



Pitchford ready for another crack at the Top

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Liam Pitchford believes last year's experience at the Europe Top 16 will stand him in good stead to perform better this time around in Montreux.

The England No 1 was seeded fourth this time last year but was defeated in the first round by ninth-ranked Simon Gauzy of France, who was the highest-ranked player he could have faced at that stage.

The Englishman never really got going as Gauzy won 4-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-9, 11-7), and ahead of this year's competition which starts on Saturday, Pitchford admitted: "Last time was the first time that I had played it, and it didn't go how I wanted.

"I didn't really know what to expect. I went in as fourth seed and I put a bit too much pressure on myself. That's something I can improve on. This year is a new year and I'm going to try to go out there and relax and not put any pressure on myself."

Pitchford is ranked six this year, and knows that whatever the draw on Friday night throws up, it will not be easy.

"Everyone there is a top player and they're there by their own right. It will be tough," he said. "You've got Timo Boll and Dimitrij Ovtcharov who are the favourites, but anybody there can beat anybody else. It's an exciting tournament and it's a new opportunity to prove yourself."

The full list of other qualified players in the men's competition is: Mattias Falck (SWE), Timo Boll (GER), Dimitrij Ovtcharov (GER), Simon Gauzy (FRA), Vladimir Samsonov (BLR), Kristian Karlsson (SWE), Marcos Freitas (POR), Jonathan Groth (DEN), Daniel Habesohn (AUT), Tomislav Pucar (CRO), Robert Gardos (AUT), Emmanuel Lebesson (FRA), Wang Yang (SVK), Darko Jorgic (SLO), Lionel Weber (SUI).

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