



I know what I need to work on, says Pitchford

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Liam Pitchford has reflected on his return to international table tennis after the long months away, as his three-tournament stay in China came to an end at the WTT Macao event.

Liam's defeat to South Korea's Jeoung Youngsik in the second round brought the curtain down on a trip which started with him topping his group to reach the main draw at the Men's World Cup, where he was beaten in a seventh game by Germany's Dimitrij Ovtcharov.

He then went out in the first round of the ITTF Finals to Hugo Calderano, before winning his debut match against Jang Woojin of South Korea at the exhibition event in Macao – the first under the new World Table Tennis banner. Then came the defeat to Jeoung.

The England No 1 feels that a little more match sharpness going into the tournaments would have translated into better results, but he says he has learned a lot about what he needs to do to up his game further.

"Overall, I don't feel I played my best table tennis, but I came in without knowing what to expect, not playing a competitive match for eight months," said Liam, who flies home tomorrow.

"It took a bit of time to get into it and I never really found my full game. That's disappointing, but I didn't expect to play my best and I have learned a lot about what I need to work on and take back to the training hall.

"Although the results didn't go how I wanted, they weren't terrible either. I had two matches that could have gone either way, against Ovtcharov and Jeoung. I was in control and let it slip a bit.

"If I'd won those then it would have been a good trip, but during those matches I lacked a little bit of match time and match nous. At the end of the day, they are players around the top 10 in the world and I had to be on it all the time – but I wasn't quite there at some moments.

"I lost a bit of confidence after the World Cup and wasn't happy with the feeling in my game, and the ITTF Finals were bad, but (coach) Gavin (Evans) and me managed to do a lot of work in the training hall leading up to the

WTT and I felt good against Jang. Against Jeoung I was a bit up and down, but I feel more confident about my game now.

"I'll have league matches and training opportunities in Japan before the next set of ITTF matches, and Champions League in Russia, so with a few more matches under my belt I'll start to feel better."

Due to technical issues, Liam's match against Jeoung was not shown live on the ITTF YouTube channel, but you can watch the full match below. There are highlights of all the matches on the [ITTF YouTube channel](#).

Liam was also impressed by the new-style WTT event. He said: "I really enjoyed it – there seemed like a lot more buzz around it and it was a lot more exciting.

"Hopefully, it's the next step for table tennis, to make it bigger worldwide. Obviously, at the first event not everything is going to be perfect, but it's about growing table tennis.

"You don't want to keep it in the stone age, that's not how sport is these days – people want to see a spectacle and it's got to be entertaining or they won't watch it.

"It's a good step in the right direction."

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