

Pitchford & Sibley are 2013 National Champions

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Liam Pitchford won his first-ever Men's Singles title at the 54th English Senior National Championships at Ponds Forge on Sunday afternoon.

The 19-year-old from Derbyshire had to face a re-match of 2012's final against four-time National Champion, Paul Drinkhall, who beat him 4-1 last time out. However, on this occasion the teen exacted his revenge and emerged victorious over six pulsating ends 4-2 (8-11, 11-8, 2-11, 11-7, 11-4, 11-9).

Pitchford was relieved to have finally got his name on the trophy after two previous final defeats in Sheffield. His loss to Andrew Baggaley in 2010 was followed by last year's defeat to Drinkhall, who Pitchford knows very well from their England training.

The Chesterfield-born player said: "We practice against each other all the time and we know each others games. Every match is difficult but I'm just happy to have finally won one.

"He blew me out of the water in the third game with some ridiculous shots. After that I just said to myself 'look, you've just got to try something different.' I started putting more topspin on my serves, waiting for him to flick and then playing down the lines – luckily it worked."



Pitchford had been out with a hip injury over Christmas but put to bed any allaying fears about his performances with not only his singles title, but also a Men's Doubles title with beaten finalist Drinkhall.

He said: "I was out for five weeks but I did good rehab and I was in good hands. I'm still working on keeping on

top of it. I'm feeling stronger than ever.

"Tomorrow I've got a flight to Germany where I've got a match on Sunday and two more the weekend after that. Pretty much everyone's a national champion [at his club, TTF Liebherr Ochsenhausen] so it's just another day in the office."

Although Pitchford prevented Drinkhall from retaining his title, Women's Singles Champion, Kelly Sibley was able to defend her crown from 2012 after a monster seven-game marathon with great rival Joanna Parker.



Having already been through two tough fixtures earlier in the day, a six-game quarter-final win over Tin-Tin Ho and a seven-game semi-final victory against Karina Le Fevre, Sibley was delighted to be able to finally put her feet up.

The 24-year-old said: "I think today's been a really tough day. In my quarter-finals I was 2-0 down and came back and won 4-2, then my semi-final was even closer than that. I was 3-0 up and Karina played really well to come back to 3-3. I was 8-3 and 9-5 down so I just focused ball-by-ball and eventually managed to get through that 14-12.

"I'm just so happy to win it really. I kept on getting into winning positions all the time but I just had to be calm and keep focused on what I was doing when I was winning the points. I took my time a bit, had a couple of deep breaths and eventually got that last point.

"I'm going to take it steady tomorrow, rest the legs and recharge the batteries then it's back to training on Tuesday."

The next challenge for both singles champions will be the Commonwealth Championships in May and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014.

Sibley said: "I want to keep pushing and working hard towards the Championships. I believe in the Commonwealth Games we can get a medal in the team especially with Tin-Tin [Ho] coming through, she's pushing to be in our team now. I think if we keep working hard then we can do some damage."

Pitchford was focused on his goals: "We've got the Commonwealths coming up, I think I'm playing well enough to medal there. I'm looking to get gold."

By Russell Moore



2012/13 English Senior National Championships (Ponds Forge, Sheffield 1-3 March 2013)

Final results:

Men's Singles: Liam Pitchford bt Paul Drinkhall 4-2 (8-11, 11-8, 2-11, 11-7, 11-4, 11-9)

Women's Singles: Kelly Sibley bt Joanna Parker 4-3 (11-9, 11-7, 10-12, 11-8, 10-12, 8-11, 11-4)

Men's Doubles: Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford bt Darius Knight/Daniel Reed 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 11-5)

Women's Doubles: Joanna Parker/Kelly Sibley bt Chloe Whyte/Jess Dawson 3-0 (11-5, 11-3, 11-3)

Mixed Doubles: Darius Knight/Kelly Sibley bt Paul Drinkhall/Joanna Parker 3-0 (11-5, 14-12, 11-6)

Men's Under 21s: Sam Walker bt Richard Andrews 3-2 (11-7, 3-11, 15-17, 11-8, 12-10)

Women's Under 21s: Tin-Tin Ho bt Yolanda King 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 11-13, 13-11, 12-10)

Veteran Men's Singles: Lorestas Trumpauskas bt Stephen Horsfield 3-2 (7-11, 11-6, 11-7, 9-11, 11-6)

For more information and full reports on all the matches [click here](#)

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