



Liam and Paul land plum draws in Bulgaria

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Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall have landed exciting draws in the last 32 of the Bulgaria Open.

Drinkhall faces top seed Dimitrij Ovtcharov of Germany, while Pitchford will have a crack at China's Ma Long, seeded third.

They have met before, Drinkhall notably defeating Ovtcharov on his way to the final of the Russian Open in 2014, while Pitchford took the first game against Ma Long in the Olympic Games team quarter-final in Rio in 2016.

Drinkhall is first on at 12.40pm UK time on Table 1, while Pitchford is on at 5pm, also on Table 1. Both matches will be streamed live on the ITTF website.

The English pair reached main draw after topping their groups and then coming through a preliminary round.

Drinkhall lost the first game against Mehdi Bouloussa but came back to win the next four with relative ease to top Group 8. Pitchford was slightly more troubled by Benjamin Brossier, who closed from 3-0 down to 3-2, but the Englishman completed a 4-2 victory to top Group 1.

However, David McBeath went out as he was beaten in five games by world No 79 Pavel Sirucek in Group 14.

Pitchford was first into the main draw thanks to a 4-1 victory over Anders Lind of Denmark, world ranked 117. Drinkhall followed with a 4-2 win over Hunor Szocs of Romania, ranked at 101.

Pitchford & Drinkhall also combined to reach the last 16 of the doubles with a routine 3-0 victory over Paraguay's Marcelo Aguirre & Thiago Monteiro of Brazil. They will face Swedish duo Par Gerell & Mattias Falck at 9.20am UK time on Thursday, with the match streamed live on Table 2.

Results

Men's Singles

Qualifying Group 1

Liam Pitchford bt Benjamin Brossier (FRA) 4-2 (11-8, 11-8, 11-2, 9-11, 7-11, 12-10)

Group 8

Paul Drinkhall bt Mehdi Bouloussa (FRA) 4-1 (7-11, 11-4, 11-7, 11-8, 11-6)

Group 14

Pavel Sirucek (CZE) bt David McBeath 4-1 (6-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-9, 11-5)

Preliminary Round 2

Liam Pitchford bt Anders Lind (DEN) 4-1 (11-8, 12-10, 12-14, 11-9, 11-4)

Paul Drinkhall bt Hunor Szocs (ROU) 4-2 (11-13, 11-7, 13-11, 14-12, 8-11, 11-5)

Men's Doubles

Preliminary round 2

Pitchford & Drinkhall bt Marcelo Aguirre (PAR) & Thiago Monteiro (BRA) 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-8)

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