

Chinese double prevents English joy at German Open

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Liam Pitchford was the second Englishman to fall to Wei Shihao

Chinese youngster Wei Shihao was the bane of the English hopefuls at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour German Open after knocking out both Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford in Magdeburg.

The talented left-hander, a relative unknown to the European table tennis circuit, was always likely to be a dangerous prospect when he drew England's no.2, Drinkhall, in the qualifying groups early on in the campaign.

Those early fears were justified as a 4-1 victory for the Asian starlet in the group's opening fixture ensured a swift exit from the competition for the four-time National Champion.

As fortune would dictate, Wei Shihao was then drawn to be Liam Pitchford's first opponent in the main knockout stage of the men's singles. Pitchford, seeded 27th, was playing his first singles match in Magdeburg (Shihao had already played four) but began confidently – winning the first two games of their encounter.

However, a strong fightback from the Chinese attacker saw him secure three consecutive games before eventually finishing the match in the seventh end 11-4 to stop short any dreams the 20-year-old Englishman had of emulating his run from Berlin last November.

Apart from Pitchford, only Joanna Drinkhall was able to make the last 64 as the qualifying groups took their toll on the English competitors.

While Drinkhall won her group impressively with a fine 4-0 (11-7, 13-11, 11-3, 11-2) win over Carole Grundisch, her form was not replicated by her compatriots who could only manage three wins between them during a frustrating campaign.

The recently-crowned Women's Singles National Champion was given the tough task of facing world no. 25 Sayaka Hirano (JPN) in the main draw in Magdeburg. A tough task on paper, her defensive skills were no match for the Olympic team silver medalist, who comfortably earned her place in the last 32 with a 4-0 win.

GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour, German Open, Magdeburg (Mar 26-30th)

Men's Singles:

Qualification Groups:

Group 4:

Darius Knight (wr 234) bt Cedric Nuytinck (BEL, 213) 4-1 (11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 15-13)

Stefan Fegerl (AUT, 64) bt Darius Knight (wr 234) 4-1 (9-11, 11-2, 16-14, 11-4, 11-6)

Group 11:

Sam Walker (245) bt Frane Kojic (CRO, 203) 4-1 (5-11, 11-9, 11-3, 15-13, 11-5)

Emmanuel Lebesson (FRA, 57) bt Sam Walker (245) 4-1 (11-6, 11-9, 9-11, 11-4, 11-5)

Group 30:

Jiri Vrablok (CZE, 164) bt David McBeath (348) 4-0 (12-10, 11-9, 11-7, 11-9)

Mikhail Paikov (RUS, 105) bt David McBeath (348) 4-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-5, 11-6)

Group 46:

Wei Shihao (CHN, u/r) bt Paul Drinkhall (135) 4-1 (13-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9, 11-9)

Paul Drinkhall (135) bt Aly Walaa El-Din (EGY, u/r) 4-0 (11-5, 11-9, 11-5, 14-12)

Lubomir Jancarik (CZE, 140) bt Paul Drinkhall (135) 4-3 (9-11, 12-10, 11-9, 7-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-8)

Last 64:

Wei Shihao (CHN, u/r) bt Liam Pitchford (52) 4-3 (8-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-8, 12-10, 9-11, 11-4)

Women's Singles:**Qualification Groups:****Group 24:**

Nadine Bollmeier (GER, 128) bt Tressa Armitage (495) 4-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-4, 11-4)

Szandra Pergel (HUN, 100) bt Tressa Armitage (495) 4-0 (11-9, 11-3, 11-4, 11-3)

Group 25:

Joanna Drinkhall (124) bt Danielle Konsbruck (LUX, u/r) 4-0 (11-4, 11-7, 13-11, 11-7)

Joanna Drinkhall (124) bt Carole Grundisch (FRA, 107) 4-0 (11-7, 13-11, 11-3, 11-2)

Last 64:

Sayaka Hirano (JPN, 25) bt Joanna Drinkhall (124) 4-0 (11-4, 11-9, 11-4, 11-5)

Men's Doubles**Pre-rounds:**

David McBeath/Sam Walker bt Jesus Cantero/He Zhiwen (ESP) walkover

Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford bt Lubomir Jancarik/David Reitspies (CZE) 3-2 (11-6, 4-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-8)

Tang Peng/Wong Chun Ting (HKG) 3-0 (11-6, 14-12, 11-5)

Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford bt Harmeet Desai/Soumyajit Ghosh (IND) 3-2 (11-7, 11-13, 9-11, 12-10, 11-3)

Tan Ruiwu (CRO)/Wang Zengyi (POL) bt Paul Drinkhall/Liam Pitchford 3-0 (11-2, 11-6, 11-9)

by Russell Moore (March 28, 2014)

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