

Day one of qualifiers ends with twist

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Na Liu (244) caused the biggest shock over Carole Grundisch (87)

The Final World Olympic Qualification Tournament in Doha, Qatar began with a mix of results for the British. After great wins for Na Liu and Liam Pitchford and good starts by the rest, a shock defeat for Paul Drinkhall gave the day a bitter taste.

While both Pitchford and Liu won twice to albeit secure their place in the next round the other four players will all still have a chance of qualifying tomorrow providing they win their matches.

Pitchford became the first British player to reach the second stage after an excellent 4-2 victory over Bartosz Such (POL, 89).

Earlier Pitchford had battled past Pablo Tabachnik (ARG, 405) in a tense seven-game thriller 4-3 after he had led comfortably 3-1. However, in the end the English number one had too much for the Argentinean as he stormed the final game 11-4.

His match against Such began with a bang as Pitchford won the first point after an audacious around the table shot. From there on points were fiercely fought over during close tight-to-the-table rallies.

At 7-7 Pitchford made the move with a cross-table smash and an aggressive next point to lead 9-7 only to see himself pulled back by the Pole. After missing one game point he secured the next at 11-10 despite being forced wide on the backhand.

Game two was similarly tight as the players once more met at 7-7. In a repeat of game one, Pitchford led 9-7 before being pegged back to 9-9 and then opening up a game point at 10-9. This time he took it as Such netted early in the rally.

Amazingly for the third game in a row the players matched each other shot for shot to 7-7. And, yet again, the Englishman took a 9-7 lead. However, after opening a three-point lead for the first time in the match, he blew three game points with a succession of nets as the Polish player won 12-10 to close the gap to 2-1.

Game four saw the first time that either player 'broke free'. Pitchford stormed 9-3 ahead and though Such clawed back to 9-6, a wide shot on game point gave Pitchford a 3-1 lead after an 11-6 game.

However, the Englishman lost his focus in game five and let Such develop a three-point lead for the first time in the match at 3-0. His focus was at its lowest when he missed an easy smash for 2-6 and the Pole duly wrapped up the game 11-4 to give himself hope.

The next game would prove crucial and Pitchford did well to keep himself ahead throughout. He led 4-2, 6-3 and 9-6 where his point met a pumped first from the Derbyshire lad believing his win was close. However, Such fought back to lead 10-9 and put the match in the balance again.

Pitchford had other ideas though and, after saving two game points, he took his second match point at 13-12 to complete the first of what we hope is many big wins this weekend.

Irish girl Na Liu also secured her berth in the knock-out round after beating world number 87 Carole Grundisch in a superb performance in Doha.

The result was totally unexpected for the world number 244 but she came quick out of the blocks to secure the first game 11-8. Frequently playing fast and low to the table, she gave her French opponent all sorts of problems.

Despite Grundisch levelling at 1-1 and 2-2, Liu took another fine 11-7 game to move 3-2 ahead and, crucially, only

one away from victory. At 8-3 up in the sixth game she looked well on her way but Grundisch closed to 8-7.

Liu then had two match points at 10-8 but a backhand into the net meant she had missed her opportunity. She then had to survive two game points against her before she finally wrapped up a 14-12 game, and the match, with a final point edge.

Liu went onto beat Maryam Samet from Iran 4-0 and that result, coupled with Grundisch's loss to Katarzyna Grzybowska means she will take her place in the next round. The French girl's defeat marking a worrying day for France as both she, and Emmanuel Lebesson dropped out while Simon Gauzy's defeat to Sas Lasan means his hopes hang by a thread.

The rest of the British players will all have to win tomorrow to guarantee their progress.



Andrew Baggaley was unfortunate in defeat to Sharath Kamal Achanta

Andrew Baggaley couldn't follow up his opening win against Kirill Gerassimenko with another against Sharath Kamal Achanta. The Indian star raced 5-0 ahead in the first game before Baggaley pulled back to 8-8 with an excellent pull down the line.

However, Achanta stole the game 12-10 with a lightning-fast cross-table shot which was the feature of his display. All match there were excellent and entertaining deep, expansive rallies but, more often than not, Baggaley did not have the requisite power to surpass the Indian.

Despite leading 5-2 in the second game and 5-1 in the third, he found himself 3-0 down as Achanta upped the gears. The world number 83 duly won the match 4-0 with a powerful smash down the line but take nothing away from Baggaley who was consistent throughout and simply came up against an opponent in form.

The Buckinghamshire player will have to put the frustration behind him and beat Jan Zibrat (SLO, 215) tomorrow to maintain his campaign.

There was a shock result, however, for Paul Drinkhall in his group after a victory over Barney Reed he lost a seven-game battle with Vitaly Nekhvedovich.

He beat Reed 4-1 in his opener but his 4-3 loss to Nekhvedovich means he must still win tomorrow. With opponent Mounaim Tirselt not playing his first two fixtures it's likely Drinkhall will have to beat Romanian Constantin Cioti (132) to progress.

Similarly both Joanna Parker and Naomi Owen had victories over lower ranked players but, defeats to those ranked above them. Parker beat Aia Mohamed but lost to Gabriela Feher while Owen beat Mahjobeh Omrani but lost to Barbora Balazova.

They now each face must-win ties to progress. Keep an eye on the [ETTA Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for regular updates and the main website for a full round-up at the end of the day's play. Also watch the action live from [tables 1 and 2 on itTV](#).

[Watch Liam Pitchford versus Bartosz Such here](#)

[Watch Liu Na versus Carole Grundisch here](#)

[Watch Andrew Baggaley versus Sharath Kamal Achanta here](#)

Results:

Men's Singles

Group 7:

Andrew Baggaley bt Kirill Gerassimenko (KAZ, 561) 4-2 (11-3, 11-3, 3-11, 11-5, 7-11, 11-6)

Sharath Kamal Achanta (IND, 83) bt Andrew Baggaley 4-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-8, 11-7)

Group 10:

Liam Pitchford bt Pablo Tabachnik (ARG, 405) 4-3 (11-8, 11-3, 12-14, 11-6, 6-11, 9-11, 11-4)

Liam Pitchford bt Bartosz Such (POL, 89) 4-2 (12-10, 11-9, 10-12, 11-6, 4-11, 14-12)

Group 12:

Paul Drinkhall bt Barney Reed (USA, 1312) 4-1 (11-6, 9-11, 11-9, 11-4, 11-6)

Vitaly Nekhvedovich (BLR, 241) bt Paul Drinkhall 4-3 (7-11, 5-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-7, 10-12, 9-11)

Women's Singles

Group 6:

Na Liu bt Carole Grundisch (FRA, 87) 4-2 (11-8, 5-11, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 14-12)

Na Liu bt Maryam Samet (IRI, 737) 4-0 (12-10, 11-5, 11-2, 11-9)

Group 8:

Joanna Parker bt Aia Mohamed (QAT, 1066) 4-0 (11-2, 11-5, 11-3, 11-6)

Gabriela Feher (SRB, 93) bt Joanna Parker 4-0 (13-11, 14-12, 11-9, 11-8)

Group 12:

Barbora Balazova (SVK, 103) bt Naomi Owen 4-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-8, 11-5)

Naomi Owen bt Mahjobeh Omrani (IRI, 560) 4-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-7, 11-4)

Fixtures:

Men's Singles

Group 7:

Andrew Baggaley vs Jan Zibrat (SLO, 215)

Group 10:

Liam Pitchford vs Marcos Madrid (MEX, 217)

Group 12:

Paul Drinkhall vs Constantin Cioti (ROU, 132)

Paul Drinkhall vs Mounaim Tirselt (MAR, 370)

Women's Singles

Group 6:

Na Liu vs Katarzyna Grzybowska (POL, 117)

Group 8:

Joanna Parker vs Shamini Kumaresan (IND, 235)

Group 12:

Naomi Owen vs Yana Noskova (RUS, 105)

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