



Ash and Josh claim more gold for GB

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Posted On: September 08, 2019

Ashley Facey Thompson and Josh Stacey head to the European Championships later this month on a high after winning gold in the men's class 9 team event at the PTT Czech Open in Ostrava today.

There were silver medals for Martin Perry and his French team partner Esteban Herrault in men's class 6 and Pathway athlete Lucie Bouron with Ana Prvulovic from Serbia in women's class 1-3 while Megan Shackleton took bronze in women's class 4 with Irem Oluk from Turkey.

It follows a series of medals for GB in the individual events

Men's class 9 was played in a round-robin format and Facey Thompson and Stacey began with a 2-0 win against the German team of Laurenz Fehling and Elias Monden, winning the doubles 3-1 and Facey Thompson beating Fehling 3-0.

They won the doubles against the German/Serbian partnership of Tobias Stiefel and Aleksej Radukic and Stacey was a 3-1 winner against Radukic. Against the Indonesian team of Banyu Tri Mulyo and Kusananto they won the doubles 3-0 and Facey Thompson won the tie with a 3-0 win against Mulyo.

Their final match against the Hungarian team of Andras Csonka, Dezso Bereczki and Barnabas Retter was to decide the gold and after combining with Stacey to win the doubles against Csonka and Bereczki 3-0, Facey Thompson beat class 8 Rio silver medallist Csonka 3-0 to clinch a second consecutive team gold for the young British team after their victory in Japan last month.

"I played a lot better in the team event than in the singles," said Facey Thompson. "I kept my head and kept positive and I feel that I am mentally back in a good place for the Europeans. Josh and I get better with every tournament. We play really well together and are improving a lot as a partnership."

"The team event went really well from start to finish," said Stacey. "Ash and me went from strength to strength as we progressed through the matches. I think we both feel that we are starting to complement each other in terms of the way we are playing and the tactics we are using. Winning the final match in straight sets in both singles

and doubles gives us a lot of confidence going into the Europeans as we know they will be one of the strongest teams we may face.”

Perry and Herrault lost a very close opening doubles to Georgios Mouchthis and Marios Chatzikyriakos from Greece 12-10 in the fifth but won the tie 2-1 with 3-0 wins for Herrault against Mouchthis and Perry against Chatzikyriakos. They came from 2-1 down to win another tight doubles match against the Swiss/Russian partnership of Valentin Kneuss and Mars Gabdullin and Perry won the tie with a 3-1 win against Kneuss after Gabdullin had levelled the tie with a 3-1 win against Herrault.

The British/French team secured top place in the group with a 2-0 win against Conor O’Callaghan from Ireland and Petr Hnizdo from Czech Republic and went through to the semi-finals where they beat the Slovakian team of Gabriel Csemy and Alexander Nagy 2-0, winning the doubles 3-0 and Herrault beating Nagy 3-1.

In the final against the top seeds Bobi Simion from Romania and the Italian Matteo Parnozan, Perry and Herrault lost the doubles 12-10 in the fifth and Parnozan won the gold for his team with a 3-0 win against Perry to avenge his defeat to the Scotsman in the singles event.

“The team event went well,” said Perry. “We played some really good doubles and I feel like I’ve got good form and momentum heading into the Europeans in Sweden. Who knows what can happen and I’m excited to get out there.”

In the round-robin women’s class 1-3 team event Bouron and Prvulovic started with a 2-1 win against the German team of Janina Sommer and Stephanie Andree, Bouron defeating Andree in four close sets and Prvulovic clinching the tie with a 3-1 win against Sommer after the Germans had won the doubles. The British/Serbian partnership combined well to win the doubles against the Dutch/Greek team of Femke Cobben and Foteini Bousiou and Bouron beat Cobben 3-0 to win the tie 2-0.

Their final match against Yukimi Chada from Japan and Pattaravadee Wararitdamrongkul from Thailand was to decide the gold and they had to settle for silver after a 3-0 loss in the doubles and Bouron’s 3-0 defeat to the in-form Chada, class 3 singles medallist in Poland, Japan and Bangkok this year.

“I’m really pleased with my silver in the team event,” said Bouron, “and I’m happy with my performance overall here. It’s been a good opportunity to play some more experienced players and has enabled me to take some things away to improve on.”

Shackleton and 18 year old Oluk began with a comfortable 2-0 win against Jelena Sisic from Croatia and Cristina Rubio from Spain, winning the doubles 3-0 and Oluk beating Rubio 3-0. Their second group match was a lot tougher with the second Serbian team of Zorica Popadic and Kristina Arancic coming back from 2-1 down to win a very close doubles match 12-10 in the fifth. Shackleton levelled the tie with a 3-0 win against Popadic and Oluk battled back from 2-1 down to beat Arancic 3-2 and win the tie 2-1 and secure top place in the group.

That set up a semi-final against the talented young Italian Carlotta Ragazzini and the very experienced Andrea Dolinar from Slovenia but after winning the doubles 3-1 Oluk was beaten 3-1 by Dolinar and Shackleton lost out in four close sets to Ragazzini.

“Overall I’m fairly happy with my performance here,” said Shackleton. “It’s been good to have some quality match practice going in to the Europeans and I hope I can bring out some good performances there as well. I’m looking forward to it.”

In men’s class 8 Billy Shilton and Ryan Henry came through a tough doubles match against the Swedish pair of Axel Jensen and Anton Grankvist 3-2 but after Henry lost 3-1 to Grankvist, Shilton was just edged out 16-14 in the fifth by Jensen. The young British pair got back on track with a 2-0 win against Phisit Wangphonphathanasiri from Thailand and Takumi Shukunobe from Japan, winning the doubles 3-1 and Shilton beating Shukunobe 3-0.

They secured top place in their group with a 2-0 win against the Czech Republic team of Lukas Maxa and Vit Spalek and went through to the quarter-finals against the Belgian/Hungarian/French team of Marc Ledoux, Gyula Zborai and Clement Berthier. Shilton and Henry lost the doubles to Ledoux and Berthier 3-2 but Shilton levelled the tie with a 3-1 win against Zborai before Berthier, runner-up to Shilton in the singles yesterday,

claimed the place in the semi-finals for his team with a 3-0 win against Henry.

In men's class 5 Jack Hunter-Spivey and regular team partner Tommy Urhaug, the former Paralympic champion from Norway, were joined by Urhaug's 18 year old class 4 compatriot Sebastian Vegsund. They won their first match against the Czech Republic team of Rene Taus and Jaroslav Hadrava, Hunter-Spivey beating Taus 3-1 and Urhaug securing the tie by beating Hadrava 3-1 after the Czech pair had won the doubles against Urhaug and Vegsund.

Hunter-Spivey and Urhaug lost the doubles against Suleyman Vural and Hamza Caliskan from Turkey 3-1 and Hunter-Spivey was just edged out by Caliskan in five sets after leading 2-1. Despite the 2-0 loss they progressed to the quarter-finals where they played the French team of Alexandre Delarque and Nicolas Savant-Aira, the reigning European team champions. Hunter-Spivey and Vegsund lost the doubles 3-0 and Vegsund battled well but lost 3-2 to Savant-Aira which gave victory to France.

With Rob Davies and Tom Matthews not competing in the team event Paul Davies partnered Sylvio Keller from Switzerland in the combined men's class 1-2 team event. After a 2-0 loss to the class 2 Czech Republic team of Jiri Suchanek and Martin Zvolanek they progressed from their group with a 2-1 win against the class 2 French/Hungarian partnership of Benoit Besset and Adam Urlauber, winning the doubles 3-0 and Davies beating Urlauber 3-0. They were beaten 2-0 in the quarter-finals by the top seeds from Slovakia, former class 2 Paralympic champion Jan Riapos and class 2 world No 8 Martin Ludrovsky who took gold in the singles yesterday.

Pathway athlete Alex Bland and his Austrian partner Christian Scheiber went out of men's class 7 at the group stage but the 20 year old from Rotherham showed his improvement with a battling 3-2 win against the Polish Open bronze medallist Michal Deigsler to level the tie against Poland before Maksym Chudzicki beat Scheiber 3-1.

Despite losing the doubles they won their next match against the Danish/Swedish partnership of Rasmus Hansen and Styrbjorn Ekengren, Bland winning the tie with a 3-0 win against Hansen after Scheiber had beaten Ekengren in five sets. In their final match against the Czech Republic team of Daniel Horut, Zbynek Lambert and Kristian Jelinek they lost the doubles to Horut and Lambert 3-1 and Bland played well in a 3-1 defeat to the very experienced former World team silver medallist Horut.

Women's classes 6-8 were combined and Fliss Pickard teamed up with class 7 player Dora Molnar from Hungary. They were beaten 2-0 by the top seeds from Russia Victoriya Safonova and Elena Litvinenko, losing the doubles 3-0 and class 7 world No 4 Safonova beating Pickard 3-0. Pickard and Dolnar went out at the group stage after a 2-0 loss to the class 8 Japanese/Italian combination of Yuri Tomono and Elena Elli, competing well in the doubles despite losing 3-0 and Tomono beating Dolnar 3-0.

Noel Thomas teamed up with Christiaan Sterenberg from Netherlands in men's class 1-2 and they went out at the group stage after a 2-0 loss to the Spanish team of singles silver medallist Iker Sastre and Miguel Angel Toledo and a more competitive 2-1 loss to the Italian/Croatian combination of Federico Crosara and Damir Vukovic. Thomas and Sterenberg played well in the doubles, losing in four close sets and Sterenberg beat Vukovic 3-2 before world team bronze medallist Crosara won the tie with a 3-0 win against Thomas.

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