



Memories of GB thriller burn bright on Olympic Day

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It was a history-making match and a thriller all the way – little wonder that Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker have chosen Great Britain versus France at Rio 2016 as their top Olympic memory!

Every match went to a deciding fifth set in a tie which lasted almost four hours and saw GB come from 2-1 down and save match points in both the fourth and fifth matches.

In the end, Walker's run of five points from 10-7 down in the final set of the final match was the key at the end of an energy-sapping, emotionally-draining encounter – and that was just for those watching on TV!

Added to Pitchford's win in the fourth match against Tristan Flore and Drinkhall's against Emmanuel Lebesson in Match 2, it put GB into a quarter-final with the all-powerful Chinese, where they landed a few blows before losing 3-0.

To celebrate Olympic Day today, we caught up with Liam and Sam and asked them to share their memories.

Liam Pitchford

After losing the doubles we were 2-1 down and had to win the last two matches to take us through to the quarter-finals.

I was up against Flore and I wasn't in my best shape and was 2-0 down, so we were on the edge of going out.

I remember saying to myself, 'this is it, this could be your last set at these Olympics', so don't leave anything on the table.

I won that set but then I was match point down in the fourth. But I saved that and I think it was 11-9 in the fifth. I just remember kissing the badge and feeling relief but elation.

Sam's match next was even more topsy-turvy. He was the underdog against Gauzy, who was about No 20 in the world at the time. They knew each other well from playing in Germany and it went to the fifth and was anyone's game.

Sam went 7-3 up or something like that but then lost seven points in a row and was 10-7 down – then suddenly it changed again and he won five points in a row. It was one extreme to the other.

When he got the win, it was massive, beating a team like France and getting a shot at China. It could have been a better draw, I guess, but it made the Olympics for us.



Sam Walker

It was my first ever match at the Olympics and the first ever for Great Britain. We were told it was the longest Olympic match in history.

I remember being 7-3 up and missing a ball, but I can't remember the points from 10-7 down particularly clearly and I can't remember much about the point where I won it.

Obviously, you never lose belief and I must have got my focus back when he was up and I tried to play point by point.

It sounds bad, but I honestly don't remember the details too much – it's just a happy memory. You remember the feeling of being 'wow, what's just happened?'

Those are the matches and moments you train for, and the reason you play. It's the best feeling in sport.

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