



Perry fightback key to team gold

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Martin Perry finished the Polish Para Open in Wladyslawowo on a high by taking gold in the men's class 6 team event with his Italian partner Matteo Parenzan.

Billy Shilton added silver in the men's class 8 team event to the silver he won in the singles and Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton took bronze in the women's class 2-5 team event.

Perry and Parenzan dominated the round-robin men's class 6 team event, starting with a 2-0 win against Malthe Storgaard from Denmark and Piotr Manturz from Poland followed by a 2-0 win over the Israel team of Danny Bobrov and Gilad Skop.

Their third match against European team silver medallists Greece proved to be key in deciding the gold medal and after combining with Parenzan to win the doubles 3-1 Perry produced a superb comeback from 2-1, 10-6 down to beat Georgios Mouchthis 15-13 in the deciding set to secure a 2-0 win for his team.

The British/Italian partnership clinched the gold with a 2-0 win against Cristian Dettoni from Chile and the German Benedikt Muller, taking the doubles 3-1 and Parenzan beating Muller 3-1.

"I wanted to get back to playing well after a disappointing singles and with the Spanish Open coming up," said Perry. "Matteo and I message each other a fair bit and always chat at competitions so I was happy to play team with him here. He's only 16 years old but already at a very good level and has such a mature head on his shoulders.

"Our doubles was fantastic and our styles complement each other really well. We managed to win every match 2-0 and I think that shows how well we were working together.

"Overall it has been an up-and-down tournament for me but some positive play coming from the team event. At 2-1, 10-6 down against Mouchthis I knew if I could dig deep, receive well and get it back to 10-8 I felt I was always going to win two on my serve and I did. I kept that fighting spirit and managed to nick it in the fifth. When a match is that back and forth you can really analyse it and take a lot from that."

Shilton combined with former World champion Richard Csejtey from Slovakia and they topped their group with a 2-0 win against the second Swedish team of Axel Jensen Wallin and Anton Grankvist and a 2-0 win against the Hungarian team of Rio 2016 silver medallist Andras Csonka and former world No 2 Gyula Zborai, Shilton securing the tie with an impressive 3-0 win against Zborai.

A 2-0 semi-final win against the first Swedish team of Nicklas Westerberg and Jonas Hansson, with Shilton beating Westerberg 3-0 in the first singles, took them into the final against top seeds Thomas Bouvais and Marc Ledoux and the experienced French/Belgian partnership proved the stronger in a 2-0 win, Ledoux securing gold by beating Csejtey in the first singles.

"I have a tendency to switch off a bit after the singles," said Shilton, "but I felt really focused during the team event and I think that showed in my performances. I'm really pleased to have taken two medals here and hopefully I can use it to give me confidence going into Spain in a couple of weeks."

Gilroy and Shackleton lost their opening group match to top seeds Oejeong Kang from Korea and Caroline Tabib from Israel 2-0 but were only narrowly beaten by the class 5 pair in a five set doubles match before Shackleton lost 3-1 to Tabib, 12-10 in the fourth.

They progressed to the semi-finals after a 2-0 win against the Japanese/French combination of Yukimi Chada and Florence Gossiaux-Sireau, taking the doubles 3-0 and Shackleton beating Gossiaux-Sireau 3-0.

Against the Italian team of Michela Brunelli and Carlotta Ragazzini, Gilroy and Shackleton lost the doubles 3-1 and Shackleton was then edged out 3-2 by Ragazzini, fighting back determinedly from 2-0 down to level at 2-2 before the Italian took the deciding set 11-6.

"Overall I'm feeling disappointed," said Shackleton, "it's always hard to lose matches so close in the fifth especially in such a crucial period. But I have to remind myself that it could have gone either way, stay strong and keep pushing for the Spanish Open in a couple of weeks' time.

"I feel that Sue and I worked well together in the doubles and supported each other in pressure situations so I feel in that sense we are only growing stronger as a team."

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