



Euro champion Rob Davies is simply four-midable!

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Paralympic champion Rob Davies won his fourth consecutive men's class 1 European singles title and David Wetherill took bronze in men's class 6 at the ITTF European Para Table Tennis Championships in Helsingborg, Sweden today.

Davies won his semi-final against Sylvio Keller from Switzerland 3-0 this morning to set up a final against the world No 5 Endre Major from Hungary, who won gold at the Polish Open earlier this year and came through a tough semi-final against the Russian Dmitry Lavrov in five sets.

Major's last win against Davies came in the European Championships in 2011 but the pair have had some great battles since, notably at the World Championships in 2014 when the Welshman came through 14-12 in the fifth, and at the Paralympic Games in Rio when he won in four sets on his way to claiming the gold.

The 35-year-old from Brecon made a great start in today's final and at 2-0 and 5-2 in the third he seemed to be on course for a comfortable win. But Major is a great competitor and after a time out he came back to take the third 11-8. Davies quickly moved to 7-3 in the fourth but again Major fought back with a run of seven points that gave him three points for the set. But Davies used all his experience and levelled at 10-10, saving two more set points and then taking the gold on his second match point, 15-13.

The match will soon be available to watch on the BBC website by [clicking here](#)

"I was nervous, I'm not going to lie," said a relieved Davies. "I'm quite experienced but I still get nervous now and again. I just got a bit edgy and stopped playing the way I was, although he probably stopped me a little bit as well.

"It was a good match; I was expecting it to be a fight and the first two ends went a bit too smoothly almost. I knew I might have to dig deep and that is what I had to do in the end and I'm glad I came through it. When he

came back again in the fourth I was just trying to get back on top.

"I still had the belief I could do it but you don't really want to be in that situation. You want to stop it a bit earlier but he had a little bit of luck and put more pressure on me and I had to come up with something a little bit different. That is what table tennis is – it's a funny game."

As European champion the former rugby player gains automatic qualification for the Paralympic Games in Tokyo next year where he will bid to defend his title.

"I knew in the back of my mind that winning would guarantee qualification for Tokyo but I just blanked that out today," he said. "For me it is about getting out there and enjoying it at the moment because I've had a few up and down years since Rio and to pull it out at another major means the most really.

"I've got to thank so many people – Shaun Marples who has stepped in as my coach for the last two competitions, my usual coach Greg Baker back at home who keeps me grounded, my family and friends, the physios out here Jill and Morag, Neil Robinson who knocks with me every week and is unbelievable, Tom Matthews who is pushing me all the time and the old dog Paul Davies who has been about for years and has showed me some tricks so it was good to see him here and I'm glad I could win the gold in front of him.

"The first title is obviously really special when you first crack the top guys but this is special in a different way really because I've had to dig deep. I've had a tough year so it is definitely up there because of how hard it has been to get back playing again. This has given me a huge boost for Tokyo and I can't wait for next year now. I've got to do a lot of conditioning work but I'm enjoying it which is the main thing for me."

Wetherill was only cleared to compete here a few days before the start of the tournament having had heart surgery last month and he could not produce the same form in today's semi-final against Bobi Simion that defeated world No 1 Alvaro Valera in the quarter-final yesterday. The world No 5 from Romania, who was a bronze medallist two years ago, is an awkward player and a great competitor and after taking a close first set he was the stronger player over the next two sets, taking the match 11-9, 11-7, 11-5.



David Wetherill in action in Sweden (ITTF photo)

Wetherill fought hard but admitted that his lack of preparation finally told in today's match.

"I'm just really tired, to be honest," he said. "I've been really mentally strong this week and I was today as well. I was trying to battle and I felt alright but I know in the back of my mind I haven't got the solid grounding and I kept missing loads of forehands which I probably wouldn't normally miss.

"I feel that I opened up the opportunities and I kind of beat myself in a way as I couldn't get the ball on the table which you obviously need to do in table tennis. You also need to practice so that when it gets tight in important situations you are 100% sure that you can spin the ball on the table and I felt a bit shaky today.

"The things you normally do without thinking, I was having to think about. Having said that it could have been different. At 9-9 in the first game that is usually when I am good and I had the serves which was a bit frustrating really.

"It is nice to come here and do well but I didn't expect to do anything really, I just wanted to come here and get some credits for Tokyo. Having beaten Valera it was annoying that I couldn't come here in better circumstances and make the most of my opportunity because I've always been in his half of the draw – the one time I wasn't was at the Europeans two years ago and I lost to him in the final. The one time that I do beat him I'm not really ready to beat everyone else but that is just the way the world works sometimes."

The tournament continues with the team events which start tomorrow and conclude on Saturday.

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