his way into the knockout stages with a 3-2 win against another Colombian Hector Castaneda Ossa, taking the fifth set 11-4 after Castaneda Ossa had edged a close fourth set 12-10, and topped his group with a 3-0 win against Dennis La Rose from Trinidad & Tobago.

Englishman Bullen beat Welshman Hall 3-0 (9, 11, 3) in the semi-final to go through to the final against Kongruang and performed well against the more experienced player from Thailand despite a 3-1 loss.

"This has been a great experience," said 21 year old Bullen from St Neots, "travelling all this way and dealing with the heat. I feel that I've had a good tournament so far; I topped my group and then had to play Cellan in the semi. It is never easy to play a team-mate and it was a good match. In the final I felt that I played really well and it was a close game. I've been working hard in training and feel it is starting to pay off and I'm looking forward to playing the team event with Cellan."

It was a first international medal for 21 year old Welsh champion Hall, from Cardiff, who said: "It's been a great experience competing outside Europe for the first time. I have learnt a lot on and off the table while playing my singles event. I was really pleased to get through my group and into the semi-final, especially after recently finishing my last physics exam for my degree. It was great to compete against my team partner Dan in the semi-final – he was the better player on the day and deserved his place in the final. I'm looking forward to competing with him in the team event now."

Sheffield based Perry was a 3-0 winner against the former Pan-American medallist Domingo Arguello Garcia from Costa Rica and then put up a great performance to beat the 22 year old Pan-American champion and world No 10 Matias Pino Lorca from Chile 3-0. A 3-1 win against another Chilean Ignacio Torres Orostica, the 17 year old Pan-American bronze medallist, 14-12 in the fourth, took him through to the semi-finals as group winner where he came up against a third Chilean Cristian Dettoni.

The world No 9 took silver in the Polish Open last week and although Perry twice came back to level the match Dettoni was just too strong in the deciding set and took the match 11-3 in the fifth.

"To top your group is always nice," said 25 year old Perry, from Paisley, "but to do so against Pino Lorca is great. He's recently moved up to number 10 in the world and we had two great matches in Poland last week. This time I felt that I was very tactical and seemed more alert so it was good to win 3-0.

"Dettoni seems to be on fire at the moment but I felt that I could beat him. The first set was very tight so I was disappointed to lose that. The sets I won I felt very much in control but in the fifth he started well and I felt I was always chasing him. I took an early timeout to try and halt his momentum and it nearly paid off. I missed the table by a fraction at 6-3 and I think if it had gone on the game could have been different. Overall I'm very pleased with my level recently and I think I've shown my true potential."

Thomas was beaten 3-0 by Victor Eduardo Reyes Turcio, the 24 year old Pan-American champion and 2017 US Open champion from Mexico, but progressed from his group with a 3-0 win against Gabriel Diaz De Leon from USA. In the semi-final against the Pan-American bronze medallist Luis Rodrigo Bustamante Flores from Chile he lost 3-0 but can be pleased to take a bronze medal in only his second international tournament.

"It's been a tournament of ups and downs," said 39 year old Thomas from Redcar. "I was really pleased to get my first international win against a ranked player in the group stage and make it to the semi-final but unfortunately I didn't play my best game in the semi and lost 3-0. Overall I have to look at the positives – it's more valuable experience gained – and come back stronger."

Ryan Henry was unlucky to lose his first group match to Ian Kent from Canada, 3-2, having led 2-1 after the Pan-American team champion and 2018 US Open champion had edged the first set 15-13. The 18 year old from Ardrossan progressed to the knockout stages with wins against Gabriel Salazar Perez, the 22 year old Youth Parapan Games silver medallist from Ecuador, 3-1, and the Pan-American silver medallist from Chile Jaime Jara Hernandez 3-0 but was beaten 3-1 in the quarter-final by Takumi Shukunobe from Japan, the 2017 US Open silver medallist.

In men's class 4 Scunthorpe's Lee York had a difficult first match against world No 7 Wanchai Chaiwut from Thailand and the world team bronze medallist, who won gold in the Lignano Master Open in Italy earlier this year, was a 3-0 winner. Although York lost his remaining group matches to the Pan-American team bronze medallist Francisco Gonzalez Hernandez from Mexico 3-1 and the Pan-American bronze medallist Maximiliano Rodriguez Avila from Chile 3-1 he was much more competitive in both matches and is competing in only his second international tournament.

Alex Bland from Rotherham had a tough group in men's class 7 and lost 3-0 to the former world No 1 and 2004 Paralympic champion Stephane Messi from France and 3-1 to 21 year old Kosuke Hemmi from Japan, the 2017

Asian Youth Para Games team silver medallist.

Bromsgrove's Craig Allen lost his matches in the round-robin men's class 9 singles to the 21 year old former Pan-American champion from Mexico Miguel Vazquez Can, 3-0, the 2018 Copa Tango Junior champion Hayuma Abe from Japan 3-0, Koyo Iwabuchi from Japan, the world No 5 and World Championship bronze medallist, 3-0 and Takuya Nakajima, the 2017 Thailand Open bronze medallist from Japan, 3-0.

The tournament continues with the team events on Friday.

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