

Pitchford to lead England at 2013 Euro Champs

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Liam Pitchford, Nick Jarvis & Kelly Sibley

Twenty-year-old Liam Pitchford will lead England's push for promotion at the 32nd Liebherr European Championships as the new British No. 1.

Chesterfield-born Pitchford, who last year reached the top position in the English rankings, finally became the best-ranked British player in the world when he surpassed compatriot Paul Drinkhall in the September world ranking list.

Now, the current world no. 122, will lead the English men in their bid to reach the Championship Division when the prestigious event kicks-off in Schwechat, Austria (October 4-13, 2013).

There will be added pressure on the youngster's shoulders as fellow Olympian, Drinkhall, will miss out on this year's competition following surgery on a hip problem, which has prevented him from starting his campaign in the Bundesliga – Germany's top division.



Pitchford, who also plays in the Bundesliga, has shrugged off the attentions of being number one, but feels he is full of confidence ahead of the European campaign.

The Ochsenhausen player said: "It's just a number in my eyes but it is always nice to say you're number 1, I hope now I can push on and break into the top 100.

"I have two more years at Ochsenhausen now so that has given me a lot of confidence. It's been good to play the first few matches and get a feel for how I am playing now. I had an important win in our first match at 2-2, which was a great start to the season and I hope it can only improve."

He will be joined in the England team by 30-year-old Andrew Baggaley, 23-year-old Daniel Reed and 18-year-

old Sam Walker, who was recently selected to play in the European Youth Top 10 that takes place this weekend in Italy.

However, in recent history it has been the boy from Derbyshire who has taken the limelight with his incredible giant-killing performances at the European Championships.

Back in Poland, 2011 he caused the biggest shock of the tournament by beating world no. 9 and three-time European Champion, Vladimir Samsonov, when ranked 269th in the world.

He has since followed that victory up with further upsets against Alexey Smirnov (20), Robert Gardos (32) and Dimitrij Prokopcov (51) in the same competition.

Although he can't pinpoint what makes him so destructive at this particular event, the current English National Champion has readied himself physically and mentally for his trip to Austria to be the most productive yet.

He said: "I guess I always prepare well for them [European Championships] and after the last few years I now have something to build on.

"It's massively important to be fresh for every match, these past few months now I have been back at my club in Germany where I have been working hard to be in top shape physically and mentally for the Europeans.

"My aim is to go further than last year, the last two years I have lost close in the last 32 so I hope this year I can go one better."

The 2013 Liebherr European Championships will involve both team and individual competitions as part of the biennial rotation of the tournament, which will also see the English women try and secure their own promotion to the top tier.



Recently married Joanna Drinkhall (26) will lead the side along with Kelly Sibley (25), Hannah Hicks (22) and Tin-Tin Ho (15). The women, who were promoted in 2011 but have since dropped back to the second level, will begin their campaign against either Italy or Greece after being seeded for the first round.

The full draws can be seen at the links below:

[Men's Challenge Division](#)

[Women's Challenge Division](#)

England squad for the European Championships

Schwechat, Austria (October 4-13, 2013)

Men: Liam Pitchford, Andrew Baggaley, Sam Walker and Daniel Reed

Women: Joanna Drinkhall, Kelly Sibley, Tin-Tin Ho and Hannah Hicks

Coaches: Jia Yi Liu and Alan Cooke

Written by Russell Moore (September 24, 2013)

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