

GB men falter against World All Stars

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Posted On: November 26, 2011



Pitchford and Baggaley missed a big chance to give GB a 2-1 lead

GREAT BRITAIN MENS' TEAM LOSE CLOSELY TO WORLD ALL STARS

The Great Britain mens' team lost 3-1 to a World All Stars side at the ExCel Arena. London on Friday evening, but with a bit of luck and inspiration they could have won this close match.

Liam Pitchford, 18 (Derbyshire), the current English no.1, got Great Britain off to a good start with his 12-10, 11-5, 11-6 success over Tomas Tregler (Czech Republic). When Tregler could get into a big loop to loop rally he often won the point. However, Pitchford was better at the beginning of the rally, keeping out Tregler with a tight service and return game, and playing strong first forehand drives and follow-ups, plus first time backhand winners wide to either side of the table, causing the Czech uncertainty and making him unable to settle. Pitchford always looked on top and deserved his success.

England champion Paul Drinkhall (Cleveland), world ranked no.144, then played Omar Assar (Egypt), who is ranked just two places below him. After his excellent form against Wang Hao, Drinkhall's play was disappointing against Assar, losing 6-11, 11-8, 8-11, 7-11. He quickly lost the first game 6-11 making many errors, and although there were again some absolutely brilliant and deft shots from Drinkhall, his moments were patchy, and Assar, whilst not having Drinkhall's flair, produced many powerful winners from both wings to get the verdict.

Liam Pitchford combined with Andrew Baggaley (Buckinghamshire) to take on Tomas Tregler and Lee Sang Su (Korea) in the doubles for the World All Stars. After the British pair took the first two games and led 8-4 in the third they looked set for victory, and although their opponents came back to level at 9-9, Pitchford and Baggaley held a match point at 10-9, before Baggaley missed a crosscourt backhand loop to an open table, and they went on to lose the game 11-13. They again led 8-4 in the fourth game, and 6-4 in the fifth before suffering a 11-7, 11-8, 11-13, 8-11, 8-11 loss. Liam and Andrew appeared to blend quite well together but made too many errors when it mattered, while Tregler and Lee got stronger the longer the game and match went on.

Andrew Baggaley, world ranked 142, then had an exciting singles with Omar Assar, in which there were many open and athletic counter-topspinning rallies using the whole court, including some brilliant forehand and backhand winners from both players. At 6-6 in the fifth game, Assar's extra weight of shot began to give him the edge, Baggaley succumbing 8-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 8-11, and England losing the match.

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