

Sheffield primed for Sunday showdown

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Darius Knight will meet old adversary Paul Drinkhall on Sunday morning

Men's Singles

A shock-less Saturday in the Men's Singles meant that Sunday will begin with the top eight seeds all preparing for action in what could be a dramatic final day at the 55th Senior English National Table Tennis Championships.

Last year's finalists Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall made no mistakes as they comfortably booked their place in the quarter-finals. Both players won their first round and last 16 matches without dropping a game – the defending champion, Pitchford, beating Kim Daybell and Tom Jarvis 4-0, while runner-up Drinkhall saw off both Mark Smith and David Meads by the same scoreline.

Pitchford may face a difficult prospect first thing Sunday morning as his opponent, David McBeath, was particularly impressive in his last 16 victory over Under-21 Champion Gavin Evans. McBeath began with a six-game tussle against Sean Cullen before blitzing Evans 4-0 (11-4, 14-12, 11-5, 11-5).

Drinkhall meanwhile, will face the match-of-the-round when he takes on former European Cadet Doubles winning partner Darius Knight in the last eight. Knight cruised past Daniel Basterfield 4-0 before overcoming Tom Maynard in an entertaining last 16 battle 4-2 (11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 10-12, 11-5, 11-8). Knight will have fond memories of the recent Briar Bristol Grand Prix when he beat the English no. 2 en route to the Men's Singles title and he'll hope to rekindle that success on Sunday.

The other two quarter-finals see Chris Doran face Andrew Baggaley and Daniel Reed play Sam Walker. Doran beat Jared Patel (4-0) and Helshan Weerasinghe (4-2) to book his place while Baggaley saw off James Ward (4-0) and Craig Bryant (4-1).

At the same time Reed beat Luke Savill 4-0 before outgunning the wily Mike O'Driscoll 4-1 (8-11, 13-11, 11-6, 13-11, 11-9) to set up his meeting with Mixed Doubles Champion Walker who dropped just one game against fellow youngsters Adam Harrison (4-0) and Richard Andrews (4-1).

Quarter-Final draw:

Liam Pitchford v David McBeath

Chris Doran v Andrew Baggaley

Daniel Reed v Sam Walker

Darius Knight v Paul Drinkhall

Women's Singles

Tressa Armitage provided the biggest shock of the Women's Singles after upsetting the seeding to reach the quarter-final stage.

The Hampshire girl, still on the England books, was in imperious form against Emma Vickers in a high-class attacking contest. Although the meeting only lasted five ends it was a tight battle throughout with two ends heading deep into deuce before she triumphed 4-1 (11-6, 15-13, 12-14, 11-5, 11-8).

There was also an upset in the top half of the draw as Natalie Slater defeated Abbie eighth seed Abbie Milwain to book her quarter-final spot against new Mixed Doubles Champion Tin-Tin Ho. Slater's electric start helped her to a 4-2 (11-9, 11-6, 11-8, 7-11, 9-11, 11-6) victory over the Derbyshire girl, while Tin-Tin beat Emma Torkington 4-0 (11-4, 16-14, 12-10, 11-7) to complete their match-up.

The other top half quarter-final will see Kelly Sibley face Yolanda King after the Sussex youngster beat Sarah Short 4-1 to set up the meeting with the top seed.

In the bottom half of the draw Hannah Hicks booked her meeting with last 16 victor Armitage by beating Vicky Smith 4-0 while Karina Le Fevre defeated Under-21 Champion Maria Tsaptsinos in the game of the day to earn a quarter-final with second seed Joanna Drinkhall. Her 4-3 (11-13, 11-1, 11-9, 11-3, 3-11, 9-11, 11-4) was filled with both drama and tension as she scraped in Sunday's draw.

Quarter-Final Draw:

Kelly Sibley v Yolanda King

Natalie Slater v Tin-Tin Ho

Hannah Hicks v Tressa Armitage

Karina Le Fevre v Joanna Drinkhall

Men's Doubles:

Defending Champions Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall remained on course to seal back-to-back titles after confidently strolling to three consecutive 3-0 wins in the Men's Doubles to secure a semi-final slot.

The top seeds wasted no time in seeing off Mark Firth/William Hornsey, Lewis Gray/Daniel Lawrence and Craig Bryant/Lorestan Trumpauskas in straight games to set-up their semi-final berth with David McBeath and Gavin Evans.

McBeath, who was already part of the mixed doubles duo with Emma Vickers that defeated Pitchford and Kelly Sibley, will be confident ahead of their semi-final after also impressing in three confident wins. Having already dispatched both Jon Hall/Kieron Smith and Victor Shi/Matt Dodds in straight games, the third seeds defeated Nottingham Trent duo Chris Doran and Sean Cullen 3-1 (14-12, 5-11, 11-8, 11-7).

In the bottom half of the draw Daniel Reed and Sam Walker, who meet in the Men's Singles quarter-finals, will team up to face Darius Knight and Andrew Baggaley in the doubles semi-finals.

Reed and Walker had a quiet day with their first two matches both walkovers before beating Mike O'Driscoll/Helshan Weerasinghe 3-1 (11-7, 11-7, 16-18, 12-10) when they finally got to the table.

Baggaley and Knight, meanwhile had to fulfil all of their fixtures but they were none worse-for-wear as their three victories all came via a 3-0 scoreline against Dominic Sussex/Mike Fraser, Kim Daybell/Ashley Facey-Thompson and Tom Maynard/Richard Andrews respectively. As the only left-hand/right-hand combination remaining, they may fancy their chances in tomorrow's key matches.

Women's Doubles:

Joanna Drinkhall and Kelly Sibley remain on course for their fifth consecutive (sixth in total) Women's Doubles title after making light of their solitary match on Saturday.

The strong favourites to win the title raced past Emma Torkington and Shu Huang 3-0 (11-1, 11-7, 11-2) to set up a semi-final meeting with fellow attack/defence combo Hannah Hicks and Sanja Clements after they emerged from the only five-end match of the proceedings to beat Emily Bolton/Cherith Graham 3-2 (11-3, 6-11, 7-11, 11-6, 11-7).

In the bottom half of the draw, Under-21 finalists Maria Tsaptsinos and Tin-Tin Ho combined forces to make the last four after a competent 3-0 (11-3, 12-10, 11-5) win over Natalie Slater and Abbie Milwain.

They will meet Karina Le Fevre and Emma Vickers after the second seeds won the final match of the round over Yolanda King and Lois Peake 3-1 (12-10, 14-12, 9-11, 11-5). However, it will be a tough ask for any of these pairs to prevent the Drinkhall/Sibley powerhouse from retaining their trophy.

You can watch all of the action from table 2 on Saturday as well as the live feed on Sunday via the [ETTA YouTube channel](#)

Russell Moore (March 1, 2014)

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