

China Open ends, training begins

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None of the four players managed to overturn the odds against their highly-ranked opponents at the China Open, meaning all focus will now turn to the important pre-Olympic training camp that begins next week.

Fighting against players in the top 20 in the world was always going to be tough and with the excitement of the Olympic squad announcement and long flight to China just a few days ago, mental and physical preparation was hard to come by.

As a result the singles defeats in Shanghai were not unexpected. While Andrew Baggaley and Na Liu suffered straight-games defeats against Koki Niwa and Li Xiaoxia respectively, Liam Pitchford managed to take a game off reigning Olympic Champion Ma Lin while Joanna Parker took Kasumi Ishikawa to six games.

Parker can feel unlucky for not getting more from her match after succumbing twice to 12-10 games, which could so easily have gone the other way. As for Pitchford, his defeat to Lin ended his tournament after he had earlier lost to North Korean Pak Sin Hyok in the under-21s.

However, the real focus now is on the training camp, which the players and coaches feel is the perfect preparation for the Olympic Games.

Women's Head Coach, Alan Cooke, said: "We've got great preparation now as we're spending a month training in the best place in the world for table tennis. The players are very excited and there's an element of nerves there but they are focused on improving their table tennis."

Liam Pitchford was equally enthusiastic about the chance to train in a new environment. He said: "There are many top quality players in China so we've got three weeks of great practice. I'm looking forward to the training because it will be different techniques in a different atmosphere."

The Derbyshire youngster's doubles partner, the experienced Andrew Baggaley, is also glad to have the chance to perfect his game ahead of the return home.

He enthused: "I'm totally relaxed so my preparation can begin in China. We'll be very well prepared for the heat there and it's a good time to get sparring in China. When we come back we'll have a few weeks so we can tailor our game and try to peak at the Olympics."

Na Liu, born in the Liaoning region of Northern China, has no doubts to where she will best prepared for the Olympics.

She said: "I think this is the place we can get our best practice and try different styles – we're really focused. I think China is always good for practicing the system and the conditions."

[Watch Joanna Parker vs Kasumi Ishikawa here](#)

Results:

Men's Singles Round of 64:

Koki Niwa (JPN, 17) bt Andrew Baggaley 4-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-9, 11-6)

Ma Lin (CHN, 5) bt Liam Pitchford 4-1 (8-11, 11-3, 11-5, 11-8, 13-11)

Women's Singles Round of 64:

Li Xiaoxia (CHN, 4) bt Na Liu 4-0 (11-8, 11-1, 11-5, 11-2)

Kasumi Ishikawa (JPN, 6) bt Joanna Parker 4-2 (12-10, 11-8, 9-11, 11-4, 6-11, 12-10)

Boy's Under 21s Round of 16:

Pak Sin Hyok (PRK, u/r) bt Liam Pitchford 3-2 (11-5, 8-11, 11-8, 8-11, 11-8)

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