

Giant-killer Pitchford hits personal best

Author: **Paul Stimpson**

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Liam Pitchford dispelled any rumours about his fitness as he reached the last 16 in an ITTF World Tour event for the first time, just a week before the [54th Senior National Championships](#).

The 19-year-old from Derbyshire, who had undergone treatment on a hip injury over winter, was back for his first tour event since and he showed no signs of loss of form.

Firstly, he cruised through his Men's Singles qualifying group with a comprehensive 4-0 win over Faisal Al-Otaibi before beating former European Junior Champion Daniel Kosiba in another impressive five-game performance.

However, those results paled into insignificance compared to his first round victory over Korea's Kim Minseok (WR 34).

Despite falling 2-1 behind, which included a 1-11 disaster game for the Englishman, Pitchford fought back to level and then take the lead against the former ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals Under 21 Champion.

In a nervy sixth game that went right down to the wire, England's number 2 missed two match-point opportunities, but was able to take a third and seal another massive scalp to add to his growing list of giant-killings.

Soon after Pitchford faced Egyptian Omar Assar in the last 32, but the 21-year-old – who himself had beaten Bojan Tokic, was no match for the English star who won in straight games to extend his record against Assar to four consecutive victories.

However, on Saturday the one nation that remains off Pitchford's giant-killing list is China though, as world number 4, Wang Hao, wasted little time in defeating the plucky teenager.

Wang Hao, like the four other Chinese players in the last 16, did not lose a game en route to the quarter-finals and was merciless in Doha. Despite the defeat there can be no doubt that Pitchford will benefit from the experience of playing such a top-class penholder.

The youngster also had an eventful under 21s campaign where he beat Kiryl Barabanov 3-0, before losing in dramatic fashion to Singapore's Wu Zhikang.

After recovering from 2-0 down to 2-2, Pitchford saved seven match points in the fifth end, but also failed to convert four of his own as the Singaporean won deep into deuce 20-18.

Both Daniel Reed and Andrew Baggaley were also in action in Qatar, but neither were able to make it through

their qualifying groups. Reed's loss to Yaroslav Zhmudenko and Baggaley's defeat to Philipp Floritz ensured neither would leave Doha with particularly positive memories ahead of the National Championships.

Don't forget you can still reserve your tickets for the nationals (1-3rd March) by contacting Vanda Jones at vjones@etta.co.uk

ITTF World Tour Super Series, Qatar Open, Doha 20-24th Feb 2013

Men's Singles

Qualifying Groups:

Group 15:

Yaroslav Zhmudenko (UKR, 105) bt Daniel Reed 4-1 (6-11, 11-3, 11-6, 12-10, 11-4)

Daniel Reed bt Hamad Buhijji 4-2 (12-10, 11-7, 13-11, 18-20, 9-11, 11-6)

Group 22:

Philipp Floritz (GER, 198) bt Andrew Baggaley 4-2 (11-4, 5-11, 11-8, 11-4, 5-11, 12-10)

Andrew Baggaley bt Hasan Juma 4-0 (11-8, 12-10, 11-2, 11-7)

Group 25:

Liam Pitchford bt Daniel Kosiba (HUN, 158) 4-1 (9-11, 11-9, 11-5, 11-7, 12-10)

Liam Pitchford bt Faisal Al-Otaibi (QAT, ur) 4-0 (11-5, 11-3, 11-4, 11-1)

Men's Singles Knock-out rounds:

Liam Pitchford bt Kim Min Seok (KOR, 34) 4-2 (14-12, 1-11, 10-12, 13-11, 11-7, 13-11)

Round of 32:

Liam Pitchford bt Omar Assar (EGY, 138) (11-8, 11-9, 11-6, 13-11)

Round of 16:

Wang Hao (CHN, 4) bt Liam Pitchford 4-0 (11-2, 11-5, 11-3, 11-8)

Men's Doubles

Pre-rounds:

Andrew Baggaley/Daniel Reed bt Mohamed El-Beiali/Mohamed Shouman (EGY) 3-0 (13-11, 11-9, 14-12)

Tonin Ryuzaki/Masataka Morizono (JPN) bt Liam Pitchford/Philipp Floritz (GER) 3-1 (11-5, 6-11, 11-9, 11-5)

Round of 64:

Romain Lorentz/Quentin Robinot (FRA) bt Andrew Baggaley/Daniel Reed 3-2 (13-11, 8-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9)

Boy's Under 21s:

Liam Pitchford bt Kiryl Barabanov (BLR, 581) 3-0 (11-9, 11-9, 11-7)

Wu Zhikang (SIN, 217) bt Liam Pitchford 3-2 (11-8, 11-7, 6-11, 4-11, 20-18)

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