

# GB players go through in Germany

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Aaron McKibbin

Eight of the 12 GB players competing in the singles events at the Bayreuth Open in Germany progressed to the knockout stages but there was disappointment for men's class 7 World champion Will Bayley who went out in the last 16 to European champion Mykhaylo Popov.

Bayley started with a 3-0 win against Viktor Karp from Ukraine and in his second group match faced the unknown Shuo Yan from China. He made a good start winning the first set but Yan is clearly a new talent in the very strong Chinese squad and came back to win the match 13-11 in the fourth.

That left Bayley needing to beat Thomas Rosenast from Switzerland in his final group match which he did 3-0 to set up a last 16 match against Popov. The 27 year old from Tunbridge Wells had struggled to find his form and although he fought back to take the third set and had two points to take it into a fifth he could not convert them and the World No 3 from Ukraine took the fourth set 12-10 to complete a 3-1 win.

"It is difficult to lose these sort of matches," admitted Bayley, "and very disappointing but hopefully I can bounce back in the team event and keep fighting and trying to win matches. I was struggling to get a backhand on the table today and although I still felt I had chances to win the matches I didn't really play the way I can. But sometimes it can happen in table tennis and you can lose a bit of form but I'll keep working hard and try to get it back for the team event."

World No 1 Rob Davies (men's class 1) beat the German Marcus Sieger 3-0 and followed that with a 3-1 win over Endre Major from Hungary. A 3-0 win over Martin Barbierik from Slovakia secured top position in his group and he has a bye into the semi-finals today.

"I'm really happy," said the Welshman, "I started where I finished off in Slovakia so I'm chuffed with how I played today. I've had some close matches with Major so I really wanted to show what I can do – I beat him in Slovakia and wanted to do the same again."

Also through in men's class 1 is fellow Welshman Tom Matthews. He started with a 3-0 win against Janos Kaiser from Hungary and then took the second set against world No 10 Ki-Won Nam but the Korean came back to win the next two and take the match 3-1. A 3-0 win over Martin Polkorab from Slovakia ensured his progression to the knockout stages and he will play Slovakia's Marian Kamien in the quarter-finals tomorrow.

"I was a bit up and down today," admitted Matthews, "I couldn't really get switched on and luckily I came through. I think I was too relaxed but I started to pick up in some sets and was winning the points so I need to try and keep that concentration."

In women's class 4 World Championship silver medallist Sue Gilroy beat Sabine Solveig Femtehjel from Norway 3-1 and then lost a great battle to home favourite Sandra Mikolaschek 3-2. A 3-0 win against Alisha Lea Almeida from South Africa put her safely through to a quarter-finals against Pi-chun Lu from Chinese Taipei.

London 2012 medallist Jane Campbell beat Aletta Moll from South Africa 3-0 and then showed all her character and determination to come back from 0-2 to beat world No 7 Nergiz Altintas from Turkey 14-12 in the fifth. She had another great tussle against Sonalben Manubhai Patel from India but could not quite close out the match on this occasion and a 3-2 loss put her through to a last 16 match against Frenchwoman Fanny Bertrand. Once again she had to fight back from 0-2 down but did so superbly to take the match 11-6 in the fifth and go through to a quarter-final against Juan Xue, the World No 3 from China.

Campbell's class 3 teammate Sara Head played a great match against world champion Qian Li from China – taking the first set and competing well in a 3-1 loss – and she went through to a quarter-final tomorrow against

Andela Muzinic from Croatia after a 3-0 win against Marie-Christine Fillou from France.

Ashley Facey Thompson (men's class 9) had a tough first match against Lin Ma from China and the World and Paralympic champion was always in control in a 3-0 win but the 20-year-old Londoner came back to beat Mohamed Amine Kalem 3-1 and avenge his defeat by the Italian in Slovakia earlier this month. His reward was a last 16 match against Yi Qing Zhao and the Chinese World No 8 looked to be heading for a 3-0 win before Facey Thompson fought back bravely to level the match at 2-2 but could not quite close out the match and lost 11-6 in the fifth.

"I've learnt that is the next level I want to get to," said Facey Thompson, "and that's the level I need to get to to beat these players. I had chances to win that last match and next time hopefully I can take it."

In men's class 8 Aaron McKibbin enjoyed the perfect start with a 3-0 win against Stig Mortensen from Norway and had chances to win three of the four sets he played against Piotr Grudzien in a 3-1 loss to the Polish world No 5. A comfortable 3-0 win over Leonardo Aritonang from Indonesia put him through to the last 16 where he competed well against Andreas Csonka but the Hungarian world No 8 was just too strong in a 3-1 win.

Gloucestershire teenager Billy Shilton played a great match against Keli Liao – fighting back from 0-2 down against the Chinese world No 6 to level at 2-2 and then saved five match points before eventually going down 11-9 in the fifth. He then beat Bogdan Omelchuk from Ukraine 3-1 but the experience of Thorsten Schwinn was the deciding factor in a 3-1 win for the German world No 10 which put Shilton out of the men's class 7 singles competition.

"I'm so close to the good players now it is just that extra push," said Shilton, "that extra discipline to get the ball on the table and not make too many mistakes because I've got the shots it is just the consistency – that's the main thing. I'm gaining experience from every top player I play – they've played for a long time and have been in so many difficult situations it is good to play against them."

Jack Hunter-Spivey beat Long Fok Chao from Macau 3-0 and had chances to win the first two sets against Nicolas Savant-Aira from France but lost the match 3-0. He also had opportunities in his final match against Nasiru Sule but the talented Nigerian made the most of his chances in a 3-0 win which put the 20 year old from Liverpool out.

"I'm missing the ability to close out sets when it gets tight," said Hunter-Spivey. "I'm playing okay – I've struggled with form this season and the pressure of qualification (for Rio) might be getting to me a little bit. I've played well against good players but I haven't got the variation of shot at the moment. It's a work in progress but I'm getting there."

Megan Shackleton (women's class 4) also had a tough start against the world champion Miao Zhang and the world No 2 from China was understandably too strong in a 3-0 win. She needed to beat Bhavina Hasmukh Bhai Patel from India in her second match to progress but a 3-1 loss put her out of the singles.

Pathway player Lawrence John (men's class 10) lost his three group matches to Karim Boumedouha from France, World No 3 Yang Ge from China and Komet Akbar from Indonesia but the 16 year old from Swansea is still inexperienced at this level and is progressing all the time.

**Francesca Bullock**  
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