



Pitchford turns it on in China

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Liam Pitchford is into the main draw of the high-class China Open in Shenzhen, defeating two higher-ranked players in the preliminary rounds today.

Having seen off Ma Jinbao of the USA, ranked at a lowly 717, in the first preliminary round, the quality stepped up in the second match when he faced Sweden's world No 20 Mattias Karlsson.

The pair had met in the quarter-finals of the World Team Championships, when Karlsson won 11-9 in the fifth to help his country to a 3-0 victory. This time Pitchford exacted a measure of revenge, recovering from losing the first game 11-3 to open up a 3-1 lead and go on to win 4-2.

The third preliminary round – with 32 players bidding to join the elite in the main last 32 – saw Pitchford up against Austria's world No 48 Stefan Fegerl, and it was another impressive win for the Chesterfield man, converting a 3-0 lead into a 4-1 victory.

All the top 16 players in the world are present apart from the injured Dimitrij Ovtcharov, and Pitchford's opponent in the last 32 will be Hugo Calderano. The Brazilian is currently ranked No 11 in the world, but Pitchford won their last meeting at the Team World Cup in London 3-0 (11-4, 11-6, 11-6).

In the doubles, Pitchford is playing alongside Lubomir Pistej of Slovakia and is also into the main draw. Karlsson was again on the receiving end as, partnering namesake Kristian, the Swedish pair were defeated 3-1. Pitchford & Pistej will face Japan's Masataka Morizono & Yuya Oshima in the last 16.

Results

Men's Singles

First preliminary round

Liam Pitchford bt Ma Jinbao (USA) 4-1 (12-10, 11-3, 11-6, 3-11, 11-4)

Second preliminary round

Pitchford bt Mattias Karlsson (SWE) 4-2 (3-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-7, 7-11, 11-4)

Third preliminary round

Pitchford bt Stefan Fegerl (AUT) 4-1 (11-9, 11-7, 11-6, 3-11, 11-4)

Men's Doubles

Preliminary round

Pitchford & Lubomir Pistej (SVK) bt Mattias Karlsson & Kristian Karlsson (SWE) 3-1 (2-11, 11-8, 14-12, 11-6)

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