

Victory for men, defeat for women at Euros

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England's men kicked-off their Joola European Championships campaign with a win last night in Slovakia while the women fell to an expected defeat to Germany as they played their first match back in the Championship Division.

The men, hoping to get promoted back into the Championship Division, had to ensure they exorcised the demons from their disappointing 3-0 defeat to Slovakia from the 2010 World Team Table Tennis Championships.

First into the fold was 19-year-old Liam Pitchford who was facing Slovak Michal Bardon. Bardon and Pitchford had only met once before, a 4-1 victory for Bardon at the 2010 German Open, but it was the English number 1 who started the better with a confident 11-5 opening game.

The second game was a much tighter affair with Bardon in control from the start. However, despite being 10-7 up, Bardon could not seal the game against Pitchford who fought back to 10-10. A series of game points fell by the wayside for both players as the second game went deep into deuce before Bardon made the crucial break to take the game at 16-14.

Would this prove important? It didn't seem so when the youngster from Chesterfield took the third game 11-5, however, the dogged Bardon came back once more with an 11-5 game of his own to take the opening match to a decider.

Pitchford hit the change of ends at 5-2 up then, despite Bardon winning the next point, the Englishman took the next five points to all-but secure victory as he eventually sealed the 3-2 win with an 11-4 final game.

Up next for England was Paul Drinkhall against Lubomir Pistej. Drinkhall, still high on cloud nine following his Olympics, was brought down to Earth by Pistej who capitalised on the Englishman's slow starts.

In both the first and second games Drinkhall fell 7-2 behind which led to the Slovakian taking a 2-0 lead after 11-7 and 11-8 games. The third game saw a marginally better start from the 22-year-old who was only 6-3 down and, in fact, recovered to lead 7-6. However, Pistej was in no mood to give up his result as he sealed a 3-0 win with an 11-9 game.

The match, as often proves the case, turned on the third fixture between Andrew Baggaley and Samuel Novota. Baggaley was in no mood to let England's first result slip and his performance showed all the consistency the 29-year-old is renowned for as he cruised into a 2-0 lead over Novota – leading all the way through both games.

In the third game he trailed 7-4 but recovered to win it 11-8 and give England the crucial 2-1 lead.

This allowed Drinkhall, far from his best form, to seal the 3-1 victory with a win over Bardon, who again proved difficult to defeat. Drinkhall stormed the first game 11-4 but Bardon fought back to win the second 11-9. At 9-9 in the third it was the Englishman who took control with the next two points before winning the fourth game 11-7 to send the visitors home happy.

England's women had a much tougher fixture on their hands when they faced the might of Germany in Dessau-Rosslau.

Despite resting Wu Jiaduo and Irene Ivancan, the strength in depth of German table tennis is incredible as Kelly Sibley still had to open up against world number 47 Kristin Silbereisen.

Like at London 2012 when Silbereisen showed a flawless display against Joanna Parker, the German was on top

form again to wear Sibley down and win in three straight games 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-6).

Parker then had to face Zhenqi Barthel (66) and began well by stunning the favourite with a 13-11 opening game. The second game proved just as close with Barthel edging it 11-9 to level the scores. From there on the highly competent German became used to Parker's defensive chops and started imposing herself on the match – eventually taking the final two games 11-5 and 11-6 for the victory.

It then came down to Hannah Hicks to salvage something from the match when she took on Petrissa Solja (100) who is ranked over 300 places above the girl from Hampshire. Hicks did spring a surprise to win the first game 11-6 but, after leading 7-6 in the second game, Solja won five consecutive points to level the score.

As in the previous match with Parker, Solja became used to Hicks' defence and won the final two games comfortably to seal Germany's 3-0 win.

The fixtures don't get any easier for the women as they play Romania next in Hull. The Romanian's with Elizabeta Samara, Daniela Dodean and Bernadette Szocs beat Russia 3-1 last night and look set to be travelling to Yorkshire for the fixture on September 18th.

On the same day in the same venue (Hull City Hall), England's men will face the Romanian men in another important match-up. Yesterday Romania cruised past Bulgaria 3-0 with victories for Constantin Cioti, Ovidiu Ionescu and Andrei Filimon as they got their campaign off to a quick start. [Tickets are still available](#) for these matches against Romania in a big double-header in Hull.

Full Results:

Women's Championship Division:

Germany 3-0 England

Kristin Silbereisen (GER, 47) bt Kelly Sibley (ENG, 180) 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-6)

Zhenqi Barthel (GER, 66) bt Joanna Parker (ENG, 112) 3-1 (11-13, 11-9, 11-5, 11-6)

Petrissa Solja (GER, 100) bt Hannah Hicks (ENG, 489) 3-1 (6-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-3)

Men's Challenge Division:

England 3-1 Slovakia

Liam Pitchford (ENG, 145) bt Michal Bardon (SVK, 177) 3-2 (11-5, 14-16, 11-5, 5-11, 11-4)

Lubomir Pistej (SVK, 156) bt Paul Drinkhall (ENG, 83) 3-0 (11-7, 11-8, 11-9)

Andrew Baggaley (ENG, 131) bt Samuel Novota (SVK, 580) 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-8)

Paul Drinkhall (ENG, 83) bt Michal Bardon (SVK, 177) 3-1 (11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 11-7)

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