



## Mixed start for GB in team events

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After the success of the singles competition it was a mixed start to the team event for the British team at the European Para Table Tennis Championships in Slovenia.

Highlight of the day was the performance of Kim Daybell and Ashley Facey Thompson who are through to the quarter-finals of men's class 10 after topping their group. There were also wins for David Wetherill, Paul Karabardak and Martin Perry in men's class 6 and Aaron McKibbin, Ross Wilson and Billy Shilton in men's class 8 but disappointment for Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton who lost both their opening matches in women's class 4-5.

Paralympic champion Rob Davies and his fellow Welshmen Paul Davies and Tom Matthews have been denied the opportunity to defend their men's class 1 European team title by the withdrawal of Hungary, as a minimum of four teams is required and with only three remaining the class was cancelled.

### Men's class 10

Daybell and Facey Thompson started their team event with a 2-0 win against Latvia, taking the doubles 3-0 before Daybell secured the tie with a 3-0 win against Aleksandrs Sinica.

In their second match against France, after dropping the first set they came back to win the doubles 3-1. Daybell won the first set against world No 4 Mateo Boheas and then held his nerve to take a crucial second set 14-12 having led 10-5.

The 20-year-old Frenchman came back to win the third but Daybell is in great form at these championships and recovered from 4-0 down to win the fourth 11-7 and take the match 3-1. The 2-0 win against France means that Daybell and Facey Thompson go through to the quarter-finals as group winners.

### Men's class 8

Rio team bronze medallists McKibbin and Wilson were comfortable winners against Norway, starting with a 3-0

win in the doubles and taking the tie 2-0 after Wilson beat Pablo Jacobsen in three sets 3, 4 and 5.

Against the London 2012 Paralympic champions Poland, Wilson and McKibbin lost the doubles 3-0 and 18-year-old Billy Shilton found the Rio singles bronze medallist Piotr Grudzien just too strong in the first singles, losing in three close sets. The British trio will have to wait for the result of Poland's match against Norway today to see if they will progress to the quarter-finals on Tuesday.

"I felt that I played well," said Shilton. "It was just a few points at the end of each set that cost me – I think when I look back on it later I'll be quite pleased with how I played. It is massive for me to be here in this environment when we've got two really strong players on the team so I'm benefiting a lot from it."

#### **Men's class 6**

After three tough matches in the singles, silver medallist Wetherill was back in action in the team event against Russia and after combining with Karabardak to win the doubles 3-0 he secured the tie for his team by beating Alexander Esaulov 3-0. The 27 year old from Torpoint was happy to win both matches 3-0.

"That was quite key, to be honest," said Wetherill. "I think the team event will be less intense, not in terms of winning matches but in terms of the schedule. We've got a good team where we can rely on three players but it was good to get it over and done with relatively quickly. We could have played better; we played well – we did enough and that was perfect really. Perfect 3-0, 3-0."

The trio play their second group match today against Greece.

#### **Women's class 4-5**

Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton won a team bronze in the 2015 European Championships but lost their opening match 2-1 to Slovenia. After a slow start the GB pair combined well to win the doubles 3-0 but Barbara Meglic levelled the tie for Slovenia with a 3-0 win against Sue Gilroy, who had beaten Meglic by the same score in the singles competition.

That left 18-year-old Shackleton needing to win the deciding singles but the former European team gold medallist Andreja Dolinar used all her experience and the enthusiastic support of the home crowd to win the match 3-1.

In their second match against Russia, Gilroy and Shackleton lost the doubles 3-0 but Gilroy levelled the tie with a battling 3-0 win against Aleksandra Vasileva. Once again Shackleton had to win the deciding match and although she started well against Nadejda Pushpasheva, the former class 2 European champion proved too experienced and came back to win 3-1.

"I definitely felt a lot of pressure in that last match," said Shackleton. "I think for me it is just going to be a learning curve of how to manage that situation and even though it is a pressure situation to make sure that I am enjoying the match as well and not necessarily putting myself under so much pressure that I don't allow myself to play to my full potential."

"We can both play a lot better," said Gilroy. "We normally never lose the singles against Slovenia and then obviously with the second match against the Russians she (Pushpasheva) has a lot more experience than Megan. We need to do a lot more work on our doubles – that is key. A disappointing day but we need to come back fighting."

Gilroy and Shackleton have a day to regroup tomorrow before they play their final two matches on the round-robin event against Germany on Tuesday and Serbia on Wednesday.

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