



Brilliant Shilton sets up semi-final with Bayley

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World champion Will Bayley is still on course to regain his European title but he will have to beat his GB team-mate Billy Shilton in the semi-final today after the 17-year-old produced the performance of the championships so far to defeat the reigning European champion Mykhaylo Popov 3-1 in the quarter-final and assure himself of a medal at his first major championship.

On another good day for the GB Para Table Tennis Team in Vejle, Denmark, Rob Davies, Tom Matthews, Paul Karabardak and David Wetherill also made it through to the semi-finals and 12 out of 15 athletes qualified for the knockout stages.

Shilton needed to beat Michal Deigsler in his last group match to go through and the 17-year-old put up a great performance to beat the experienced Polish player who had beaten him last month in the Czech Open. Despite losing the third set after having two match points he recovered to win the fourth 11-8 and the match 3-1.

"I was really nervous at the end of the third set," admitted Shilton afterwards, "but I got my focus at the end and did enough to get through so I'm really happy."

In the last 16 Shilton faced Stephane Messi, the world No 10 from France, and produced another great performance to come back from 2-1 down to win the match 11-7 in the fifth. That put him through to a quarter-final against the reigning European champion Popov and after winning a close first set 15-13 Shilton took the second 11-9 to take a 2-0 lead. Although the World No 3 from the Ukraine came back to take the third the GB teenager – playing with a maturity beyond his years – held his nerve to win the fourth 11-8 and take the match 3-1.

"I set myself the target of getting to the quarter-finals," said Shilton, "so anything beyond that was a bonus really so I'm very happy. I was definitely nervous but I've been speaking a lot with Tim (GB team psychologist) to keep my head and focus on myself and not give up and I think that is the reason I've done so well at this competition – never giving up and keep fighting for every point.

"I can't quite believe it, to be honest – it's like a dream come true."

Bayley received a bye into the quarter-finals and was drawn against his old rival Jochen Wollmert, the double Paralympic champion. The World champion was in top form and after taking the first two sets 11-5 he withstood a rally from the German to clinch the match 11-8 in the third.

"I think that is probably the best I've ever played against him," admitted Bayley. "I've got such respect for him –

he's such a legend. I've always wanted to win as many majors as he has so it's nice to beat him because it's difficult.

"It was really important to make a good start because he is a confidence player and when he's playing well he's hard to stop. I'm really happy with the way I'm playing – I just want to keep going and an all GB semi-final will be nice!"

Davies ensured that he topped his group with a comfortable 3-0 win over Federico Falco from Italy and looks to be finding his form at the right time.

"I'm feeling a lot better today," said the Welshman, who plays Dmitry Lavrov in the semi-finals. "More focused and more like myself. A lot more positive. It's always good to play matches but nice to get a bye into the semi-finals."



Tom Matthews

In his final group match Tom Matthews had match points against Endre Major but was eventually beaten 3-2 by the experienced Hungarian who topped the group, with Matthews in second place but through to the quarter-finals to face Falco.

To his credit Matthews recovered from the disappointing loss and was always in control against Falco, overcoming a fightback in the third set by the Italian to win 3-0 and assure himself of at least a bronze medal in his first major championship.

"I was disappointed to lose this morning," said Matthews. "I was 10-8 up in the fourth and lost it so it was hard to get back into it but me and Rob (Davies) had a good chat. We support each other and he helped me to prepare for the match. My emotional control has been brilliant here so I'm happy. I'm taking my time instead of rushing things."

The 23-year-old from Aberdare plays world No 1 Jean-Francois Ducay in the semi-finals.

"He's a good player," said Matthews. "Rob and I will have a chat in the morning and hopefully I can beat him and Rob can win his semi and we can make it an all-Welsh final."

It was a good day for Wales as Swansea's Karabardak reached the semi-finals in men's class 6 with a 3-0 win

over the Russian Alexander Esaulov.

"Once I pulled away in the first set I knew that if I kept playing well I could make things more comfortable for myself," he said, "because I don't think he had the belief that he could beat me and I didn't want to give him any chance to get into the game. So I think I did well to shut him out and dominate the game really."



David Wetherill

David Wetherill topped his group with a 3-0 win in his final match against the Russian Dinar Safiullin and defeated the experienced Italian Raimondo Alecci 3-1 in the last 16 to set up a quarter-final against world No 6 Thomas Rau from Germany. A 3-0 win put Wetherill through to the semi-finals and assure him of his first ever medal in a major championship.

Ross Wilson ensured that he would go through to the knockout stages of men's class 8 as group winner with a 3-0 win over the Italian Francesco Lorenzini and he then overcame the Belgian former Paralympic silver medallist Marc Ledoux 3-0 in the last 16.

Playing in his first major championship since London 2012 and only his fourth competition in three years the 20-year-old started his quarter-final against Andras Csonka in great style and led 2-1 but the Hungarian world No 5 just had the edge in a tense final set to win the match 11-8 in the fifth.

"I think on a good day I can take those matches," said Wilson. "I think what I missed in the build-up to this was match practice and I'm not 100% sharp yet so with sharpness and better preparation with dealing with my injuries then definitely I can compete with the best in the world."



Ross Wilson

Wilson's class 8 team partner Aaron McKibbin booked his place in the last 16 with a 3-1 win over Max Van Amerongen from the Netherlands, recovering well from losing the first set. His reward was a last 16 match against the world No 2 Thomas Bouvais and the Frenchman was in top form in a 3-0 win.

"I don't feel that I played badly," said McKibbin, "I thought I played a really good game. To be fair to him he was on top form and I tried to do three or four different things and he was there for every ball."

Ashley Facey Thompson reached the last 16 on men's class 9 with a battling 3-1 win over the higher ranked Dutchman Tonnie Heijnen despite dropping the first set.

"I've played him a lot and lost to him in the past," said the 20-year-old London South Bank University student. "After the first set I was thinking don't be afraid – don't think about losing think about winning and be more positive around the table. I knew my game was stronger than his today so I was able to overcome him and I was pleased with my performance."

That put Facey Thompson through to face Frederic Bellais and the Frenchman looked to be on his way to an easy win after taking the first two sets. But Facey Thompson showed great character to battle his way back into the match, levelling at 2-2 and then saving three match points at 10-7 down to win the match 12-10 in the fifth.

"When I was 2-0 down I was thinking 'how can I get back in this match?'" said Facey Thompson. "I wanted to win but I also didn't want to let myself down. At 10-7 down in the final set I was just thinking play each point – it doesn't matter what the score is. He's a good strong player so I was very happy with my performance."

In the quarter-final against the world No 3 Juan Perez Gonzalez the Spaniard's experience was decisive in a 3-0 win but it has nevertheless been a promising performance by Facey Thompson.

Sue Gilroy secured top place in her group in the combined women's class 4-5 with a comfortable 3-0 win over Helke Koller from Austria but found the class 5 three time former European champion Ingela Lundback just too strong in a 3-1 defeat.

"I'm bitterly disappointed," said Gilroy. "To come back from 10-6 down in the fourth and then lose 15-13 and getting two nets at deuce. I was really hoping I could come back in the fourth and take it to a fifth but it wasn't to be. Hopefully I can turn it around in the team competition."

Gilroy's team partner Megan Shackleton needed to beat Nada Matic in her final group match and put up a determined performance against the women's class 4 World Championship bronze medallist, fighting back from 2-0 down to win the third but eventually losing 11-9 in the fourth.

"I'm really proud I fought back," said the 16-year-old from Todmorden. "I'll never give up even if I'm not going to win I want it to be the closest score and I want them to know I'm a potential threat in the future and not walk away from the match thinking it was easy."

Jack Hunter-Spivey reached the quarter-finals of men's class 5 with a 3-1 win over Hamza Caliskan from Turkey but was disappointed to lose 3-0 to the world No 6 from Serbia Mitar Palikuca.

"I've beaten him the last few times we've played," said the 20-year-old from Liverpool, "but he changed tactics and opened up a bit more. There were some big rallies at key points in the match and I couldn't quite get the ball on the table.

"But I feel that I've given a good account of myself and tried my hardest and that's all I can do. I haven't got that winning edge yet in those sort of matches but it takes experience to do that."

In men's class 10 Kim Daybell reached the quarter-finals with a hard-fought 3-2 win over Igor Misztal from Poland and despite playing much better against Ivan Karabec from the Czech Republic he was bitterly disappointed to lose in four close sets to the world No 6.

"It's always difficult when you are 2-0 down against a good player," said Daybell. "At 8-4 up in the second I didn't quite take my chances but that's the way it went today."

In women's class 3 Jane Campbell and Sara Head both failed to progress to the knockout stages after losing their final group matches but will now focus on the team competition which starts on Thursday.

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