

England's women defeated in Russia

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So close but yet so far for Kelly Sibley

England's women succumbed to another 2013 Joola European Championships Qualification defeat in the Championship Division as they were beaten in Eastern Europe by Russia.

The English women, yet to register a win in the top tier of European competition since their promotion in Poland 2011, were always up against it when battling their higher ranked opponents.

In the day's opening fixture England no. 1 Joanna Parker found herself up against the Russian no. 1, Anna Tikhomirova (WR 55), who quickly made her presence felt in St. Petersburg.

Ranked over 50 places above Parker, her steady attacking play wore down the English defender with increasing confidence as the Russian won in straight games 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-2).

Matters were almost levelled when Kelly Sibley took to the table, however, as she started confidently against Polina Mikhailova (117). Despite falling 1-0 behind to an 11-9 game, she moved 2-1 ahead with a confident 11-6 game and a nerve-wracking third end where she missed game points before eventually taking one at 12-10.

Mikhailova fought back in the fourth game to take the match to a decider where it was neck-and-neck with Sibley holding a 7-6 advantage at one stage. However, that was as good as it got for the English no. 2 as the Russian forced herself ahead to dramatically seal a tight win, 11-9 in the fifth.

Last up was Hannah Hicks who was facing the Russian no. 2 Yana Noskova (108) – ranked some 300 places above the girl from Hampshire.

It appeared as though as a shock might be on the cards with Hicks securing a tight opening game 13-11. However, after two close 11-9 and 12-10 games to the Russian, England were on the brink of defeat.

With England's hope of salvaging a priceless victory ever dwindling, the nail was put in the coffin by Noskova, who won the fourth game 12-10 to march the Russians to another win in St. Petersburg.

2013 European Championships Qualification Results

Women's Championship Division Group B

Russia 3-0 England

Anna Tikhomirova bt Joanna Parker 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-2)

Polina Mikhailova bt Kelly Sibley 3-2 (11-9, 6-11, 10-12, 11-4, 11-9)

Yana Noskova bt Hannah Hicks 3-1 (11-13, 11-9, 12-10, 12-10)

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