

Men's promotion dream crushed in Czech Rep

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Any hopes the English men had of earning a dramatic promotion to the Championship Division of the European Championships were crushed by a determined Czech Republic side in Jaromer.

Needing to win the fixture 3-0, a first rubber defeat for Paul Drinkhall to Dimitrij Prokopcov (93) meant that any dreams of promotion were put to bed. The Czechs, who needed to win to secure their own path into the Championship Division for 2013's European Championships in Schwechat, Austria, were in no mood to mess around and won all three matches to book their place in the top tier.

After Drinkhall's defeat to Prokopcov, newly crowned English National Champion Liam Pitchford fell to a 3-2 defeat against Pavel Sirucek (134). Despite fighting back from 2-0 down to force a deciding game, the 19-year-old was unable to capitalise as the hosts went 2-0 ahead.

The third and final defeat was handed out to Daniel Reed, who took the lead in his match with Lubomir Jancarik (141), but soon after found himself falling to a 3-1 defeat and leaving the team licking their wounds.

Just across the country in Hodonin, the English girls took on the Czechs in their last fixture of the Championship Division before they start the European Championships in October in the second tier following their demotion.

However, despite their fate already being sealed, there were plenty of positives to be taken from their midweek trip to the Czech Republic.

The 3-1 defeat didn't reflect how different the story could have been had defending National Champion Kelly Sibley managed to shock Iveta Vacenovska (25) in a tight opening match-up.

Despite losing the first game 11-3 and falling 2-1 behind, Sibley fought back on each occasion to force a deciding game. Unfortunately, she was unable to keep the pace of the previous games as Vacenovska established a crucial early 5-0 lead en route to an 11-5 game.

Next on court was Joanna Parker who made light work of the recently crowned Czech Women's Singles winner Hana Matelova (216). Although the first two games were tight (13-11 and 11-9), both times the English girl came out on top to cement her advantage.

After winning the third game at a canter, 11-6, England were back level in the tie.

This parity only lasted briefly with Katerina Penkavova (179) cruising past England's no. 3 Hannah Hicks in no time to re-establish the hosts advantage. Then, when Vacenovska returned to the table to beat Parker 3-1, the English girls day campaign was over.

On another day, had Sibley beaten Vacenovska and then faced Matelova in the final match, the result could have been different. However, it can only be marked down as another learning curve on the girls' career paths.

2012/13 Joola European Championships Qualification Results

Men's Challenge Group A

Czech Rep. 3-0 England

Dimitrij Prokopcov (93) bt Paul Drinkhall 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-5)

Pavel Sirucek (134) bt Liam Pitchford 3-2 (11-9, 11-2, 7-11, 9-11, 11-7)

Lubomir Jancarik (141) bt Daniel Reed 3-1 (8-11, 11-6, 11-5, 11-9)

Women's Championship Group B

Czech Rep. 3-1 England

Iveta Vacenovska (25) bt Kelly Sibley 3-2 (11-3, 7-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-5)

Joanna Parker bt Hana Matelova (216) 3-0 (13-11, 11-9, 11-6)

Katerina Penkavova (179) bt Hannah Hicks 3-0 (11-2, 11-9, 11-5)

Iveta Vacenovska bt Joanna Parker 3-1 (11-5, 11-3, 8-11, 11-6)

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