

Bayley bidding for third gold in Slovakia

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BAYLEY BIDS FOR THIRD GOLD IN SLOVAKIA

Paralympic silver medalist Will Bayley will be bidding to win his third gold medal of 2013 when he competes in the Slovakian Open this week (May 22-25). He will be joined by four other members of the GB Para Table Tennis Team including Paralympic bronze medalist Paul Davies, European medalist Paul Karabardak, and two of the team's promising young players Ashley Facey Thompson and Jack Hunter-Spivey.

Sheffield based Bayley, 25, from Tunbridge Wells, regained the world number 1 ranking in his class after winning the Lignano Masters Open in Italy in March and followed up that success with gold in the Slovenian Open earlier this month. The field for the class 7 event this week includes the Ukrainian pair ranked 2 and 3 in the world – Mykhaylo Popov, who Bayley replaced as world number 1, and Maxym Nikolenko, who Bayley defeated in the final in Italy.

"I was really happy to win in Slovenia," said Bayley, who is the reigning European champion. "I wasn't playing my best so it made it even more special as I had to fight hard to win. I've had a good week of training since then and I feel like I'm playing better. Slovakia will be tough with the number 2 and 3 in the world but it will be good to get more experience against them before the European Championships."

Bayley will once again team up with Karabardak in the class 7 teams event and they will be hoping for another medal after taking the bronze in Slovenia. Karabardak, 27, from Swansea, came within one point of beating Paralympic champion Jochen Wollmert in Slovenia and will be looking to turn narrow defeats into victories this week.

Davies, 46, from North Cornelly in Wales, also won gold in Slovenia, in the class 1 teams event with his fellow Welshman Rob Davies. He will be hoping for more success in the singles in Slovakia after taking a bronze in the singles in Italy.

Ashley Facey Thompson, 18, from London, reached the quarter-finals of the class 9 singles in Slovenia after two good wins against higher ranked opponents and is keen to consolidate that performance in Slovakia. Together with the rest of the GB team he has been training in Slovenia for the past week with players from Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela and feels he has definitely benefited from the experience.

"It's been a tough week," said Facey Thompson, "but it has helped me to prepare for competition and understand what I need to improve on. I'll just take it one match at a time in Slovakia, fight for every point and try to play like I did in Slovenia."

The team for Slovakia is completed by 18 year old Jack Hunter-Spivey, from Widnes, who will be hoping to show

the form that saw him take two bronze medals in Hungary earlier this season.

GB Performance Director Gorazd Vecko said: "We have had a really good training camp in Slovenia and training with good players from other countries will help our players to improve. The competition in Slovakia will be strong but we need to play against the best players and it will be really good preparation for the European Championships in September."

Players from the GB Performance Squad competing in the Slovakian Open are:

Will Bayley (Home town: Tunbridge Wells; Lives: Sheffield) – Class 7

Paul Davies (Lives: North Cornelly) – Class 1

Ashley Facey Thompson (Lives: London) – Class 9

Jack Hunter-Spivey (Lives: Widnes) – Class 5

Paul Karabardak (Lives: Swansea) – Class 7

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