

EUROPEAN MASTERS GAMES REPORT

A group of eight veteran taekwondo players from all over the UK together with Team GB Coach Master Pete Hankin from Liverpool Taekwondo Academy, travelled to Italy to represent Team GB at the European Masters Games. The Games were held in the beach resort of Lignano from 10th to 20th with the taekwondo event contended over 2 days – 18th & 19th Sept.

There were over 4000 athletes, all aged over 35, from 61 countries, competing in 21 different sports at various venues around the resort.

The taekwondo poomsae categories were played out on day 1 with Master David Bailey from Central Taekwondo Academy Scotland flying the flag for the UK in the 41-50 division. There were 9 competitors and after all had performed Pyongwon and Sipjin the player from Sweden's national team came out on top. Germany took the silver medal and Master Bailey achieved Team GB's 1st podium position with a very creditable bronze medal.



Day 2 saw the kyorugi competition get underway with Olympic weight groups split by age – 35 to 45 years and over 46s.

First up for Team GB was 38 year old John Lockwood from Pulse Taekwondo Huddersfield in the -68kg under 45 division. John was 3-2 down to Italy with 10 seconds left when he threw a superb 3 point axe kick which saw him progress to the semi finals. He later narrowly missed out against a top class Spanish player but came away with a bronze medal.

Next up was Matthew Hobbs, 35 from AWTC, Leatherhead, in the -80kg category. In his first match he cruised passed a Spanish opponent by 10 points to 4. He was 2 points ahead in his quarter final match against Italy with only 7 seconds left on the clock, when his opponent's coach used his video reply card to score a disputed head shot. A cruel way to exit the competition after a great performance.

Alex Barter, 39 from Spitfire Taekwondo in Southampton, was one of 3 GB players in the +80kg category. He outclassed his first opponent with a fine display of high kicking and the match concluded early with a 12 point gap. He started his quarter final match against Germany in the same vein scoring a superb spinning head shot early on to take a 4-1 lead. With seconds remaining he conceded a head shot which took the game to golden point. Unfortunately, a scuffed shot from the German registered on the PSS and Alex missed out on picking up a medal.

On the other side of the draw Mark Backhouse, 44 from Black Widow Taekwondo, Wakefield, cruised through his quarter final match against Norway with a convincing 6-0 win. In a close fought semi final he lost 2-1 to Germany and had to settle for a bronze medal.

The 3rd GB player in the category was Stuart Wright from Cumbrae Taekwondo in Scotland. Stuart, 35, scored a peach of a spinning head shot to win his quarter final 6-2 against Italy. He benefited from team mate Alex Barter's earlier head shot as his semi final opponent had to withdraw with a suspected broken jaw! This saw Stuart play the final against Mark Backhouse's victor from Germany. It was a hard fought clash but nothing was registering on the Daedo system. One big punch from the German was enough to take the match 1-0 and Stuart came away with a hard earned silver medal.

David Bailey, competing in the over 46 -68kg division, was attempting to add to his bronze medal from the previous day. The draw pitted him against Raphael Marcione in a quarter final game. Marcione from Italy was a big name on the WTF competition circuit 30 years ago. He was 3 times European Champion (1978, 80 & 84) and World Silver Medallist 1982. Bailey fell behind early on but began to make up ground in the second round. Unfortunately, with matches being only one minute rounds he ran out of time and had to bow out, losing narrowly by 5 points to 3.

Mark Moores, 35 from NTC Nottingham, had dieted and trained hard to get back to his old fighting weight of 58kg. He found himself in a straight final against another former Italian national team player. Moores came out on top of some lightning fast exchanges but the PSS favoured the Italian. Another silver medal in the bag for Team GB.

The only female player on the team was Jo-Anne Nash, 38 from Liverpool TKD Academy. Jo-Anne was awarded the gold medal in the -67kg division as there were no other athletes entered, becoming Team GB's only European Masters Games Champion! She was then moved into the +67kg division where she really had to earn her medal. She overcame a significant weight disadvantage in a semi final against Germany and took the match by 3 points to nil. In the final against a Swedish opponent the gap in weight was even greater with Jo-Anne giving away more than 20kgs. Despite this the Liverpool girl worked hard to come back from 1-0 down to take a 2-1 lead with only seconds to go. A late equaliser from the Swede followed by a second kyongho for Jo-Anne in the last second meant she went down 3-2. However, it was a tremendous performance worthy of an EMG Champion!



Team GB Coach, Pete Hankin said “Coming away from such a high profile European event with 1 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals is a fantastic result for Team GB. The team gelled really well and all performed with 100% effort. I was proud to lead the first ever GB Team to compete at a Masters Games and I’m sure the future for GB’s veteran athletes will produce many more international successes. We now look forward to the World Masters Games in Torino in August 2013”.