

Bayley wins Pride of Sport Award

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Will Bayley in action at the ITTF World Para Championships

GB Para table tennis player Will Bayley, who became world champion in China in September, has won the Disability Sport award for an individual who has triumphed over a disability to excel in their chosen sport at the inaugural Daily Mirror and Sport England Pride of Sport Awards. The 27 year old from Tunbridge Wells received his award from Paralympic legend Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson at a glittering ceremony this evening at London's Grosvenor Hotel hosted by TV presenter Ben Shepherd.

Sheffield based Bayley was born with arthrogryposis, a rare congenital disorder that affected all four of his limbs and also overcame childhood cancer after being diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma at the age of seven.

The Paralympic silver medalist avenged his London 2012 final defeat by Jochem Wollmert in China, beating the Paralympic champion in the group stages of the World Championship, and went on to beat the European champion Mykhaylo Popov in the semi-final before defeating the world number one Maksym Nikolenko from Ukraine in the final to take the gold medal.

"I didn't think I had a chance of winning so it was a real shock," said Bayley, "but I'm really happy and it is great to get some recognition for the sport of table tennis."

The awards celebrated elite performers, unsung local heroes and those who volunteer and devote their free time to sport across England. The winners of each of the 11 categories were chosen by a judging panel which included Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Olympic gymnast Beth Tweddle, England cricket's Ashes-winner Simon Jones, Sue Day, the former England women's rugby union captain, Sport England's Tanya Joseph, Minister for Sport, Helen Grant, and Julie Whelan, CEO of the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust.

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