



British squad ready for European Para Championships

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Paralympic champions Will Bayley and Rob Davies head a 16-strong British squad that will compete in the European Para Table Tennis Championships in Lasko, Slovenia from September 28-October 4.

Team training hard 4 Euros on & off the table – thanks to [@samchubbvideo](#) & [@RossBugden](#) #Lasko2017 [@billyshiltstt](#) [@ParalympicsGB](#) [@eissheff](#) pic.twitter.com/mSzOb8cnyG

— GB Para Table Tennis (@GBParaTT) [September 21, 2017](#)

Bayley, who is also the current World champion in men's class 7, will be looking to take the European crown and hold all three major titles at the same time.

The 29 year old from Tunbridge Wells won the European title in 2011 but has taken silver on the last two occasions, losing in the final in 2013 to the Ukrainian Mykhaylo Popov and in 2015 to Jean-paul Montanus from the Netherlands.

Bayley, who won the German Open in June beating the current World number one Maksym Nikolenko from Ukraine in the final, said:

I might never have the opportunity again to hold all three titles at the same time and it would be a dream so I just want to put myself in with a chance of doing it.

I'm also realistic enough to know that sport is unpredictable and anything can happen so I don't really put myself under too much pressure in that way.

It's been a really good build-up – probably one of the best that I've had – and I've been working harder than ever before and trying to improve because I don't want people to say that I settled for gold in Rio and now I've taken my foot off the gas.

Winning the German Open gives me massive confidence because Nikolenko has been brilliant this season and only lost one match so it is going to be a massive challenge to beat him but I'm looking forward to it.

Davies is bidding for his third consecutive European singles title and with fellow Welshmen Paul Davies, the London 2012 bronze medallist, and Tom Matthews will also defend the men's class 1 team title won in 2013 and 2015.

The 33 year old lost the World number one ranking after a below-par performance in the German Open in June but came back to win gold in the Czech Open earlier this month.

Davies said:

You can't be 100% on top of your game constantly and I wanted to concentrate on other things in my life after Rio, including getting married in July.

It is nice to be World number one – I think I was on honeymoon when I heard that I had gone down the rankings – but to be honest it is not as important for me as winning the major titles.

Nobody remembers who was World number one – it is titles that really matter so I'm looking forward to going to the Europeans and hopefully playing my best table tennis.

The Czech Open was really good match practice and I was happy with my performance there so I've just got to try and up my level again for the Europeans.

The British squad for Slovenia also includes Rio and London Paralympic team medalists Aaron McKibbin and Ross Wilson, World silver medallist Sue Gilroy, World and European medallist Paul Karabardak, European medallist David Wetherill and talented teenagers Megan Shackleton and Billy Shilton, who both took medals in the European Championships in 2015.

British Table Tennis Team Performance Director, Gorazd Vecko, said:

The European Championships will be our first major competition since Rio.

We have a lot of experience in our squad as well as some younger players who will undoubtedly benefit from the experience of playing in a major championship.

Many of the world's leading players are European so the competition will be very tough but the players are well prepared and ready for the challenge.

The full British squad for the European Championships is:

- Will Bayley (class 7) – Tunbridge Wells/Sheffield
- Paul Davies (class 1) – North Cornelly
- Rob Davies (class 1) – Brecon
- Kim Daybell (class 10) – Sheffield/Leeds
- Ashley Facey Thompson (class 9) – London/Sheffield
- Sue Gilroy (class 4) – Barnsley
- Jack Hunter-Spivey (class 5) – Liverpool/Sheffield
- Paul Karabardak (class 6) – Swansea

- Tom Matthews (class 1) – Aberdare
- Aaron McKibbin (class 8) – London/Sheffield
- Martin Perry (class 6) – Paisley/Sheffield
- Felicity Pickard (class 6) – Burnley
- Megan Shackleton (class 4) – Todmorden
- Billy Shilton (class 8) – Stonehouse (Gloucestershire)/Sheffield
- David Wetherill (class 6) – Torpoint
- Ross Wilson (class 8) – Minster/Sheffield

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