



Success for Pathway Squad in Romania

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A squad of young British Para Table Tennis Pathway Squad athletes has added three medals in the Romania Open to the five medals won in the Junior (U23) Open at the PTT RITTO in Cluj-Napoca.

Dan Bullen and Lawrence John picked up bronze medals in their respective singles events and Shae Thakker and Ryan Henry took bronze in the men's class 9-10 team event on the final day of competition.

Bullen, who also took bronze in the men's class 2-5 singles in the Junior Open, came through his group in men's class 5 as runner-up after beating Liu Fu from China 3-1 and understandably found the experienced world No 4 Mitar Palikuca too strong in their semi-final, which the Serbian took 3-0.

"I was disappointed to lose deuce in the fifth in the semi-final of the junior singles," said Bullen, "but it is all good experience for me and it will help me become a stronger player."

John topped his group in men's class 10 after wins against Chris Peters from Luxembourg (3-2) and the Russian Nikita Perevozchikov (3-0). He won a close first game 14-12 in his semi-final against Martin Nielsen before the Danish newcomer came back to take the next three 11, 9 and 6 to win the match 3-1. He had earlier taken silver in the round-robin men's class 10 Junior singles after his narrow 3-2 loss (14-12 in the fifth) to team-mate Shae Thakker proved decisive.

"Overall I've learnt a lot from the competition," said John. "I've had difficult matches in which I haven't been playing my best and had to work hard and find other ways to win. I'm happy to medal in juniors and seniors and will be looking to improve in upcoming competitions."

At just 13 years old Thakker is a promising talent and after taking gold in the men's class 10 junior singles he combined with Ryan Henry to take team bronze in the senior open.

"I am really pleased with the gold that I have achieved in the junior singles," said Thakker. "This has really improved my confidence in my game and I am really ecstatic to see that my training is being very influential. This has inspired me to work even harder so that I can achieve this success again."

Henry beat Elias Monden from Germany to put the GB pair through to the semi-finals and said: "I was happy with the way I played and felt it was a great learning experience all round. I'm really pleased to have won a bronze medal in the team event with Shae."

Conor McAdam won all three of his matches in the round-robin junior men's class 6 singles, securing the gold with an impressive 3-0 win in his final match against the German Thilo Sonnenschein. He also came through his group in the senior men's class 6 singles with 3-0 wins against Florin Milciu from Romania and the Serbian Luka Andrasic and was not disgraced in a 3-0 quarter-final loss to the European team gold medallist Michael Jensen from Denmark.

"I'm happy with my performance in the U23 event," said McAdam, "winning my first junior singles medal, especially with it being gold. I felt that I was playing well, implementing the things that I have been working on in training. So I'm happy with that."

"In the senior event I felt that I played well but was outplayed by more experienced players. This has left me with some things to work on back home which can help me further my game."

Craig Allen lost his second match in the round-robin junior men's class 9 singles to the German Laurenz Fehling 3-2 but with wins against Vladislav Balobanov from Russia and Elias Monden from Germany he took the gold on countback.

"I am really pleased to have won my first singles medal in Romania," said Allen. "It makes all the hard work and sacrifices worthwhile and is a great way to thank the Grantham Academy coaches and my local coaches for their expertise and support. I need to carry on improving my game and this medal makes me hungry for another one."

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