



Pitchford run ended in semi-finals

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Liam Pitchford's run at the Hungarian Open was ended in the semi-finals by Japanese teenager Yukiya Uda today.

Pitchford started strongly against his left-handed opponent, who is Japanese national champion, opening up an 8-1 lead before Uda pegged it back to 10-7 and then 10-10. Pitchford eventually took his fifth game point to win it 13-11.

The comeback theme was reversed in the second as Pitchford closed from 4-10 to 8-10, forcing Uda to take his timeout. It worked, though with the help of a dead net-cord on the next point.

The next two games were shared, both for the loss of five points, as Uda went 2-1 up and Pitchford then levelled.

Uda moved in front again in the fifth, winning it 11-6, and when he led 5-2 in the sixth, Pitchford took his timeout. The guidance of Gavin Evans seemed to have done the trick as Pitchford came back to lead 7-6.

However, that was the last point he won as Uda claimed a 4-2 (11-13, 11-8, 11-5, 5-11, 11-6, 11-7) victory. He plays compatriot and fellow teenager Tomokazu Harimoto in the final, after Harimoto beat Dimitrij Ovtcharov of Germany 4-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-4, 11-8) in the first semi-final.

[Click here to watch Pitchford v Uda on itTV](#) (registration required).

Yesterday, Pitchford turned in an immaculate performance to blow away Kristian Karlsson in four straight in the quarter-finals.

There was not much to choose between the pair on paper, with Pitchford seeded ninth and Karlsson 11th, and only five places between them in the world rankings.

But Pitchford was on top form with a display full of power and precision placement to book his last-four spot.

After taking the first game 11-9 on his second game point, Pitchford clinched a tight second, both players saving a game point before Pitchford took his second opportunity.

The third game saw the left-handed Swede open a 4-2 lead but take his time-out three points later with a one-point deficit. Despite words of wisdom from Jorgen Persson in his corner, Karlsson did not win another point as Pitchford took his streak to nine in a row to move 3-0 ahead.

Pitchford trailed 5-1 in the fourth but again had the confidence and presence to turn it around, allowing Karlsson only three more points as he closed out victory.

[Click here to watch Pitchford v Karlsson](#) on itTV (registration required).

Afterwards, Pitchford said: "I was expecting a tough match – he's one of the best players in the world – and it was 4-0 but the first two sets were really important. When I won those, it helped me to relax a bit and I felt more in control of the match."

Reaching the semi-finals equals Pitchford's best performance on the ITTF World Tour – he reached the last four in back-to-back tournaments in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria in 2018.

Results

Men's Singles

Quarter-final

Liam Pitchford bt Kristian Karlsson (SWE) 4-0 (11-9, 13-11, 11-4, 11-8)

Semi-final

Yukiya Uda (JPN) bt Pitchford 4-2 (11-13, 11-8, 11-5, 5-11, 11-6, 11-7)

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