

England power past Dutch in Portsmouth

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English no. 1 Paul Drinkhall showed the way against Oostwouder

England crushed Netherlands 3-0 to continue their charge towards the Championship Division in their third 2013 Joola European Championships Qualifying match at the Mountbatten Leisure Centre.

English number 1 Paul Drinkhall wasted no time in the opening match of the evening as he comprehensively beat Ewout Oostwouder 3-0 in Portsmouth.

Without requiring to unleash his infamous powerful forehand, the 22-year-old was comfortable in his close-to-table backhand play to open up the Dutch player.

While both players started nervously and felt their way into the first game, Drinkhall raced ahead from 6-5 to 11-5 to settle his nerves on the night. That was quickly followed by a second 11-5 game to give himself some clear breathing space.

The four-times National Champion then led the third game throughout to eventually wrap up the win 11-9 and give the hosts the perfect start.

Next up for England was Danny Reed who overcame a tricky start to beat Casper Ter Luun in four games.

After losing the first game, Reed found himself 5-1 and 7-4 down in the second and facing down the barrel, but a fantastic run of seven consecutive points saw him level the match and settle his nerves.

Reed then produced a similar run in the second game, moving from 6-5 down to lead 10-6 before eventually wrapping up the game 11-7 and securing a 2-1 lead.

The fourth game was fraught with drama and Reed, for a third time, came from 6-3 behind to lead 7-6. However, Ter Luun replied with a run of his own to open up two game points at 10-8 and put the pressure back on the Englishman.

Both were saved by Reed before a third was opened up by the Dutchman at 11-10. This time the 22-year-old was able to save the point and create his own match points – ultimately converting the second of those to win the game 14-12 and give England a 2-0 lead.

With Liam Pitchford rested after a hip injury, the final English player was late replacement Andrew Baggaley who faced Dutch left-hander Rajko Gommers.

The 29-year-old lost the opening three points but, perhaps inspired by Reed's play earlier, went on the longest run of the evening to secure eight straight points and lead 8-3.

England's third representative at the Olympics then finished off the first game with a dismissive backhand to stamp not just his own, but also England's dominance on the match.

The second game was almost role-reversal with Baggaley taking a 3-0 lead before Gommers retaliated to lead 5-3. The English no. 3 thought he had avoided a full repeat of game one when he led 10-8 but he was unable to fight off Gommers who came back to win it 13-11 and level the match.

Angry with himself for letting the second game slip, Baggaley cruised the third game 11-4 and set up a chance for himself to finish the tie for England.

It was a chance he gleefully took, racing from 5-5 to 9-5 in the next game to all-but seal the victory. Sure enough just five points later and England were confirmed victors in front of a packed crowd at the Mountbatten Leisure Centre.

This result leaves England with a great chance of finishing in the top two of the group with away matches in both Bulgaria and the Czech Republic remaining in 2013.

Thanks go to all the event staff, volunteers and supporters as well as Portsmouth City Council and the Mountbatten Leisure Centre for hosting the match.

2013 European Championships Qualification Results

Men's Challenge Division Group A

England 3-0 Netherlands

Paul Drinkhall bt Ewout Oostwouder 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-9)

Danny Reed bt Casper Ter Luun 3-1 (7-11, 11-7, 11-7, 14-12)

Andrew Baggaley bt Rajko Gommers 3-1 (11-5, 11-13, 11-4, 11-8)

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