



Pitch sinks Samsonov to put England into quarters

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Liam Pitchford won twice, including against the great Vladimir Samsonov, as England beat Belarus 3-1 to top their group at the European Team Championships and earn a place in the quarter-finals.

They will face Sweden in a repeat of last year's World Team Championships quarter-final in Halmstad, which [host nation Sweden won 3-0](#). The quarter-final is at noon UK time on Friday.

Pitchford beat Samsonov at this competition in 2011 – the biggest win of his career at that time – and the fact that at WR18 he is now ranked above Samsonov (WR21) and has picked up a series of high-profile scalps means the English No 1 would have gone in full of confidence.

Although he lost the first game 12-10, the signs were there that he was in good form and good heart as he saved four game points. He levelled things up in the second and when he came back from 7-10 down to take the third 12-10 either side of a Samsonov timeout, the belief was flowing.

Pitchford opened up a 7-3 lead in the fourth but saw that pegged back to 8-8, before three points in a row clinched his personal victory and the overall tie for England.

Earlier, Pitchford got the first point on the board with a 3-1 win over Pavel Platonov (WR 99), but Samsonov levelled in three against Paul Drinkhall, the Englishman (WR 94) playing well but ever quite managing to engineer an opening for himself.

Sam Walker (WR 86) against Aliaksandr Khanin (WR 134) was crucial in the 'pivot' match and Walker came out on top 3-1 to restore an England lead which Pitchford converted into victory.

Pitchford told the ETTU website: "It is always nice to beat the legend. It was really difficult, all the games were very close. I didn't let him control the game. I was very fast in rallies, attacked. The third match was very important, he (Walker) had to win that one. Coming to the table at 2-1 for me was obviously a much better

position then it was for Samsonov.”



Sam Walker on his way to victory over Aliaksandr Khanin (ITTF picture by Remy Gros)

Video

[Pitchford v Platonov](#)

[Drinkhall v Samsonov](#)

[Walker v Khanin](#)

[Pitchford v Samsonov](#)

Results

England 3 Belarus 1

Liam Pitchford bt Pavel Platonov 3-1 (11-4, 11-6, 8-11, 11-7)

Vladimir Samsonov bt Paul Drinkhall 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-7)

Sam Walker bt Aliaksandr Khanin 3-1 (11-8, 8-11, 11-7, 11-5)

Pitchford bt Samsonov 3-1 (10-12, 11-9, 12-10, 11-8)



Paul Drinkhall takes on Vladimir Samsonov (ITTF picture by Remy Gros)

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