



Pitchford to face Gauzy in Top 16

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Liam Pitchford first faces Simon Gauzy as he goes up against the top players in Europe this weekend, aiming to reinforce his position as one of the continent's best players.

Pitchford is seeded fourth for the Europe Top 16 in Montreux – the first time he has qualified for the prestigious event. He was drawn against France's Gauzy in the first round of the straight knockout event. The match is at 10.25am UK time on Saturday.

Pitchford and Gauzy, who is the ninth seed, have met in two high-profile matches which are part of England and Great Britain's recent history on the world stage.

The Englishman won their clash 3-1 (12-10, 19-21, 11-9, 11-9) in the quarter-finals of the World Team Championships in Kuala Lumpur in 2016 as England claimed that memorable bronze.

They clashed again at the Rio Olympics later that year and although Gauzy took a 3-2 (12-10, 7-11, 14-12, 8-11, 11-5) victory, his defeat to Sam Walker in the final match saw Great Britain go through to the quarter-finals.

[Don't miss your chance to watch Liam and the rest of England's top players at the PG Mutual Nationals. Click here to buy tickets](#)

Pitchford says he is relishing the chance to build on his superb 2018 form, which saw him break into the world's top 20.

"It's something I'm looking forward to and another chance to prove myself," said Pitchford, before the draw was made on Friday night.

"It's my first time playing in it, though I went there as first reserve when Paul Drinkhall was playing (in Baku in 2015), so I kind of know what to expect.

"Then again, it's a different format, it's straight knockout, so I've got to be ready straight away.

"There's eight players I can play against and I know them all pretty well. I'll focus on my game and when I know the draw, I'll do some research and prepare.

"There's no one I'm afraid of, but there are some players I don't like playing against as much as others, but we'll see how the draw goes.

"Every match is tough. It would be nice to win that first one and hopefully get some momentum going."

The event is not being streamed live but some of the action will be broadcast on Eurosport 2 on Sunday February 3 (6.45pm-8.10pm) and Monday February 4 (1pm-2pm); and on Eurosport 1 on Monday February 4 (4.45pm-5.30pm).

The full field for the men's event is: 1 Timo Boll (GER), 2 Dimitrij Ovtcharov (GER), 3 Mattias Falck (SWE), 4 Liam Pitchford (ENG), 5 Vladimir Samsonov (BLR), 6 Jonathan Groth (DEN), 7 Simon Gauzy (FRA), 8 Kristian Karlsson (SWE), 9 Marcos Freitas (POR), Emmanuel Lebesson (FRA), 11 Daniel Habesohn (AUT), 12 Tiago Apolonia (POR), 13 Kou Lei (UKR), 14 Ovidiu Ionescu (ROU), 15 Panagiotis Gionis (GRE), 16 Lionel Weber (SUI).

Women's event: 1 Sofia Polcanova (AUT), 2 Bernadette Szocs (ROU), 3 Elizabeta Samara (ROU), 4 Li Jie (NED), 5 Petrissa Solja (GER), 6 Matilda Ekholm (SWE), 7 Li Qian (POL), 8 Georgina Pota (HUN), 9 Britt Eerland (NED), 10 Polina Mikhailova (RUS), 11 Ni Xia Lian (LUX), 12 Nina Mittelham (GER), 13 Natalia Partyka (POL), 14 Hana Matelova (CZE), 15 Barbora Balazova (SVK), 16 Rachel Moret (SUI).

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