

Favourable draws for GB at Olympics

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: July 25, 2012



Great Britain's Olympic table tennis teams avoided the top seeds in the team draw as the GB men will face eighth seeds Portugal while the women will play another eighth seed in DPR Korea after the draw was made at ExCeL earlier.

The singles draws were also made with both Paul Drinkhall and Joanna Parker seeded for a first round entry meaning they will face one of the preliminary round winners.

Four-times National Champion Drinkhall (WR 107) will play either Ibrahim Al-Hasan (228) from Kuwait or Saheed Idowu (423) from DR Congo. Neither player is seen regularly on the international circuit but Drinkhall did play Al-Hasan five years ago when he beat him. If he wins the first round match he will face Yang Zi (54) from Singapore in the second round.

Drinkhall said: "Every match is hard here but it's a good draw and a chance to get through to the next round. I played him [Al-Hasan] five years ago at a junior tournament but it's not that relevant now.

I'm expected to win the first round in the singles on paper and then go out in the second round but I'm not going to say that's what's going to happen. Obviously there's pressure when you're expected to win but at the end of the day I'm going to take one game at a time and see how far I can get."

His partner Joanna Parker (119) also received a favourable draw in her first round fixture as she faces either Brazil's Caroline Kumahara (192) or Djibouti's Yasmin Farah (unranked). If she wins that match, Parker will play in the second round against Germany's Kristin Silbereisen (47).

With both the British men and women's teams seeded 13th for the Olympic Games, their respective draws against Portugal and DPR Korea were the best draws they could have hoped for as the top eight seeds faced the bottom eight seeds.

If the teams manage to progress through the first couple of rounds they will both also avoid the overwhelming favourites China (until the final – fingers crossed).

Andrew Baggaley said: "For me personally it's all about preparing in exactly the same way as I would for any important competition and not trying to do things differently despite the magnitude of the event. My preparations will follow the same routines that ensure I am at peak physical and mental strength to perform at my top level.

Regardless of a player's status in the game, if I am in a position where I am close to victory, I always believe I will win."

Drinkhall added: "We've got the eighth seeds so it's a good draw. Obviously they will all be strong but we've played these guys before and we know we can beat them if we all play well."

1992 and 2000 Olympian Matthew Syed explained how, with two days until the start of the tournament, focusing your mind amongst the Olympic hype may be crucial to the GB players success:

"Mental toughness will be absolutely key. It is difficult enough playing in an Olympics, where 4 years of hard graft is distilled into a single competition, but a home Olympics is even more pressurised. This is a once in a lifetime chance to play in the most important competition on earth on home soil. It will take composure, steeliness and focus."

Selected GB Draws:

Men's Singles First Round: Saturday 28th July 16:45

Paul Drinkhall (GBR, 107) vs Ibrahem Al-Hasan (KUW, 228) or Saheed Idowu (CGO, 423)

Women's Singles First Round: Saturday 28th July 14:30

Joanna Parker (GBR, 119) vs Caroline Kumahara (BRA, 192) or Yasmin Farah (DJI, unr)

Men's Team round of 16: Friday 3rd August 19:00

Team GB vs Portugal

Women's Team round of 16: Friday 3rd August 12:30

Team GB vs Korea DPR

For the Full Draws, click the links below:

[Men's Singles](#)

[Women's Singles](#)

[Men's Team](#)

[Women's Team](#)

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