



Shilton pleased with team silver

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Billy Shilton bounced back from a disappointing loss in the singles to take silver in the men's class 8 team event in the Costa Brava Para Open in Platja D'Aro.

The British team also picked up two bronze medals with Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton (women's class 4-5) and Ashley Facey Thompson and Joshua Stacey (men's class 9-10).

Shilton teamed up with Marc Ledoux, the very experienced former Paralympic team gold medallist from Belgium, and they began with a hard-fought 2-1 win against the Australian Nathan Pellissier and 16-year-old Vit Spalek from the Czech Republic. After winning the doubles 3-1, Ledoux lost the first singles to Pellissier 3-2 but Shilton secured the tie with a 3-0 win against Spalek.

The British/Belgian partnership sent through to the semi-finals as group winners with a 2-0 win against Nicklas Westerberg from Sweden and the class 6 Italian Raimondo Alecci, winning the doubles 3-0 and Shilton beating Alecci 3-0.

Against the French team of former world No 2 Thomas Bouvais and Clement Berthier, Shilton and Ledoux edged a close doubles match 3-2 and Ledoux beat Berthier 3-0 to take his team into the final against the Hungarian Andras Csonka, silver medallist in Rio 2016, and former world champion Richard Csejtey from Slovakia. Having lost the doubles 3-1 Shilton brought his team level with an impressive 3-0 win against Csejtey but Csonka won the gold for Hungary/Slovakia with a 3-0 win against Ledoux.

"I was really happy with my performance in the team event," said Shilton. "My motivation was really low after losing in the quarter-finals of the singles so to turn it around and take a team medal is a good feeling. I also feel that I played my best level in the team event."

Gilroy and Shackleton were 2-0 winners against the Japan/Netherlands/Spain combination of Yukimi Chada, Femke Cobben and Cristina Rubio, winning the doubles against Chada and Rubio 3-0 and Shackleton, after losing a tight first set 14-12, beating Chada 3-1.

Their second group match against the Turkish team of class 3 World and European medallist Hatice Duman and in-form Irem Oluk, the class 4 singles finalist in last month's Egypt and Polish Opens, went the distance with Turkey dropping the first set in the doubles but coming back to take the next three 13-11, 13 11, 12-10 and the match 3-1. Shackleton levelled the tie with a 3-2 win against Duman and Gilroy fought back from 2-1 down against Oluk to take a tense fourth set 15-13 and win the match 11-9 in the fifth and the tie 2-1.

That secured top place in the group and a semi-final against the Korean team of Asian Championships team silver medallist Mi Kyoung Shin and Young A Jung, the class 5 world No 4. The doubles proved crucial and Gilroy and Shackleton fought back from 2-0 down to level at 2-2 before the Korean pair clinched the match 11-8 in the fifth. Shackleton kept the tie alive with a 3-2 win against Shin and Gilroy led Jung 2-1 in the deciding singles but the Korean proved just the stronger and took the match 3-2 and the tie 2-1.

"After a difficult singles event where I struggled to find my form I started to play much better in the team event," said Gilroy. "My forehand improved considerably and I was spinning and driving much better and my shots seemed to flow much more. I have played much more resiliently in the team event and played really well against Jung, narrowly losing in the fifth after being 2-1 up. I feel as a team we have gelled much more and improved our doubles considerably."

"I thought me and Sue were strong in the team event," said Shackleton. "We are supporting each other well in high pressure situations and it was great to beat Turkey to win the group as we both had to battle to win our singles."

Facey Thompson and Stacey began with a comfortable 2-0 win against the second Spanish team of 15-year-old Ander Cepas, Edgar Mataro and Joaquin Azcon, winning the doubles against Cepas and Mataro 3-0 and Stacey beating Cepas 3-0. In their second group match they took on the strong combination of former Chinese class 9 world No 1 Ma Lin, who now represents Australia, and the class 10 European bronze medallist from Montenegro Luka Bakic. The British pair led 2-0 in the doubles before Ma and Bakic came back to win a very close match 15-13 in the fifth and Bakic won the tie with a 3-1 win against Facey Thompson, clinching the match 18-16 in the fourth.

Facey Thompson and Stacey progressed from the group in second place and faced the Netherlands team of class 10 world No 10 Bas Hergelink and class 9 Bart Van Der Zanden in the quarter-finals. They lost the first set of the doubles but came back to win it 3-1 and Stacey completed a 2-0 win by beating Van Der Zanden 3-0.

That took them through to a semi-final against the class 10 former world and Paralympic champion Gilles De La Bourdonnaye from France and the class 9 former world No 2 from Russia Iurii Nozdrunov. The French/Russian partnership won the doubles 3-1 and Nozdrunov took his team into the final with a 3-1 win against Stacey.

"Of course we wanted to progress to the final and have an opportunity to win but today we weren't good enough," said Stacey. "Ash and me haven't played much doubles together recently so I'm pleased with how we played as a team and I'm sure we will better our result next time we play."

"Josh and I played well together," said Facey Thompson. "My singles was OK and I'm happy with how I played."

Tom Matthews teamed up with the class 2 Spaniard Lazaro Rodriguez in the men's class 1-2 event and in their first match took on the combination of class 2 world, Paralympic and European medallist Juri Suchanek from the Czech Republic and the Russian pair of class 2 Rasul Nazirov and Dmitry Lavrov, the class 1 European bronze medallist. After losing the doubles to Suchanek and Nazirov 3-0 Matthews levelled the tie with a 3-1 win against Lavrov but Suchanek secured the win for his team with a 3-0 win against Rodriguez.

In their second match against the Italian team of class 2 world team medallist Federico Crosara, class 1 World team champion Federico Falco and the unranked class 1 Luca Chiarini, Matthews again levelled the tie with a 3-0 win against Chiarini after Crosara and Falco had combined to take the doubles 3-0. Crosara then won the tie for Italy with a 3-0 win against Rodriguez which put the British/Spanish team out of the competition.

In men's class 6-7 Martin Perry teamed up with the unranked class 6 player Petr Hnizdo from Czech Republic.

After losing the doubles to the class 7 European silver medallist Pavao Jozic from Croatia and the class 6 Russian Mars Gabdullin 3-0, Perry beat Gabdullin 3-1 to level the tie before Jozic sealed a 2-1 win for his team with a 3-0 win against Hnizdo.

In their second group match Perry and Hnizdo took on the class 7 European team bronze medallists Maksym Chudzicki and Michal Deigsler and the Polish team were just too strong, winning the doubles 3-0 and Chudzicki beating Perry 3-0 for a 2-0 win.

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