



Pitchford and Walker edged out in Qatar thrillers

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Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker were both beaten in deciding seventh games at the Qatar Open as they missed out on a place in the main draw by fine margins.

England No 1 Pitchford was first on court for his fourth preliminary round tie against world No 70 Tomislav Pucar of Croatia. After the first two games had been shared, Pucar moved 3-1 ahead to put one foot into the main draw.

However, Pitchford had other ideas and won the next two games on deuce to level it up. The decider went all the way and Pitchford had a match point saved, before Pucar took his chance to win it 12-10.

Walker's match with world No 41 Benedikt Duda also went the distance. Three times Walker led, but three times the German levelled, overturning a 9-7 deficit in the sixth to do so.

In the decider, it was level up to 8-8 but Walker crucially served long at 8-9 to give his opponent two match points – and he took the first of them.

[Click here to watch Walker v Duda](#)

Earlier, both Englishmen showed their resilience to pick up victories in the third preliminary round.

Pitchford never trailed against left-handed Iranian Noshad Alamiyan (WR66), but he found his opponent hard to shake off, never more so than when Alamiyan saved two match points in the sixth. However, Pitchford made no mistake when he had more match points in the decider.

[Click here to watch Pitchford v Alamiyan](#)

Walker was up against another left-hander, Marcelo Aguirre of Paraguay, and he found himself 2-0 down

against the world No 86. But Walker turned it around to win in six, taking the crucial fourth set 13-11 and moving away from there.

[Click here to watch Walker v Aguirre](#)

In the doubles, Walker & Paul Drinkhall picked up a good 3-0 win over Indian pair Kamal Achanta & Sathiyar Gnanasekaran to reach the main draw, but Pitchford, partnering Denmark's Jonathan Groth, was edged out 12-10 in a preliminary-round decider by Jakub Dyjas of Poland & Belgium's Cedric Nuytinck.

The reward for Drinkhall & Walker is a last-16 tie against Chinese pair Lin Gaoyuan and Ma Long at 9.40am UK time on Thursday. The match is on Table 1 – [click here to watch](#) live.

Results

Men's Singles

Preliminary Round 3

Liam Pitchford bt Noshad Alamiyan (IRI) 4-3 (11-6, 8-11, 11-6, 10-12, 13-11, 10-12, 11-8)

Sam Walker bt Marcelo Aguirre (PAR) 4-2 (6-11, 5-11, 11-5, 13-11, 11-5, 11-8)

Preliminary Round 4

Tomislav Pucar (CRO) bt Pitchford 4-3 (11-6, 8-11, 11-7, 11-8, 10-12, 11-13, 12-10)

Benedikt Duda (GER) bt Walker 4-3 (7-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 8-11, 12-10, 11-8)

Men's Doubles

Preliminary Round 1

Paul Drinkhall & Sam Walker bt Sharath Kamal Achanta & Sathiyar Gnanasekaran (IND) 3-0 (11-5, 12-10, 11-6)

Jakub Dyjas (POL) & Cedric Nuytinck (BEL) bt Liam Pitchford & Jonathan Groth (DEN) 3-2 (7-11, 12-10, 12-14, 11-5, 12-10)

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