

China Open Day One Report

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Na Liu continued her excellent recent form as she began the China Open with a seven-game victory against world number 57 Iveta Vacenovska.

The Irish girl has been in the headlines in May after big victories at the Final World Qualification Tournament in Doha as well as being selected to represent Great Britain in the Olympic Games.

Liu had beaten Carole Grundisch (FRA, 87), Gabriela Feher (SRB, 93) and Katarzyna Grzybowska (POL, 117) in Qatar before adding the Czech Republic's Vacenovska to her list of recent scalps.

The match itself was a great exhibition of fast, close-to-the-table rallies with the Team GB player combining backhand pushes with aggressive forehand attacks.

The first game seemed in Vacenovska's control at both 6-3 and 7-4 up but Liu rallied to lead at 8-7 before eventually seeing the first game poised at 9-9 when she looped a topspin forehand long. However, when Vacenovska twice missed backhands wide it gifted Liu the first game 11-9.

The Czech player once again raced ahead in game two at 4-1 only for the Irish girl to fight back at 8-8. This period of play included the rally of the match for 4-2 with Liu attacking and Vacenovska defending until the Czech player countered from deep before playing twice with vicious sidespin only to eventually hit the forehand long and give Liu the point.

It mattered little in the end as the Czech player went onto win the game 11-8 and level the match 1-1.

The third game once more followed a similar pattern with Vacenovska striding 6-4 ahead before being pegged to back – this time again at 9-9. Again it was Liu who held her nerve as Vacenovska hit the net and then hit long to win 11-9.

Game four was a real turnaround. From 10-7 ahead the Czech player saw her lead vanish as Liu benefitted from both a fine edge on the end of the table and a thick net as she closed to 10-9. Three more consecutive points from Liu then sealed a dramatic 12-10 game and, importantly 3-1 lead.

However, that lead vanished as the world number 57 won the next two games 11-6 and 11-8 to level at 3-3 and force a decider. On game point in the fifth Vacenovska pumped her fist while on game point in the sixth Liu dropped her head as it seemed the tide had turned.

The start in the seventh was important but Liu fell 3-1 behind to a thin edge making it look as though the Czech player had control. At 4-1 up it seemed the case but by the change of ends Liu had forced a 5-4 lead.

At 8-5 to the GB star controversy arose as apparently Vacenovska won a tight net point but the umpires did not give it immediately. After a three minutes and 12 seconds delay the point was eventually awarded to the Czech player. However, it was the last point she won as Liu triumphed 11-6 in the end.

The other Olympic athletes in action had varying success with all three still likely to qualify.

Andrew Baggaley beat Lai Yi-Yao in a tense seven-game thriller despite trailing 3-2 at one stage. Although he then lost to Japan's Yuto Muramatsu he should still qualify in second place.

Liam Pitchford will also qualify with a win tomorrow against American Wally Green after he beat Mattias Karlsson but lost to North Korea's Kang Wi Hun. Similarly, Joanna Parker will need to beat Suzanne Dieker after losing today to Shiho Ono from Japan.

Three of those games will also be available live on itTV in the morning while the doubles competition begins for both British pairs.

[See Liu Na vs Iveta Vacenovska here](#)

[See Andrew Baggaley vs Lai Yi-Yao here](#)

[See Andrew Baggaley vs Yuto Muramatsu here](#)

[See Joanna Parker vs Shiho Ono here](#)

Results:

Men's Singles Qualifying Groups:

Group 10:

Andrew Baggaley bt Lai Yi-Yao (TPE, 614) 4-3 (8-11, 11-0, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11, 11-8, 11-9)

Yuto Muramatsu (JPN, 159) bt Andrew Baggaley 4-0 (11-2, 11-5, 11-4, 11-9)

Group 15:

Kang Wi Hun (PRK, u/r) bt Liam Pitchford 4-2 (6-11, 11-6, 10-12, 13-11, 8-11, 6-11)

Liam Pitchford bt Mattias Karlsson (SWE, 172) 4-2 (11-13, 9-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8, 11-5)

Women's Singles Qualifying Groups:

Group 2:

Na Liu bt Iveta Vacenovska (CZE, 57) 4-3 (11-9, 8-11, 11-9, 12-10, 6-11, 8-11, 11-6)

Group 12:

Shiho Ono (JPN, 97) bt Joanna Parker 4-0 (11-7, 11-3, 11-5, 11-8)

Fixtures:

Men's Singles Qualifying Groups:

Group 15:

08:45 Liam Pitchford vs Wally Green (USA, u/r)

Women's Singles Qualifying Groups:

Group 2:

06:30 Na Liu vs Mima Ito (JPN, 156) – Table 2 itTV

Group 12:

07:15 Joanna Parker vs Suzanne Dieker (NED, 515) – Table 2 itTV

Men's Doubles:

11:00 Liam Pitchford/Andrew Baggaley vs Cho Eonrae, Seo Junghwa (KOR) – Table 1 itTV

12:00 Winner of LP/AB – CE/SJ vs Seiya Kishikawa/Koki Niwa (JPN) – Table 1 itTV

Women's Doubles:

11:30 Na Liu/Joanna Parker vs Jeon Jihee/Seok Hajung (KOR)

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