

Pitchford to lead England against Romania

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England number 1 Liam Pitchford will lead England against Romania in their Joola European Championships Qualifying match on Tuesday 18th September in Hull.

The 19-year-old from Chesterfield will assume the key role in the team following extraordinary circumstances surrounding Paul Drinkhall's European Champions League match on Friday.

SV Werder Bremen are due to play UMMC Verkhnyaya Pyshma (Ekaterinburg, RUS) on Friday 21st in Eastern Russia – just three days after both Drinkhall, and Bremen team-mates Adrian Crisan and Constantin Cioti, were scheduled to play in Hull.

However, a number of complications arose regarding the fixture related to travel arrangements and difficulties in acquiring visas for Russia. The SV Werder Bremen squad (including Drinkhall, Crisan and Cioti) catch a flight from Bremen on Wednesday at 6:10am. There they fly to Paris, then Moscow and finally Ekaterinburg – arriving at 10pm (16hrs later) before travelling to their hotel.

Despite the best efforts of the ETTA, it proved impossible to make alternative travel and visa arrangements, which would have enabled Drinkhall to play in Hull and Ekaterinburg.

Both Drinkhall and the Association are disappointed that he is unable to play in Hull and his club Werder Bremen are also very apologetic over the matter. It's a bizarre set of circumstances that mean all three players in this fixture will be unavailable – if the match had been played in Central Europe there would have been no issue.

New Head Performance Coach Nick Jarvis said: "We'll be contacting all of the clubs where English players are and also the European Table Tennis Union to ensure that this situation cannot occur in the future."

As it stands Pitchford and Andrew Baggaley will now be joined by Danny Reed in Hull on Tuesday night against the Romanians as both sides look to continue their winning start to their respective campaigns.

The England women's team for their Championship match with Romania will see 14-year-old Tin-Tin Ho make her Senior European Championships debut alongside the experienced pairing of Joanna Parker and Kelly Sibley.

Like their previous fixture against Germany, the Romanians will provide a stern test of our girls as they continue to battle in the top tier of European competition.

Confirmed England teams vs Romania

Men:

Liam Pitchford

Andrew Baggaley

Daniel Reed

Women:

Joanna Parker

Kelly Sibley

Tin-Tin Ho

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