

BRITISH PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION

Press Information

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Paralympic judo players to battle it out at British Champs

Britain's visually impaired judo players will be out to impress at what is scheduled to be the last major event before the squad for the Athens 2004 Paralympic Games is selected.

The battle for places at the Paralympic Games will reach a climax at the British Senior Open Championships for Visually Impaired Men and Women on Saturday (17th April).

The men's under-66kg weight is likely to be one of the most keenly contested categories, with three strong British contenders battling for domination.

Experienced campaigner Darren Kail, seventh in the division at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games and seventh again at the International Blind Sports Association Championships (IBSA) in Canada last year, will battle it out against Brighton's Ben Quilter and Cardiff's Darren Harris for supremacy in a category that is also likely to feature some decent opposition from France and Germany.

The championships are also an opportunity for three times Paralympic Games gold medallist Simon Jackson to prove he is on course for another gold at Athens. Jackson struck gold at Seoul in 1988, Barcelona in 1992 and at Atlanta in 1996. He was hotly tipped to make it four in a row at Sydney 2000, but came away with bronze.

He contests the under-73kg division on Saturday - one weight category down from the division he contested at Sydney. He showed he is still among the best in the world by taking silver at under-73kg at the IBSA Championships last year.

Wales' Maxine Ingram aims to reinforce her position as frontrunner to become the first British woman judo player to compete at the Paralympic Games. Women's judo makes its Paralympic Games debut at Athens and the 23-year-old Welsh player proved her mettle with a fifth place in the under-63kg division at the 2003 IBSA Championships in Quebec.

More than 50 visually impaired judo players, including some from Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Spain and Sweden will compete in the championships, making it the biggest yet staged.

The competition is being held as part of the British Open Championships for able-bodied judo players and takes place at Burgess Hill in West Sussex.

Judo takes place on Saturday and Sunday, with the visually impaired categories taking place on Saturday, beginning at 2pm.

For further information contact: The British Paralympic Association's Press Office at Matchtight Ltd on (01225) 383518 or by email at comms@matchtight.co.uk, or see the BPA website at www.paralympics.org.uk