



Bayley & Co have Italian job to do

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Posted On: February 12, 2016

World champion Will Bayley heads a 16-strong squad that will compete in the Lignano Master Open in Italy next week (February 17-20), the first international competition of the season for the GB Para Table Tennis Team as it prepares for this year's Paralympic Games in Rio.

Bayley, the current men's class 7 world No 1, faces tough opposition from the world Nos 2 and 3 from the Ukraine, Maksym Nikolenko and Mykhaylo Popov, as well as Dutchman Jean-Paul Montanus, the world No 6 who beat Bayley to win the European title last October.

"Training has been going really well," said the 28-year-old London 2012 silver medallist. "The whole squad is playing brilliantly and we are really looking forward to playing in Italy."

"It is a fantastic tournament and I'm really focused on doing the best I can but obviously I want to peak in Rio and this is a stepping stone."

"The competition is going to be very strong but that is what I want – I was really excited when I saw the players list because I want the best players there and it is a great test for me to see where my level is at the moment."

The GB squad for Italy also includes fellow London 2012 medallists Aaron McKibbin, Ross Wilson, Jane Campbell and Sara Head, World silver medallist Sue Gilroy and 2015 European championship medallists Tom Matthews, Paul Karabardak, Billy Shilton and David Wetherill.

"With the Paralympic Games less than seven months away Rio is obviously the main focus for this year," said GB Performance Director Gorazd Vecko, "but there is a lot of work to be done before then."

"The team has been working hard through the winter and Italy will be a tough competition with many of the world's best players competing. We obviously want the players to peak in Rio but this is an important competition for us in our preparation for the Games."

The full list of GB players competing in Italy is:

Performance Squad

Will Bayley – Tunbridge Wells/Sheffield (class 7)

Jane Campbell – London (class 3)

Kim Daybell – Sheffield/Leeds (class 10)

Ashley Facey Thompson – London (class 9)

Sue Gilroy – Barnsley (class 4)

Sara Head – Beddau (class 3)
Jack Hunter-Spivey – Liverpool/Sheffield (class 5)
Paul Karabardak – Swansea (class 6)
Aaron McKibbin – London/Sheffield (class 8)
Megan Shackleton – Todmorden (class 4)
David Wetherill – Torpoint (class 6)
Ross Wilson – Minster/Sheffield (class 8)

Pathway Squad

Thomas Matthews – Aberdare (class 1)
Martin Perry – Paisley/Sheffield (class 6)
Felicity Pickard – Burnley (class 6)
Billy Shilton – Stonehouse/Sheffield (class 8)

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