



Vecko eyeing Paralympic glory after Euro joy

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GB Para Table Tennis Team Performance Director Gorazd Vecko has praised his young team's achievement of taking 11 medals at the ITTF PTT European Championships in Denmark and is confident that the Paralympic Games in Rio next year can provide even greater success than London 2012.

Rob Davies & Tom Matthews took gold in the men's class 1 team event on the final day and there were silver medals for Will Bayley & Billy Shilton (men's class 7) and Paul Karabardak & David Wetherill (men's class 6), while Aaron McKibbin & Ross Wilson took bronze in men's class 8.

That added to Sue Gilroy & Megan Shackleton's bronze in women's class 4-5, plus [six individual medals](#) won earlier in the tournament.

"I think we need to be really happy with the performance," said Vecko, who took over as Performance Director for GB in 2009, "because we took 11 medals and we were without Paul Davies in men's class 1 so we might have had even more.

"We also had some tough draws in the quarter-finals and women's class 4 was combined with women's class 5 otherwise Sue Gilroy could have taken a medal in the singles as well as the team.

"There were some big surprises with the young Pathway players Billy Shilton and Tom Matthews taking medals in the singles as well as the team and Megan Shackleton taking a team medal.

"For these young players to be competing in their first major championship and taking medals is a great result for our programme and all these athletes will be medal chances, if not in Rio, then in Tokyo for sure.

"In 2011 we took six medals at the European Championships and we went on to take four medals in London, which was a huge success because in Beijing we didn't take any. Now with the best performance at a European Championships in history for GB with 11 medals I think we are looking good and we can hope to reach our targets in Rio.

"I don't like to talk a lot about medals because there will be tough competition from other countries that are also focused on winning medals but we will be disappointed if we don't achieve our target in Rio."

With the qualification period for Rio ending on December 31 this year Vecko and head coach Greg Baker are looking to send players currently on the borderline of qualification to tournaments in Belgium, China and Costa Rica in a bid to achieve a high enough world ranking to secure their qualification for Brazil next year.

“Costa Rica in December will be the last tournament in the calendar,” said Vecko, “and after this we will know how many players are qualified but I expect us to have between 10-12 players qualified for selection to compete for ParalympicsGB in Rio.”

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