



GB step up their medal hunt

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Eleven British players including Paralympic champions Will Bayley and Rob Davies are still in contention for medals in their respective classes at the European Para Table Tennis Championships in Lasko, Slovenia.

Davies will play his fellow Welshman Paul Davies for a place in the final of men's class 1 and with another Welshman Tom Matthews in the other semi-final the British team could take all three medals.

Bayley is one of eight British players who reached the quarter-finals along with Jack Hunter-Spivey (men's class 5), David Wetherill (men's class 6), Ross Wilson (men's class 8), Ashley Facey Thompson (men's class 9), Kim Daybell (men's class 10), Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton (women's class 4-5).

Men's class 1

Paul Davies progressed to the quarter finals as group winner with a 3-0 win against Alan Papirer from France and then came through a tough quarter-final against Sylvio Keller from Switzerland 3-1 to set up a semi-final with his team mate Rob Davies.

"I'm overjoyed – brilliant," said Davies. "Sylvio is an awkward customer and the stuff he can do with the bat – you've got to give him a lot of respect because he plays good on the angles. He played really well and pushed me all the way so I'm just glad to get the win and meet my younger brother in the semis tomorrow!

"There is going to be a lot of respect between us – we know each other's game so well so all we can do is give it 100% and whatever happens one of us will be in the final so that's great."

After a walkover in his first match Tom Matthews started his competition with a 3-0 win against Keller in the group which gave him a bye in to the semi-finals where he will face Federico Falco from Italy.

Men's class 5

After a tight first set Jack Hunter-Spivey lost his second group match 3-0 to his great friend and regular team

partner, Tommy Urhaug, the former Paralympic champion and world No 1 from Norway, but he secured his place in the quarter-finals with a comfortable 3-0 win against Gerardus Van Grunsven from The Netherlands.

"In the first set against Tommy I felt that our top level is very close to each other," said the 22 year old from Liverpool, "and if I had taken the first set it would have changed the whole complexion of the game. We both played very well but he was the better man on the day."

Hunter-Spivey plays the World number two Ali Ozturk from Turkey in his quarter-final.

Men's class 6

Dave Wetherill had chances to win both of the first two sets in his last 16 match but found himself 2-0 down to the Russian Alexander Esaulov, the former world No 2. His response was magnificent as he battled his way back into the match and eventually clinched his place in the quarter-finals 11-7 in the fifth.

"I'm a bit annoyed because I gave myself more work to do having been 10-7 up in both of the first two sets," said Wetherill, who plays the Spaniard Alberto Seoane Alcazar in the quarter-finals.

Martin Perry showed his improvement with a 3-0 win against Valentin Kneuss from Switzerland in his final group match to progress to the last 16 against Viktor Karp, but the Ukrainian former class 7 player had just too much experience for the 23-year-old from Paisley in a 3-0 win.

"This is my first major championship," said Perry, "so to get out of my group and compete at this level - I'm really proud of that."

Paul Karabardak beat Marios Chatzikriakos from Greece in his last group match 3-1 and was unlucky to miss out on a place in the last 16 on countback after three players in his group finished with two wins each. He can now look forward to playing the team event with Wetherill and Perry.

Men's class 7

Will Bayley secured his place in the quarter-finals with a 3-0 win against Nicklas Westerberg from Sweden in his second and final group match.

"He gave me a massive test in the Slovenia Open this year," said Bayley, "and nearly beat me in the group stages so I knew he was going to play really good here."

Bayley plays the Frenchman Kevin Dourbecker in the quarter-final and will have to win three matches on the day if he is to add the European crown to his World and Paralympic titles.

Men's class 8

After losing his second match yesterday Ross Wilson needed to beat Pablo Jacobsen from Norway in his final group match to ensure his progress to the last 16 and came through 3-0 to set up a match against the former world and Paralympic champion Mathieu Loicq from Belgium. The 22-year-old was in sparkling form and was an impressive 3-0 winner.

"I'm really pleased," said Wilson. "Yesterday night I felt really down on myself for not performing the way I wanted to and coming out and performing the way I know I can so it was really positive for me today to know I can turn it round."

Wilson takes on Piotr Grudzien from Poland in the quarter-final.

Aaron McKibbin beat Joshua Wagner from Germany 3-0 in his final group match and made a great start in his last 16 match against Ivan Mai but the Ukrainian won 14 points in a row after losing the first set and took the match 3-1.

"I played okay," said McKibbin. "He is obviously a good player and a style I struggle with. I started really well and then he came out of the blocks from nowhere and I didn't really know what was going on, to be honest."

"I tried to change things near the end but he is someone I always struggle with so I knew it wasn't going to be easy."

Billy Shilton faced Linus Karlsson in the last 16 and although the 18-year-old fought back well to take the third set the Swedish player had too much experience in a 3-1 win.

"I found it really difficult in the first two sets," said Shilton, "and lost track of my tactics a little bit. When I won the third set I thought if I could get a good start in the fourth I might have a chance but it just didn't go my way today."

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