



## Para stars target ranking points in Poland

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With the Paralympic Games in Tokyo just over six months away the British Para Table Tennis Team is sending eight players to this week's Polish Para Open in Wladyslawowo (February 20-22) who are all looking to improve their world ranking before the qualification period ends on March 31.

They include 25-year-old Londoner Ashley Facey Thompson, who narrowly missed out on a singles medal at the European Championships last year, and his class 9 team-mate Joshua Stacey, who broke into the world's top 10 last season after taking singles medals in Italy, Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Finland and China and winning European team bronze with Facey Thompson and Kim Daybell.

"I played really well in 2018, closing out the year with some good results," said Facey Thompson. "I played with a lot of confidence and I need to carry that on into this season. At my best, I am hard for my opponents to play against and if I play with confidence then I know I can go far this season. Of course qualifying for Tokyo means a lot; if I'm good enough to qualify then I will be there, if not then life continues and I have to train harder."

Teenager Stacey, who won bronze for Wales in the Commonwealth Games in 2018 and now trains full time with the squad at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield, is bidding to qualify for his first Paralympic Games but has shown great maturity throughout the process.

"Last season was my best to date," said the 19 year old, "and it does give me added confidence to know that I can perform very well when it matters most. I feel like I've made the necessary improvements in the winter to go into the new season playing at my best. I'll definitely treat Poland as just another tournament as I've done that from the start of qualification and I believe if you're good enough you will perform when it matters most and qualify."

The full squad for the Para Polish Open is:

Ashley Facey Thompson, 25 (men's class 9)

Sue Gilroy, 47 (women's class 4)

Paul Karabardak, 34 (men's class 6 – singles only)

Tom Matthews, 27 (men's class 1)  
Martin Perry, 25 (men's class 6)  
Megan Shackleton, 20 (women's class 4)  
Billy Shilton, 21 (men's class 8)  
Joshua Stacey, 19 (men's class 9)

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