



England begin with victories at World Team Championships

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England Leopards men and women got their World Team Championships campaign off to a winning start today in Sweden, each with 3-0 successes.

The men began their quest to repeat their 2016 World Team Championships bronze medals with a 3-0 triumph over Belarus.

Ranked No 12 in the world team list, the England squad is made up of Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford, Sam Walker, David McBeath and Tom Jarvis.

Drinkhall got the team off to a winning start by beating Pavel Platonov 3-2.

He took the first game quickly with a 11-2 win, but Platonov then fought back taking the next two games 12-10. Drinkhall equalled the score in the fourth, leaving it all down to the final game. He was leading 10-8, but lost two match points (10-10). He then saved a Platonov match point before he took his own third chance to win 13-11.

Pitchford (World No 65) then faced 42-year-old former World No 1 and six-time Olympian Vladimir Samsonov. Liam took the first two games (11-7, 11-9), before Samsonov pulled back and the pair faced a point-by-point battle, with Samsonov eventually winning both (13-11, 12-10). With victory hanging on the last game, Pitchford pulled out all the stops to win 11-6 and take the match 3-2.

Speaking afterwards he said: "It was a tough match. I think Paul set the tone for the game really. It gave me a lot of confidence after he won...

"I think he [Samsonov] was bit shocked at how well I was playing. 2-0 match point. I didn't do a lot wrong. He changed some of his tactics and came back into the match, but I didn't panic. I kept calm and I had a good start in the fifth set and never let up.

“It was an important win for the team and great to get a 3-0 start.”

Sam Walker was up next against Aliaksandr Khanim, where he sealed the victory by winning 3-1 (11-8, 11-8, 7-11, 11-8).

Tomorrow is set to be England men’s toughest day of the group stage as they face sixth-ranked Chinese Taipei at 9am, followed at 6pm by world No 3 team Japan.

Meanwhile, England’s women – who are in the second division – claimed victory over the Dominican Republic.

The trio of Tin-Tin Ho, Maria Tsaptsinos and Denise Payet were on duty following Kelly Sibley’s retirement, and it was Tsaptsinos who led off.

The 20-year-old was up against the Dominican Republic’s No 1 Eva Brito, and she kicked off the team’s winning streak clinching it in three straight (12-10, 12-10, 11-5).

Next up was Ho who took on Esmerlyn Castro, winning 3-1 (11-9, 6-11, 11-6, 11-8).

The final win came from Payet on her debut performance at the event. The World No 631 played against World No 305 Yasiris Ortiz, and won the final tie 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 7,11, 11-4) to complete victory.

The trio return tomorrow (Monday) when they take on Switzerland at 3pm.

Results

Women’s Division 2:

Group H

Maria Tsaptsinos bt Eva Brito (DOM) 3-0 (12-10, 12-10, 11-5)

Tin-Tin Ho bt Esmerlyn Castro (DOM) 3-1 (11-9, 6-11, 11-6, 11-8)

Denise Payet bt Yasiris Ortiz (DOM) 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-4)

Men’s Championship Division

Group C

Paul Drinkhall bt Pavel Platonov (BLR) 3-2 (11-2, 10-12, 10-12, 11-9, 13-11)

Liam Pitchford bt Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) 3-2 (11-7, 11-9, 11-13, 10-12, 11-6)

Samuel Walker bt Aliaksandr Khanim (BLR) 3-1 (11-8, 11-8, 7-11, 11-8)

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