

Slovenian Open Preview

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Andrew Baggaley and Liam Pitchford double up in Slovenia just as they did in November

The Slovenian Open World Tour event squad selection has been announced for the English players although, unlike the Hungarian Open which takes place one week earlier, the Slovenian Open is a private entry event for the English players.

After the Hungarian Open in Budapest (17–21st January), the Slovenian Open takes place in Velenje from 25–29th January.

There are seven English players set to take part although all are privately funded (except for Liam Pitchford who misses the Hungarian Open so gets funding for the Slovenian Open).

These two World Tour events certainly kick-off the 2012 international calendar with a bang and, because of the close nature of the current English rankings, they could prove to bring about a change as the English number ones.

There will be six English male entrants: Paul Drinkhall, Andrew Baggaley, Liam Pitchford, Darius Knight, Daniel Reed and Chris Doran while there is just one female entrant in the form of Joanna Parker.

They won't find the going easy though as many of the world's top players are attending in northern Slovenia.

China are sending a strong squad including Ma Long, Zhang Jike, Liu Shiwen and Ding Ning while there are also several other players from the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals held last November including both Under-21s winners Kim Min Seok (KOR) and Kasumi Ishikawa (JPN).

England will also have three doubles partnerships with Baggaley and Pitchford teaming up again after their Grand Finals appearance while Knight and Reed pair up once more.

Paul Drinkhall will join Ukraine's world number 142 Lei Kou but Chris Doran and Joanna Parker are still looking for partners.

Pitchford and Doran will also be entering the Under-21s tournament – hoping to emulate Knight's qualification for the Grand Finals from last season. Pitchford will be boosted by being 10th seed for the competition.

England players for Slovenian Open

Men:

Paul Drinkhall, Andrew Baggaley, Liam Pitchford, Darius Knight, Daniel Reed and Chris Doran.

Women:

Joanna Parker

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