

Mixed day for GB as team event starts

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MIXED DAY FOR GB AS THE TEAM EVENT STARTS

It was a mixed day for GB at the European Para Table Tennis Championships with two wins and two losses on the opening day of the team competition.

In the men's class 7 event Will Bayley and Paul Karabardak took on The Netherlands in their first match and Swansea's Karabardak gave the duo the perfect start with a 3-0 win over the Dutch number two Hans Speek.

Bayley had lost to the improving Jean Paul Montanus in the group stages of the singles and looked to be heading for another defeat at 2-0 down. In a typically fighting display the Rotherham-based world number two, he came back to win a tense third game 14-12 and went on to take the match 3-2. It was a great comeback against a talented opponent who had beaten the Paralympic champion Jochen Wollmert on his way to winning a bronze medal in the singles. Bayley and Karabardak then combined to win the doubles 3-0 and take the tie 3-0.

Their next match against the number one seeds from the Ukraine resulted in a 3-0 loss as Bayley struggled to find his form and although Swansea player Karabardak pushed the singles gold medalist Mykhaylo Popov to four sets Bayley lost to world number one Maxym Nikolenko and the pair then lost the doubles, also in four sets.

"We played well against Holland and they are not easy so to beat them as comfortably as we did was very good," said Karabardak. "I had a good game against Popov and if I could have taken the second set when I had set points to go two sets up it could have been a bit different but it wasn't to be and he played a bit better than me at crucial times."

Bayley and Karabardak will need to win their final group match against France tomorrow to progress to the semi-finals and Bayley is already focused on clinching another medal after his silver in the singles.

"I just seem a bit sluggish at the start in the team matches at the moment," said the 25-year-old from Tunbridge Wells, "but I need to up my game and try and get focused for tomorrow as it's a big game against France. It is difficult when you are not quite pumped up enough but there are lots of things we can improve tomorrow and we'll come back fighting. If we beat France we'll be in the semis and assured of a medal so it's all to play for."

Kim Daybell and Ashley Facey Thompson began their bid for a medal in the men's class 10 team event with a tough match against the favourites from Poland. Daybell had two match points in the fifth game against the Polish number two Sebastian Powrozniak but could not convert either and lost the game 13-11 and the match 3-2. Facey-Thompson, a class 9 player, was not disgraced in a 3-0 loss to Patryk Chojnowski, the class 10 world

number one and Paralympic champion who had retained his European singles title on Monday. In the doubles, the GB pair competed well but lost in three close sets 3-0 (11-9, 15-13, 11-8).

They needed to win their second match against Germany to keep their medal hopes alive and showed great character and resolution to come through 3-1. Facey-Thompson made a slow start against the German number one, Michael Roll, but fought back hard and lost in the third 15-13. The 18-year-old Londoner combined well with Daybell in the doubles, which the pair took 3-0 and can take plenty of positives forward into tomorrow's must win match against France.

"I gave myself chances against Chojnowski," said Facey-Thompson, "he's a really good player and the Paralympic champion and I just came out with no fear and tried my best and it was a good match. I was disappointed to lose my singles against Germany but I picked myself up for the doubles – it was a big match and we came out strong and won so that was good."

Leeds University student Daybell won both his singles matches against Germany 3-0 and is determined to make up for the disappointment of losing in the quarter-finals of the singles.

"It was disappointing to go out of the singles in the quarters," said the 21-year-old from Sheffield, "but you just have to try and put it behind you and you can make up for it in the team if you play well. Poland are the number one seeds and I felt that I should have won my opening singles although to be fair the other guy played a really good match.

"It was a must-win match against Germany so I was pleased that we could go out and do the business today. France tomorrow is a medal match because if we can win that we will be through to the semi-finals – I've never played either of their players before so it will be nice to have a new challenge and hopefully we can come through it."

Rob Davies and Paul Davies (class 1) and Sara Head and Jane Campbell (class 3) begin their campaigns tomorrow.

Written by Francesca Bullock (October 2, 2013)

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