



## Six medals for Para GB in Lignano

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The GB Para Table Tennis Team made a good start to the 2016 season in Italy with bronze medals in the singles events at the Lignano Master Open for Sue Gilroy (women's class 4-5), Tom Matthews (men's class 1), Jack Hunter-Spivey (men's class 5), Paul Karabardak (men's class 6), David Wetherill (men's class 6) and Kim Daybell (men's class 10).

But there was disappointment for men's class 7 World champion Will Bayley, who was knocked out in the quarter-finals by the experienced Spaniard Jordi Morales.

Gilroy, world silver medalist in 2014, topped her group with three wins from three including a walkover against Tarsilem Tarsilem from Indonesia. She received a bye in the quarter-finals but had to settle for bronze after a 3-0 semi-final loss to Wijittra Jaion from Thailand, the world No 6.

Matthews lost his opening match to Paralympic champion Holger Nikelis from Germany but reached the knockout stages with a 3-0 win over the Italian Federico Falco. A great 3-0 win over the very experienced Endre Major from Hungary took him into a semi-final against Dmitry Lavrov but the Welshman could not produce his best form and the Russian took the match 3-0.

Hunter-Spivey started with a great 3-2 win over the Paralympic champion and world No 1 from Norway Tommy Urhaug and followed that with a 3-0 win over Sem Roelofs from The Netherlands. A 3-1 loss to Yen-Hung Lin from Chinese Taipei meant that he finished in second place in his group and progressed to a quarter-final against the former European champion and current world No 5 Nicolas Savant-Aira. The Frenchman twice came back to level at 1-1 and 2-2 but Hunter-Spivey responded well and took the match 11-9 in the fifth for another notable win.

The 20-year-old from Liverpool started well in his semi-final, taking the first set against Ming Chih Cheng but the world No 4 from Thailand was just too strong in a 3-1 win. Nevertheless it was a great start to the season for Hunter-Spivey, who continued the good form he showed in China at the end of last year.

Karabardak topped his group with three 3-0 wins and another 3-0 win against Michael Jensen from Denmark in the quarter-finals took him into a semi-final against the world No 2 Peter Rosenmeier in a repeat of their semi-final at last year's European Championships that the Dane won 3-2. It was another close match and the Swansea City fan had his chances and led 2-1 but Rosenmeier finally clinched the match 3-2.

Wetherill also progressed from his group with three wins from three although he had to fight hard to defeat the Romanian world No 8 Bobi Simion 3-2. He went on to beat Pavao Jozik from Croatia 3-0 in the quarter-finals but

came up against the Paralympic champion and world No 3 Rungroj Thainyom in the semi-final and the man from Thailand was a 3-0 winner.

Daybell, who has taken a year out of his medical studies to prepare for Rio, won his group with three wins from three although he had to dig deep to beat the Indonesian player Komet Akbar 3-2. His reward was a bye in the quarter-finals and an automatic place in the semi-finals where he faced the experienced Pavel Lukyanov. After losing a close third set 16-14 Daybell fought back to level at 2-2 but the Russian took the final set and the match 3-2.

Bayley, the men's class 7 world No 1, started with a comfortable 3-0 win against Yuttana Namsaga from Thailand and followed that with a 3-1 win over the Ukrainian Victor Karp. His quarter-final opponent was the world No 5 Jordi Morales and the experienced Spaniard, who is always a tough competitor, produced his best form to defeat a below-par Bayley 3-1.

In men's class 8 Aaron McKibbin won all three of his group matches, including a 3-1 defeat of the world No 8 from Sweden, Linus Karlsson. He faced Ivan Mai in the quarter-finals and led 2-0 before a titanic struggle in the third set, which he lost 18-16, gave the momentum to his Ukrainian opponent who went on to win the match 3-2.

McKibbin's class 8 team partner Ross Wilson defeated the Italian Francesco Lorenzini from Italy 3-0 and Banyu Tri Mulyo from Indonesia 3-1 but found the former European champion and London 2012 bronze medallist Emil Andersson in great form and a 3-1 loss to the Swede left him second in his group and drawn against the world champion and world No 1 Viktor Didukh in the quarter-finals. After a close first set the Ukrainian proved too strong in a 3-0 win but Wilson was playing only his fifth competition since London 2012 and is sure to improve with more matchplay.

Teenager Billy Shilton is still finding his way in men's class 8 but was disappointed to lose both his group matches against world No 6 Andras Csonka and Ivan Mai.

Ashley Facey Thompson had a 3-0 win against Ali Alsanea from Kuwait but defeats against the world No 2 from Russia Iurii Nozdrunov and the Italian Mohamed Kalem sent him out of men's class 9 at the group stages.

In women's class 3 Jane Campbell started with a 3-0 win over Osrita Muslim from Indonesia but a defeat by Italy's Michela Brunelli 13-11 in the fifth and another narrow 3-2 loss to Helena Dretar from Croatia meant that she missed out on a place in the knockout stages. Team partner Sara Head was drawn in a really tough group and defeats to Swedish world No 1 Anna-carin Ahlquist and Hatice Duman from Turkey meant that she also did not progress from the group stages.

With women's class 4 and 5 combined, 16-year-old Megan Shackleton also faced a tough task in her group but although she did not win a match she pushed Germany's world No 8 Sandra Mikolaschek all the way in a four-set defeat and is gaining valuable experience at this level.

Felicity Pickard also showed that she is making great progress in women's class 6 with a 3-0 win over Stephanie Grebe, the German world No 6, and narrow 3-2 defeats to the Russian world No 2 Raisa Chebanika (14-12 in the fifth) and world No 3 Marina Lytovchenka from the Ukraine.

Martin Perry was a deserving winner of the men's class 6 singles in the Lignano Junior Open earlier in the week and although he did not progress from his group he competed well against the experienced Italian Raimondo Alecci and Michael Jensen from Denmark and is showing plenty of promise for the future.

The tournament continues with the team competition, which concludes on Saturday.

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