

# Davies leads a trio of GB Para podium places

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Sue Gilroy in action at the Bayreuth Open

The GB Para Table Tennis Team picked up three medals in the singles events at the Bayreuth Open in Germany today with Rob Davies taking silver in men's class 1 and Tom Matthews (men's class 1) and Sue Gilroy (women's class 4) both taking bronze.

Davies defeated his Welsh team-mate Matthews 3-1 in the semi-final, which put him through to the final against Ki-Won Nam. The Korean had narrowly beaten him in Slovakia earlier this month and it was another close contest with Nam proving just the stronger and taking the match 12-10 in the fourth.

"I'm very disappointed," said Davies. "I was looking forward to playing him and I just wanted to go out and perform the way I can and I didn't, to be honest.

"I've just spoken to Greg my coach and we'll go back and work on a few things, get some confidence and come back and have another go at him. I've just got to come back stronger and this will really motivate me now to push myself even further and really work on some things in the training hall."

Matthews had earlier recovered from losing the first set to beat Marian Kamien from Slovakia 3-1 in the quarter-finals to set up the all-Welsh semi-final against Davies.

"It was a new experience for me to play a team-mate and not have a coach in the corner," said the 22-year-old from Aberdare. "I was surprisingly relaxed and concentrated well through the match so I'm happy with that.

"We had a bit of a laugh on the table and said sorry when things went wrong so it was a nice team atmosphere on the table. I'm much more pleased with the way I played today and I'm over the moon to get a singles medal in a factor 40 tournament for the first time."

The two Welshmen will now combine forces for the team competition and have strong hopes for another medal.

"I'm looking forward to playing with Tom," said Davies. "It's our third tournament playing together and he's playing really well so I've got to get my head up now and help him along and hopefully we'll both play well."

Gilroy beat Pi-Chun Lu, the world team silver medallist from Chinese Taipei 3-0 in their quarter-final to earn her place in the semi-final against World champion Miao Zhang in a repeat of their World Championship final last September. The Chinese player took the first two sets and although Gilroy fought back to take the third the world No 2 took the fourth 11-6 and the match 3-1.

"I played a lot better than yesterday and I can take lots of positives," said Gilroy. "There are areas I've got to work on but I know exactly what I should be doing now.

"We play the Chinese so rarely and it is learning their game and how to master it – they are very strong attackers on the forehand – but I really enjoyed that game and feel very positive. It's a very strong tournament so good to get a medal and we'll have another go in the team event."

Gilroy will be partnered in the team event by 16-year-old Megan Shackleton and said: "It's really good to have a team partner after so long without one and Megan is coming on so well that we could be a really good team."

In women's class 3 Jane Campbell and Sara Head both went out at the quarter-final stage, Campbell beaten 3-0 by Juan Xue, the world No 3 from China, and Head losing a close battle with Andela Muzinic, the world No 4 from Croatia in five sets.

"She's a very good player, to be fair," said Campbell, who could never really get in a blow against the world silver

medallist. "She is just a lot stronger and more positive in her game which is on another level for me to get to. I think overall I'm playing well – I just need to be more consistent and start faster. It just seems to be taking me a while to get going and I don't know why as that's not normally the case but here it seems to be going that way."

Head was 1-2 down to Muzinic and battled back to level at 2-2 but the Croatian always had the edge in the final set to secure a 3-2 win.

"For me it is all about the fight," said Head. "I try to go out and fight as hard as I can. Some days it works and some days it just doesn't happen. I'm thrilled with the way I'm playing and I can keep building on it. We're quite early on in the season and to lose to someone who is ranked four in the world and to be so close – I just need to keep focused and work hard in training."

The pair can now focus on the team competition starting tomorrow and Campbell said: "Sara and I are both playing well so let's hope we keep going that way."

**Francesca Bullock**

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