

French double for Pitchford in Denmark

Author: **Paul Stimpson**

Posted On: **October 18, 2012**



Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall won a dramatic last-gasp doubles decider against Frenchmen Adrien Mattenet and Emmanuel Lebesson late on day two of the 2012 European Championships to reach the last 16.

The English pair can now look forward to the task of facing the coveted new pairing of Dimitrij Ovtcharov (GER) and Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) for an improbable quarter-final place.

Drinkhall and Pitchford worked hard from losing the opening game to take a 2-1 lead against their seeded French opponents, only to see a dominant 6-0 lead in the fourth game result in an 11-9 loss as the match headed to a deciding fifth game.

When a similar lead in the fifth (7-3) was surrendered to 7-8 down it seemed as though lightning would strike twice. However, the gallant Englishmen had other ideas as they forced two match points at 10-8.

Once more, though, this was not the end of the matter as their French opponents hit back. First to level at 10-10, then to lead both 11-10 and 12-11. After Drinkhall and Pitchford saved those two match points and then took their own for 14-12, a truly outstanding win was sealed in Denmark.

This came after both men learnt their draw for the first round of the Men's Singles with Pitchford beating another Frenchman in Quentin Robinot to join the seeded English number 1 in the main draw.

The 19-year-old avenged his 2011 Junior World Championship quarter-final defeat with a 3-2 victory over Robinot to arrange a meeting with Austria's Robert Gardos (32) in the first round.

Meanwhile, Drinkhall will face Yaroslav Zhmudenko (UKR, 103) in his first round. The last time the pair met the Ukrainian was victorious 4-3 in the World Olympic Qualification Tournament in Doha, QAT.

Unfortunately, Darius Knight will not be joining them as he was not one of the chosen 'lucky losers' to finish second in their groups – this after he lost a dramatic five-game thriller with Par Gerell (SWE, 94) to decide the group.

Knight will rue a missed opportunity at 9-9 in the fourth game to potentially open up a match point.

Both Knight and partner Danny Reed were then knocked out of the doubles competition by host-nation pairing Jonathan Groth and Kaspar Sternberg.



Reed, who sealed an international best result with victory over Patrick Franziska (GER, 87), was eliminated from his group via the countback method – the same method that meant Andrew Baggaley's 3-0 defeat to Li Ahmet (TUR) was terminal for his hopes as England's hopes were extinguished.

However, one player in unstoppable form is Joanna Parker who also reached the first round of the women's singles after comprehensively winning all of her group games 3-0.

While colleagues Kelly Sibley and Tin-Tin Ho fell at the first stage, Parker beat Nicole Trosman (ISR) in straight-games to set up a meeting with Tetyana Bilenko (UKR, 103) who she will have high hopes of beating on Friday.

Friday's Draws:

Men's Singles:

Paul Drinkhall vs Yaroslav Zhmudenko (UKR, 103) 13:00

Liam Pitchford vs Robert Gardos (AUT, 32) 13:45

Women's Singles:

Joanna Parker vs Tetyana Bilenko (UKR, 103) 10:00

Men's Doubles:

Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford vs Dimitrij Ovtcharov (GER)/Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) 19:00

2012 Joola European Championships Results (English)

Men's Singles:

Group 1:

Daniel Reed bt Linor Citaku 3-0 (11-5, 11-1, 11-8)

Daniel Reed bt Patrick Franziska 3-2 (11-8, 4-11, 11-9, 8-11, 11-7)

Group 4:

Par Gerell (SWE) bt Darius Knight 3-2 (11-9, 7-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-7)

Darius Knight bt Magnuss Magnusson (ISL) 3-1 (8-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-5)

Group 24:

Andrew Baggaley bt Konrad Kulpa (POL) 3-2 (7-11, 5-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-9)

Li Ahmet (TUR) bt Andrew Baggaley 3-0 (11-7, 11-5, 11-6)

Group 25:

Liam Pitchford bt Vailot Vainula (EST) 3-0 (11-3, 11-3, 11-5)

Liam Pitchford bt Quentin Robinot (FRA) 3-2 (11-6, 8-11, 11-7, 3-11, 11-4)

Women's Singles:

Group 3:

Joanna Parker bt Nicole Trosman (ISR) 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-7)

Group 18:

Ivanka Angelova (BUL) bt Tin-Tin Ho 3-1 (11-9, 13-11, 8-11, 12-10)

Camelia Postoaca (ROU) bt Tin-Tin Ho 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-7)

Group 19:

Magdalena Szczerkowska (POL) bt Kelly Sibley 3-1 (11-5, 11-5, 12-14, 12-10)

Kelly Sibley bt Natali Ruvman (ISR) walkover

Men's Doubles:

Jonathan Groth/Kaspar Sternberg (DEN) bt Darius Knight/Daniel Reed 3-0 (11-4, 11-8, 11-7)

Alexey Liventsov/Mikhail Paykov (RUS) bt Andre Silva (POR)/Andrew Baggaley 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-8)

Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford bt Emmanuel Lebesson/Adrien Mattenet (FRA) 3-2 (9-11, 11-6, 11-7, 9-11, 14-12)

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