



## The WTT Star Contender Doha is back next week!

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Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall and Tin-Tin Ho are back on the WTT stage for the first time this season as they head to the WTT Star Contender Doha, which starts on September 20.

The Qatari capital is a happy hunting ground for the two men, who teamed up to reach the doubles final of the ITTF World Tour Platinum event there in 2020, [losing only to Chinese greats Xu Xin & Ma Long](#).

It was an even more memorable tournament for Pitchford, who beat Xu in the singles semi-finals to reach his first Tour final, [losing to Fan Zhendong of China](#) in six.

The last visit was not quite so happy, Pitchford going out in the first round of the WTT Contender in March this year and going on to [lose in the final of the World Olympic Qualifying Tournament](#) which followed.

Pitchford said: "I didn't have the best experience last time in Doha, but the time before was a bit better! I have fond memories of Doha and I'll never forget one of the best tournaments of my career.

"I probably wasn't in the best place to perform last time but now I'm back and hopefully can perform well."

Drinkhall believes there is no reason he and Pitchford cannot go one better and win the doubles – joining Sam Walker as the [only English winner of a doubles title on the world circuit](#) since the advent of the ITTF world tour in 1996 following his win at the lower-tier Czech Open.

He said: "I don't think me and Pitch have played doubles since then but our games groove together and we get on so well that it doesn't take us long to get back in the swing. It's definitely possible and we'll be looking to go there and challenge.

"Sam's was a great achievement. Nobody has done it before, so it's good for English table tennis and good for Sam, but I don't think it gives us any extra motivation – we've been wanting to get a title anyway, every time we

go out there.”

Drinkhall has enjoyed a break with his family since the Olympics and said: “I’m feeling good. I had a good summer with the family and a couple of holidays, which was nice. We went to stay with my parents for a few days and then to Mykonos in Greece.

“I played a bit out there, just to keep feeling the ball, but I wanted to make sure I had a break this summer because with the Commonwealth Games next summer, it might be difficult to get a break, so I wanted to make sure there wasn’t a burn-out coming.”

Like Pitchford, Drinkhall will start in the main draw of the singles and said: “I just scraped into the main draw, which is good and it gives me an extra couple of days to prepare, which is nice.

“I can watch the qualifiers and see who I could potentially play and focus on myself to get ready. The extra couple of days will really help after this summer.

“I’m not really looking at results. I just want to play matches and perform well and although the Olympics was a while ago now, I felt in really good shape there and there’s no reason I can’t continue that.”

Ho made her WTT debut at the Contender Doha event in March, going out in the third qualifying round to the higher-ranked Sarah De Nutte of Luxembourg, before going out in the second round of the Olympic qualifying tournament.

She said: “I’m feeling excited about Doha. “I think WTT is quite cool and appealing to spectators. The events are set up well and the courts always look really good. It’s very professionally run and it feels very professional – that’s good and will hopefully take our sport forward.

“I’ve got a few tournaments under my belt in the last month and I’m excited to try to get as far as I can. It would be nice to get into the main draw but it’s more about performing as well as I can.”

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