

# Players given final World Olympic Qualifier chance

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Six players have been given one last opportunity to secure their Olympic place when they take part in the Final World Olympic Qualification Tournament in Doha, Qatar.

After failing to secure their automatic Olympic places at the European Olympic Qualification Tournament in Luxembourg (April 11-15th), the potential Team GB athletes have been afforded one final opportunity by the British Table Tennis Federation.

Leading the charge is 22-year-old Paul Drinkhall who just this morning re-entered the top 100 in the latest world rankings after a 17 month absence. The four-times National Champion is one of the top seeds for the tournament on May 10-13th where only two male and two female players can win their place at London 2012.

Drinkhall, the world number 97, will be joined in Doha by 18-year-old Liam Pitchford and 29-year-old Andrew Baggaley in the men's competition. Pitchford, the English number 1 was also boosted by the May world rankings as he reached a new personal best of 130th. Just 12 months ago the Derbyshire youngster was 260th – exactly double his ranking at present.

Also attending are three of the four remaining women on the Olympic shortlist. English number 1 Joanna Parker and Na Liu from Northern Ireland, who both went to the European Qualification Tournament, will be hoping to secure their place this time around in Doha.

However, absent from proceedings will be the current English National Champion, Kelly Sibley, who is still recovering from a hip injury and is unable to attend. Her place will be taken by Naomi Owen from Wales who is the outside chance for a place in the Team GB squad so may have much to prove in Qatar.

The competition involves 16 qualifying groups of four players (though may contain three or six depending on entry numbers) with the top two from each group progressing to a straight knock-out tournament.

From there only the finalists from the men's and women's event will qualify for the Olympics and, for any British players who fail to reach these places, they will then have to rely on the host allocation places which will be announced by the BTTF selection panel on May 15th.

## **Final World Olympic Qualification Tournament, Doha May 10-13th**

### **Full British Player Entries:**

Men: Andrew Baggaley, Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford

Women: Joanna Parker, Naomi Owen and Na Liu

Coaches: Jia Yi Liu (Men's Head Coach) Alan Cooke (Women's Head Coach)

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