

Bronze for McKibbin is GB highlight in Slovakia

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Aaron McKibbin

Aaron McKibbin took bronze in the men's class 8 singles on an otherwise disappointing day for the GB Para Table Tennis Team at the Slovakia Open in Bratislava.

World No 1 Rob Davies (men's class 1) lost narrowly in the quarter-finals to world No 10 Ki-Won Nam from Korea, Paul Karabardak (men's class 6) was beaten at the same stage by the world champion and world No 1 Alvaro Valera and Jack Hunter-Spivey also lost in the quarter finals to world No 1 and Paralympic champion Tommy Urhaug from Norway.

Londoner McKibbin topped his group with three wins from three and received a bye into the quarter-finals where he beat Josef Krsiak from Slovakia 3-2. In the semi-finals he faced the world champion and world No 1 Viktor Didukh and the Ukrainian was too strong in a 3-0 win.

Davies also topped his group and received a bye into the quarter-finals. He led Nam 2-0 and had match points in the fifth set but could not convert them and the Korean edged the set 12-10 to win the match 3-2.

Fellow Welshman Karabardak, gold medallist in Slovenia last week, won his group and played a great match to beat the world No 6 Bastien Grundeler from France 3-0 in the last 16. He was then unlucky to come up against Valera in the quarter-finals and the Spaniard showed all his class in a 3-0 win.

Hunter-Spivey progressed to the knockout stages with two wins from his three group matches and beat Agus Sutanto from Indonesia 3-1 in the last 16 to set up a quarter-final against Urhaug but the experienced Norwegian was always in control and beat the 20 year old from Liverpool 3-0.

Ashley Facey Thompson (men's class 9) also progressed from his group with two wins but found the Japanese player Nobuyuki Suzuki too good in their last 16 match in a 3-0 loss.

Thomas Matthews (men's class 1) had a tough group with the world No 2 Jean-Francois Ducay from France and Nam and although he lost to both players he came very close to beating Nam, fighting back from 0-2 to level at 2-2 and losing a tight fifth set 11-9.

Martin Perry (men's class 6) was also knocked out at the group stages but played well in 3-1 defeats to Grundeler and the world No 10 Alberto Seoane Alcazar from Spain and recorded a 3-0 win over Jaun Carlos Sepulveda Pardo from Chile.

The competition continues with the team event which concludes on Saturday.

Francesca Bullock

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