

Liebherr Men's World Cup Preview

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The Heavens may be opening up over Merseyside this weekend but the arrival of the Liebherr Men's World Cup should brighten matters inside the Echo Arena with a few high-class encounters of biblical proportions.

This Friday will see the first day's play at the 33rd Men's World Cup as the fourth Intercontinental Cup kicks-off between Ahmed Ali Saleh (EGY), Thiago Monteiro (BRA), William Henzell (AUS) and Pierre-Luc Theriault (CAN).

The three previous winners of the Intercontinental Cup have all come from South America (Cazuo Matsumoto, Liu Song and Gustavo Tsuboi) so there's big pressure on Monteiro to continue that run.

However, favourite to progress will be the Australian Henzell who had an excellent Olympic Games where he beat Adam Pattantyus and Joao Monteiro before losing to Vladimir Samsonov in a seven-game thriller.

The winner of the IC Cup will then progress to the main draw where they will be joined by 15 other world-class athletes; including England's own Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall.

Among the stars will be the third-most experienced player in Men's World Cup history; Belarusian Vladimir Samsonov. His 14th appearance puts him behind only Jan-Ove Waldner (18) and Jean-Michel Saive (17) in the all-time list.

This year Samsonov will be looking for redemption after failing to advance through the group stages in Paris for the first time since the Men's World Cup travelled to Hangzhou (CHN) in 2004.

Close behind Samsonov in appearances are Germany's Timo Boll and Chinese Taipei's Chuang Chih-Yuan who are both registering their 11th Men's World Cup bow.

This weekend will also see six Men's World Cup debutants join the group stages with local heroes Pitchford and Drinkhall ready for judgement.

Against such a high calibre of opposition it may take a miracle for either to progress but, just maybe, this time their prayers will be answered.

One thing for sure is that there's truly only one place to be to catch the best action live and that's at the Echo Arena. [Grab your last minute tickets here](https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/liebherr-mens-world-cup-preview/) before the opportunity passes!

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