

# European Olympic Qualifiers Preview

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This weekend Olympic hopes will be realised or dashed for 124 European hopefuls who have travelled to Luxembourg for the European Olympic Qualification Tournament.

The tournament, which begins tomorrow and will run until Sunday, whittles down the 124 players to just 22 players who can take their place at ExCeL for the start of the 2012 London Olympic Games on July 28<sup>th</sup>.

Six British players are in attendance, all with high hopes to secure their place at the first Olympic Games in England since 1958. Top of the list is the current English National Champion Paul Drinkhall, whose world ranking of 106 makes him the 20<sup>th</sup> seed for the men's event.

Alongside him will be the youth/experience combination of 18-year-old Liam Pitchford (world ranked 147) and 29-year-old Andrew Baggaley (ranked 130). While only two players are allowed to compete in the singles competition in London, all three can secure their place for the team competition by progressing here in Luxembourg.

Three British women will also be hoping to qualify this weekend when they take on their fellow European counterparts. Joanna Parker (ranked 136), Kelly Sibley (168) and Northern Ireland's Na Liu (235) will all be in action in Luxembourg's capital.

Although the players have 'nothing to lose' with Team GB being allocated three host nation places for both the men's and women's events, many of those involved have declared their wish to qualify by their own right and, more importantly, secure a singles place.

The task won't be easy. Some big names remain in the running with Bastian Steger (GER, 26), Robert Gardos (AUT, 29) and Marcos Freitas (POR, 37) the top ranked male players to avoid.

The women will also face a tough task if they are drawn against one of the big names such as Irene Ivancan (GER, 39), Matilda Ekholm (SWE, 50) or Margaryta Pesotska (UKR, 52) among others.

With such a big prize at stake though, nerves can get the better of anyone and it will be a real high-class shootout between Europe's elite over the next five days.

The Preliminary stage draw will be made at 5pm today with details announced on this page following the draw.

The ETTU will also be airing some live matches from the event so [click here](#) to witness the tournament as it unfolds.

A full list of entries can be [found here](#).

By Russell Moore

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