

More medal delight for teenage ace Shilton

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Billy Shilton

The GB Para Table Tennis team's rising star Billy Shilton has added two more medals to his international tally at the PTT Spanish Open in El Prat de Llobregat, taking silver in the men's class 6-7 team event with Martin Perry and a bronze in the men's class 7 singles – his first individual medal.

There was also a first international medal for 15-year-old GB Pathway Squad member Lawrence John, who took silver in the men's class 10 team event with fellow Welshman Nathan Thomas.

Development athlete Craig Allen, partnered by Ireland's Thomas Anthony Davis, took bronze in the men's class 10 teams, and there was further success for GB as Barnsley's former Commonwealth champion Sue Gilroy took gold in the women's class 4 singles.

Shilton, 15, from Gloucestershire, topped his group in the men's class 7 singles with 3-0 wins over Daryl Sterling (USA) and the Norwegian Markus Koteng, and another 3-0 against the American Hunter McAloose in the quarter-finals earned him a semi-final against Ben Despineux. The Belgian world No 12, who went on to take the gold medal, is a tricky opponent and his greater experience showed as he beat Shilton 3-1.

"I was really pleased that I kept my form going from Romania last week," said Shilton. "I find Despineux really awkward to play and I won the first set but he changed his tactics then and that worked against me. But I was really pleased with the way I played and it is great to win an individual medal."

Gilroy, competing for the first time since the Italian Open in March, also topped her group and after a 3-1 semi-final win against the German Sandra Mikolaschek she went on to beat the world No 5 from Korea, Ji-nam Jung, in the final by the same score.

"It was a good test for me," said Gilroy, "because the Koreans were here and I haven't played Sandra for about five years so I wanted to have a crack at her before the World Championships. So I'm really pleased and I can take confidence from that now into the Worlds in September."

In the team event event, Shilton and Perry progressed from their group and, after beating the USA in the semi-finals, they lost 3-1 in the final to the Israeli team of Samuel Shur and Daniel Bobrov.

"I was quite disappointed with how I played in the singles," said Perry, "but I played better in the team and Billy and I got stronger with every match we played. Shur and Bobrov are a tough combination and we battled well – we lost the doubles 11-9 in the fifth and if we had won that we could have gone on to win the match."

Nathan Thomas and Lawrence John had comfortable wins against two Spanish combinations but after winning their semi-final against Allen and Davis they lost out to the very experienced No 1 Spanish team of world No 4 Jose Manuel Ruiz Reyes and world No 8 Jorge Cardona.

"It has been an intensive three days of competition in tough conditions," said GB Pathway Team Coach Shaun Marples, "and it's been a great experience for all the players."

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