



McKibbin and Wilson target more glory in Italy

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Paralympic medalists Aaron McKibbin and Ross Wilson, who took bronze in the men's class 6-8 team event in Rio last September, head a squad of 12 athletes representing the British Para Table Tennis Team in the Lignano Master Open in Italy next week.

McKibbin won the deciding singles tie against world champions China that secured the bronze medal in Rio and is hoping to carry that form into the start of the new season.

He said:

"It was big for me to win that last match in the team event in Rio and prove that I deserved to be there.

"I definitely feel more relaxed going in to this season as although I still want to improve and perform well I feel more confident now – I've done it before so hopefully I can do it again. We are ready for some matches and it will be exciting to compete again. Hopefully we can pick up where we left off in Rio."

Wilson has had to contend with a series of injuries since taking a bronze medal in London 2012 at the age of just 17 and won bronze in Rio despite a preparation hampered again by injury.

The 21-year-old from Minster said:

"Preparation has been going really well. Italy will be my first competition since Rio so I really can't wait to get out there and see where I am compared to the other players in the world.

"The plan is to make sure that I get on top of my recovery work and hopefully have fewer injuries so I can train more. If I can get results like I did in Rio even when I am struggling with injuries then hopefully I can do even

better if I can stay fit.”

Also competing in Italy will be five time Paralympian Sue Gilroy who came agonisingly close to winning her first Paralympic medal in Rio, losing a very close match for the bronze medal to the Serbian Nada Matic 3-2.

Gilroy said:

“Training has been going well. I’ve been playing a lot of able bodied county tournaments and in two leagues so most of my preparation has been playing against able bodied players but I’ve been on a GB training camp in Sheffield this week and playing against wheelchair players and I’ve been playing really well.

“I played well in Rio – the last match was disappointing but it is a new season now so I’m really looking forward to Italy.”

The full squad for the Lignano Master Open is:

Ashley Facey Thompson (Class 9 – London)
Sue Gilroy MBE (Class 4 – Barnsley)
Lawrence John (Class 10 – Swansea)
Paul Karabardak (Class 6 – Swansea)
Aaron McKibbin (Class 8 – London/Sheffield)
Tom Matthews (Class 1 – Aberdare)
Martin Perry (Class 6 – Paisley)
Felicity Pickard (Class 6 – Burnley)
Megan Shackleton (Class 4 – Todmorden)
Billy Shilton (Class 8 – Stonehouse/Sheffield)
David Wetherill (Class 6 – Torpoint)
Ross Wilson (Class 8 – Minster/Sheffield)

The following members of the Pathway Squad will be competing in the Lignano Junior Open (February 27-28):

Craig Allen (Class 9 – Birmingham)
Daniel Bullen (Class 5 – St Neotts)
Tamlan Eastwood (Class 9 – Swansea)
Ryan Henry (Class 8 – Ardrossan)
Lawrence John (Class 10 – Swansea)
Conor McAdam (Class 6 – Troon)
Jack Stockdale (TBC – Romford)
Shae Thakker (Class 10 – Slough)

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