



## Pitchford to join top Japanese league

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Liam Pitchford says signing up to play in the Japanese T.League was a chance he could not turn down and he believes it will make him a better player.

The England No 1 will join Saitama when the next season gets under way in late August and will lock horns on a regular basis with some of the world's best players.

The four-team league includes all the leading Japanese players, including world top-10 ranked Tomokazu Harimoto, Koki Niwa and Jun Mizutani, plus several overseas stars.

Saitama's team this season has included Hong Kong's Wong Chun Ting (world No 8), Jeoung Youngsik (KOR, 22), Maharu Yoshimura (JPN, 26) and Tiago Apolonia (POR, 40).

Pitchford, who has been playing for Hennebont in the French League this season, was first approached late last year.

He said: "At the time I had a few offers from clubs in Europe. Saitama gave me a very good offer and I weighed everything up and decided it's a very good opportunity for me. I'm looking forward to it.

"Every match will be tough, and that's what I need before the Olympics. I think it's really going to help my development. I couldn't turn this opportunity down."

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