



Daybell delight as medal is guaranteed

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Kim Daybell has come so close to winning a major medal, losing in 12 quarter-finals, but it proved to be lucky 13 as he and Ashley Facey Thompson put up a brilliant performance to beat the world team silver medallists Russia 2-1 to reach the semi-finals of men's class 10 team at the European Para Table Tennis Championships in Lasko, Slovenia.

On a good day for the British team Paul Karabardak, David Wetherill and Martin Perry also reached the semi-finals of men's class 6.

After topping their group Daybell and Facey Thompson were unlucky to be drawn against the experienced Russian team of Pavel Lukyanov and Iurii Nozdrunov but they played superbly to win the vital opening doubles match 14-12 in the fourth.

Facey Thompson fought hard against Nozdrunov but the world No 3 had just too much experience for the 22-year-old Londoner and levelled the tie with a 3-1 win in the first singles.

That left Daybell to play the deciding singles against Lukyanov and he made a great start taking the first set 11-5 before the Russian came back to edge the second 12-10.

Daybell's spectacular defence can so often frustrate opponents and so it proved in the third set. The Russian coach called time out with Lukyanov leading 10-9 but Daybell levelled at 10-10 and then hung on tenaciously, saving several game points before clinching the set 14-12. It proved to be the pivotal point in the match as the 25-year-old Leeds University medical student ran away with the fourth set 11-1 for an emotional win.

📷 [#YouShallNotPass pic.twitter.com/lcFNwU6uuv](https://pic.twitter.com/lcFNwU6uuv)

— David Wetherill (@Wetherill89) [October 2, 2017](#)

Daybell admitted:

The doubles was massively important. We've played better here than we have ever played before – really working well together – and it goes to show that if you do win that one you really put yourself in with a massive shot.

They were the number three seeds and we were unlucky to draw them so it was a really nice way to win.

The third set against Lukyanov was a difficult set; it wasn't pretty and I think we were both quite nervous and I just had to find a way to crawl over the line and it was nice to be able to come through.

I've been part of a lot of quarter finals and it has been a real hard struggle. Class 10 is such a tough class but it means even more to win it in team because Ash and me have been trying for a long time to win a medal together and I think when you share something like that it just makes it all the better.

Facey Thompson is also assured of his first major medal and the class 9 player is starting to fulfil his potential since moving to Sheffield to train full time with the British squad in the summer.

Facey Thompson said:

We played very good doubles against France and Russia, better than we have ever played together. Training full time has improved me a lot as a player and to be with Kim and to feel that we have an equal partnership now is great.

I felt really good against Nozdrunov and was buzzing from the doubles. I tried my hardest but he came through at the end with quality and experience but I'm happy.

Words can't describe how it feels to win a major medal – we have been close four times but we've worked hard and the outcome is at least a bronze so I'm really happy.

Daybell and Facey Thompson will face Spain in the semi-finals today.

Paul Karabardak and David Wetherill came through their final group match in men's class 6 against Greece, using their experience to good effect in the doubles to win 3-0 before Wetherill overcame a spirited challenge from Mario Chatzikyriakos in the first singles 3-1 after dropping the first set.

Wetherill said:

It was one of those matches where we just needed to get the job done and we managed to do that. Paul and me have just been analysing how much risk we need to take and doing enough to make sure we get the win.

But if we get put under a bit more pressure we know we can up it several levels so we have that confidence in each other.

I think today we played really clever and we did nothing apart from place the ball in the right places so I am very pleased with that.

The duo and team-mate Martin Perry will play Israel today for a place in Wednesday's final.

In the last round of group matches in men's class 8 Poland beat Norway to win their group which meant that the British team of Aaron McKibbin, Ross Wilson and Billy Shilton, who did not play on Monday, took second place and will progress to the quarter-finals, where they will face France.

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