

Top seeds too good for English hopes

Author: Russell Moore

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England's pair of Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford both suffered double defeats on Friday at the Liebherr Men's World Cup as the host nation were subdued by their illustrious international opponents.

Bremen teammates subdue Drinkhall

Drinkhall lost his opening match against Chuang Chih-Yuan (TPE, 10) 4-1 and he will rue missing a chance to take a 2-1 lead in the third game.

After losing the first game 11-6, Drinkhall fought back excellently to take a 10-7 lead in the second game against his illustrious Werder Bremen teammate. He opened that three point lead with the help of the thinnest edge but he quickly saw that lead evaporate as Chuang fought back to level.

However, the English number one held his nerve to level matters with two consecutive points for a 12-10 game and 1-1 match score.

The third game was even more dramatic as the players drew level at 9-9. Drinkhall saved a game point at 10-9 before creating his own with the rally of the match from deep topspin to topspin rallies.

Unfortunately, Chuang saved the game point before he was gifted an opportunity of his own with the Englishman serving into the net. The Chinese Taipei star made no mistake and sealed the game next point as Drinkhall's net dropped long.

He was left to regret that missed opportunity as Chuang went onto dominate the final two games 11-5 and 11-4 to seal the opening victory.

Later on, the four-time National Champion lost narrowly to Adrian Crisan with three 11-9 games proving his downfall as there was nothing to choose between the Werder Bremen teammates.

In the first game he experienced the first of these 11-9 games after he saved one game point with a brilliant backhand but saw a second backhand go wide at 10-9. Drinkhall retaliated well in the second game with a hard fought 14-12 encounter where he saw four game points saved by his Romanian opponent before he could finally seal the game.

The next two sets would then prove to be heart-breaking for Drinkhall who suffered consecutive 11-9 game losses as Crisan won the crucial points in the games before racing home in the fifth game to record a 4-1 victory.

No repeat for Pitchford

The story was similar for 19-year-old Liam Pitchford who found the experienced Vladimir Samsonov in no mood to suffer a repeat of his defeat at the European Championships in 2011.

The three-time World Cup Champion was in trouble early on against the youngster at 5-1 down in the opening game, but he quickly recovered his form to take the game 11-6 in an assertion of his power.

This was further emphasized when he won the second game 11-3 to clear his mind of any worries of a repeat performance from Poland. Credit to Pitchford, who fought back in the third game to open up two game points, but Samsonov again showed his mettle to steal the game away 12-10.

That was as close as Pitchford could get with the final game going to Samsonov 11-6 in a professional

performance from the former world number 1.

The youngsters would also receive no favours against Marcos Freitas, the first player from Portugal ever to play in the Men's World Cup.

Freitas stormed the first game 11-2 but found himself thoroughly tested by the Chesterfield-born player in the second game, which narrowly went to Freitas 11-9. Pitchford wasn't done there though as he pulled a game back 11-7 in the third with a rapid backhand on his first game point.

Unfortunately, Freitas recovered his form to win a hotly contested fourth game 11-8 before sealing the win with an 11-5 fifth game.

The English pair will now have to face the top two seeds from China; Ma Long and Xu Xin respectively on Saturday before their World Cup campaigns come to a close at the Echo Arena.

Selected English World Cup Results:

Chuang Chih-Yuan bt Paul Drinkhall 4-1 (11-6, 10-12, 13-11, 11-5, 11-4)

Vladimir Samsonov bt Liam Pitchford 4-0 (11-6, 11-3, 12-10, 11-6)

Adrian Crisan bt Paul Drinkhall 4-1 (11-9, 12-14, 11-9, 11-9, 11-5)

Marcos Freitas bt Liam Pitchford 4-1 (11-2, 11-9, 7-11, 11-8, 11-5)

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