



Liam eyes Champions League glory in Russia

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Posted On: June 01, 2020

Liam Pitchford is ready for a serious crack at Champions League glory after signing a deal with Russian club UMMC for the 2020/21 season.

His contract will run alongside his commitments in the Japanese T.League with Saitama, once elite table tennis restarts after the coronavirus shutdown.

“It’s always been a goal of mine to win the Champions League,” said Pitchford. “I [won the ETTU Cup with Hennebont](#), so the next step would be to win the Champions League – it’s the biggest thing you can win at club level.”

UMMC are based in Ekaterinburg in central Russia, about 1,800km east of Moscow. The club had reached the last four of this season’s Champions League before the competition was put on hold and later cancelled due to the pandemic.

Among Pitchford’s team-mates will be Tomislav Pucar of Croatia (WR 37) and Jonathan Groth, the world No 28 from Denmark.

Pitchford said: “I’ve known Jonathan since we were growing up. We lived together in Germany when we were younger and then when I was based in Copenhagen we were together a lot. He’s been trying to get me out to Russia for a few years and now is the right time.

“We’ve got a good young team. Obviously, there are a lot of strong teams and it’s not going to be easy, but if we play well there’s a chance of going far in the competition.

“It’s another challenge, I’m looking forward to it.”

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