



Paralympians through to finals

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Three Paralympians are into tomorrow's finals at the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships, but in many ways the day belongs to Shae Thakker.

In the standing class 7-10 event, Thakker beat two higher-ranked players to reach the semi-finals, where he was beaten by world champion Ross Wilson – who will play fellow Paralympian Kim Daybell in the final.

In the wheelchair class 3-5 final, Rio 2016 athlete Jack Hunter-Spivey will face Dan Bullen, who he beat in a deciding game in their group meeting today.

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Class 7-10

Ross Wilson and Kim Daybell will contest tomorrow's final, but Shae Thakker stole the headlines with two big victories.

The Denham teenager beat last year's champion Ashley Facey-Thompson and then launched a terrific comeback from 2-0 down to beat Craig Allen 3-2.

His run ended in the semi-finals at the hands of the world champion and Commonwealth Games gold medallist Wilson, who had too much quality for Thakker, who nevertheless got himself on the board in the second game – before Wilson reasserted himself to win 3-1 (11-4, 10-12, 11-3, 11-8).

The other semi-final was done in three straight, albeit with not a huge amount between Daybell and Billy Shilton,

the former winning it 8, 7, 10.



Billy Shilton

Thakker had caused an early stir when he edged Facey-Thompson in three tight games – 11-7, 14-12, 14-12 – in the opening round of fixtures in Group 2.

He followed up with that comeback 3-2 (4-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-9, 13-11) win over Allen in a dramatic finish – saving a match point at 10-9 and then seeing Allen save one at 11-10.

With Daybell having beaten Allen and Facey-Thompson (in three and four respectively), it meant the qualifiers were known after two rounds of matches.

In the final round of group matches, Daybell beat Thakker 3-1 (11-6, 11-6, 6-11, 11-4) to top the group, while Facey-Thompson did at least finish on a high with a 3-0 victory over Allen (5, 7, 8).

Wilson won Group 1 ahead of Shilton, the pivotal match in the group going 3-2 in the world and Commonwealth Games champion's favour as he withstood a Shilton comeback from 2-0 down. The final score was 11-4, 11-7, 10-12, 9-11, 11-7 for Wilson.

Both players beat Jack Stockdale and Alex Bland, Shilton's 3-1 win over Stockdale the only dropped game as he recovered from losing the first. Stockdale finished third in the group by beating Bland in three (8, 2, 7).

Class 3-5



Dan Bullen

Jack Hunter-Spivey will look for a repeat of his group win over Dan Bullen when the two of them meet in tomorrow's final.

Both got through their semi-finals today, Hunter-Spivey courtesy of a 3-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-4) win over Sue Gilroy, while Bullen had to chisel out a tough 3-1 (13-11, 18-16, 9-11, 13-11) victory over Megan Shackleton.

In the groups, Paralympian Hunter-Spivey had to dig deep to get the better of Bullen, overturning a 2-1 deficit to triumph 3-2 (11-5, 11-13, 9-11, 11-6, 11-4). With both beating Lee York (who took a game off Bullen 15-13), it meant Hunter-Spivey topped the group.

In Group 2, Shackleton and Gilroy had a tight match decided by only a handful of points, 3-1 (8-11, 12-10, 11-9, 11-9) in favour of Shackleton. With both players beating Romain Simon – Gilroy in four and Shackleton in three – it was Shackleton who topped the group.



Sue Gilroy

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