Liam chopped down by Ma Te

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Liam Pitchford's run at the Bulgaria Open was ended in the last 16 by Chinese defender Ma Te today.

Fresh from his momentous defeat of world and Olympic champion Ma Long yesterday, Pitchford faced an entirely different challenge against a 24-year-old opponent currently ranked at 448 but who has been much higher.

The Chinese player started strongly and won the first three games, each one for the loss of seven points, befoer Pitchford got himself on the board by an 11-8 margin in the fourth. But any hopes of a comeback were snuffed out as Ma won the fifth, yet again to seven, and went through to the quarter-finals, where he will meet Daniel Habesohn of Austria.

Earlier, Pitchford & Paul Drinkhall were edged out of a place in the men's doubles final in a dramatic deciding game. They pushed top seeds Masataka Morizono & Yuya Oshima of Japan all the way, closing from 2-0 down to take it to a fifth and seeing their opponents save two match points before taking their own first chance to seal it 13-11.

The English pair had enjoyed a briliant run to the last four, coming through the qualifying rounds and then seeing off sixth seeds Mattias Falck & Par Gerell of Sweden in the last 16 and Japanese third seeds Koki Niwa & Jin Ueda in the quarter-finals in their first match of today – click here to watch that match

Liam and Paul in action in the semi-final (ITTF picture)

Results

Men's Singles
Round of 16
Ma Te (CHN) bt Liam Pitchford 4-1 (11-7, 11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 11-7)

Men's Doubles
Quarter-finals
Pitchford & Drinkhall bt Koki Niwa & Jin Ueda (JPN) 3-1 (11-3, 5-11, 11-8, 11-6)

Semi-finals
Masataka Morizono & Yuya Oshima (JPN) bt Pitchford & Drinkhall 3-2 (11-5, 12-10, 8-11, 10-12, 13-11)

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