

Pitchford selected for Men's World Cup

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Posted On: August 16, 2012



England's number 1 Liam Pitchford has been selected as an ITTF wildcard for the Liebherr Men's World Cup where he will join fellow Team GB Olympian Paul Drinkhall at the Echo Arena in Liverpool.

Nineteen-year-old Pitchford, who played in the Team GB Olympic Games match against Portugal, will take his place among 18 of the world's best players on 28-30th September after an incredible 12 months.

Both Pitchford and Drinkhall have played at the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals, European Championships, European and World Olympic Qualifiers, World Team Championships, the London 2012 Olympic Games and now the Men's World Cup.

The experience is giving the youngster from Chesterfield a perfect start to his career before his second season in the Bundesliga with German side TTF Liebherr Ochsenhausen.

He said: "It's a fantastic opportunity for me to play against the best players in the world and hopefully it will be the start of another good season if I can get some wins.

I am very fortunate – it's all about gaining valuable experience at the moment. I know I probably wouldn't have been playing either if they weren't being held in England, but I have the chance and I am going to do my best to take it."

Pitchford, the World Junior Championships quarter-finalist from 2011, might get the chance to face current World Champion and double Olympic gold medalist, Zhang Jike, from China who has also been invited to Merseyside.

The elite line-up also includes Jike's team-mate Xu Xin, as well as double Olympic bronze medalist Dimitrij Ovtcharov. The full invitation list (in detail below) includes stars ranging from Germany's Timo Boll and Belarus' Vladimir Samsonov to Japan's Jun Mizutani.

In fact, at the European Championships in Poland, Pitchford beat the then world number 9 Samsonov 3-2, which has given him confidence to progress from his world ranking of 274 to the current rank of 145.

Pitchford said: "Last season I beat about nine players in the top 100 or thereabouts so I know on my day my level is up there, if I can be a bit more consistent then I think by the end of the year hopefully I will be there."

He added: "I would like to play a Chinese player to see where I am and where I need to be but I would also like to play one of the European guys as I think my main chance would come against them. There are some great players playing but I have beaten three players in the top 20 so I have the belief I can do it again."

Tickets for the Liebherr Men's World Cup are still available at [this link](#).

Invitation List:

World Cup Holder & World Champion: Zhang Jike (China)

European Rep: Timo Boll (Germany)

Asian Rep: Xu Xin (China)

Latin American Rep: Thiago Monteiro (Brazil)

African Rep: Ahmed Saleh (Egypt)

Oceania Rep: William Henzell (Australia)

North American Rep: Pierre-Luc Theriault (Canada)

Host Nation Rep: Paul Drinkhall (England)

World Ranking Places:

Jun Mizutani (Japan)

Chuang Chih-Yuan (Chinese Taipei)
Dimitrij Ovtcharov (Germany)
Joo Sae Hyuk (South Korea)
Oh Sang Eun (South Korea)
Gao Ning (Singapore)
Vladimir Samsonov (Belarus)
Jiang Tianyi (Hong Kong)
Koki Niwa (Japan)
ITTF Wildcard: Liam Pitchford (England)
ITTF Wildcard: Michael Maze (Denmark)
Reserve no.1: Adrian Crisan (Romania)
Reserve no.2: Marcos Freitas (Portugal)

By Russell Moore

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