

Boll ends Pitchford's glorious German rampage

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England's No.1 was in sublime form in Berlin, pic courtesy of ITTF

Twenty-year-old English No. 1 Liam Pitchford's awe-inspiring run was finally halted at the ITTF World Tour German Open after six-time European Champion Timo Boll put an end to the Englishman's onslaught in Berlin.

Pitchford, who had already created a stir in the German capital with wins over [Gao Ning \(SIN, world rank 16\)](#), [Oh Sangeun \(KOR, 29\)](#) and [Yang Zi \(SIN, 81\)](#), set-up a meeting with the nine-time German Champion after a nerve-racking 4-3 triumph over Kenta Matsudaira (JPN, 18) – the same player he had lost to just a week earlier in Poland.

Unlike the 4-1 defeat in their previous encounter, Pitchford started quickly against the Japanese star, winning the first game 11-6. However, when he failed to convert a 10-7 lead in the second game it seemed as though the Englishman's troubles would return.

The remainder of the match continued neck-and-neck with Pitchford twice leading but twice being pegged back by Matsudaira. This resulted in an incredibly tense final game which went deep into deuce. After saving a couple of match points, the Chesterfield-born player won the crucial game 14-12 in bizarre circumstances as Matsudaira claimed the serve had touched the net once the point had been won. His appeal was to no avail which left Pitchford to progress to a meeting with Boll.

This meant that the youngster was meeting another recent foe after Pitchford's Ochsenhausen met Boll's Borussia Dortmund just two weeks prior to their clash in Berlin. That time the 32-year-old had emerged as a close 3-2 victor, but it was a result which would've given the Englishman hope against the imperious world no. 6.

It didn't start well for the 'foreign invader' in front of a partisan home crowd despite this [amazing defensive rally](#) in the first game. Pitchford fell 2-0 behind but recovered magnificently to dominate a third game 11-7 and really bring himself back into contention.

Unfortunately luck was against the reigning National Champion as a decisive fourth game fell right into Boll's lap. Twice the German favourite benefitted from lucky nets before Pitchford missed a great forehand chance at 9-10 to give Boll a 3-1 lead.

That dealt as big a blow physically and mentally as was required for the World Cup winner who coasted home in the fifth game against a weary Pitchford.

It wasn't surprising that the Englishman was unable to up his game given his exploits over the previous 48 hours. His magical run included an under-21s semi-final berth against Frenchman Quentin Robinot after Saturday morning's 4-1 victory over Tamas Lakatos.

His 4-0 defeat to Robinot, followed by his defeat to Boll, wasn't the dream finish the young star had hoped for but it won't take away from an amazing performance in Europe where he will be sure to have raised a few eyebrows amongst the game's elite. Look out for the next world rankings as Pitchford also looks set to blaze into the world's top 100.

ITTF World Tour German Open, November 13-17, 2013 Berlin, Selected results:

Men's Singles:

Last 16:

Liam Pitchford bt Kenta Matsudaira (JPN, 18) 4-3 (11-6, 10-12, 11-6, 6-11, 11-7, 5-11, 14-12)

Quarter-Final:

Timo Boll (GER, 6) bt Liam Pitchford 4-1 (11-7, 11-5, 7-11, 11-9, 11-2)

Boy's Under-21s:

Quarter-Final:

Liam Pitchford bt Tamas Lakatos (HUN, 266) 4-1 (11-9, 7-11, 11-6, 11-5, 14-12)

Semi-Final:

Quentin Robinot (FRA, 106) bt Liam Pitchford 4-0 (15-13, 11-6, 11-9, 11-6)

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