

# English trio secure BT Sport spot

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**Posted On:** July 05, 2014



Kelly Sibley strikes forcefully at the K2, picture courtesy of Mike Loveder

Three English players made it through to the semi-finals of the 2014 Heritage Oil Open when the competition closed in Crawley ready for the televised finals at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

English no.1 and top seed Liam Pitchford comfortably secured his progress at the K2 Leisure Centre while English no. 6 Sam Walker and women's no. 2 Kelly Sibley also booked their places in the last four following an entertaining day's play.

Tournament favourite Pitchford cruised through to the men's singles semi-finals – dropping just one set to Middlesex's Alim Hirji in the last 32, despite not feeling as though he had yet hit top gear.

The 20-year-old said: "It's been a tough day but a successful day. I'm pleased, I've not been playing great but I've got the job done. It was my aim to have one English guy on the TV so we've got a good chance. It should be a great atmosphere and a great environment and we'll see how it goes."

His final two victories over compatriot David McBeath (Hants) and Italy's Niagol Stoyanov hinted at his best form during a tournament that saw a variety of top European talent.

"It's been a great tournament to get all the top players over. Stoyanov who I just played there is a good player, maybe in an international match it would've been a bit closer but I thought I was quite focused and played how I wanted to play. I don't think he was really at the races today but I'm glad I won 3-0."

The Chesterfield player will now face Portugal's Enio Mendes who quietly progressed to the last four, making the most of the withdrawal of second seed Paul Drinkhall to book his place in front of the BT Sport cameras.

Mendes completed a 'European tour' of victories over Thomas Le Breton (FRA), Jakub Kosowski (POL) and Peter Musko (HUN) but remains a relatively unknown prospect with a Greek Championship win in 2014 the only notable occasion he has popped up on the international stage.

On the other side of the draw England's Sam Walker was a surprise semi-finalist after defying his 13th seeding to secure one of the precious spots on Monday night.

The 19-year-old twice succeeded in five set matches against countrymen Tom Jarvis and Andrew Baggaley before waltzing past Hungary's Zsolt Szel 3-0 (11-6, 11-3, 11-4) to complete a tough day's work.

The Worksop youngster explained: "Tom Jarvis just came out fighting straight away – he had nothing to lose. I was a little passive but in the end I fought through it which gave me confidence to go on again.

"Against Andrew I was the underdog really so I had nothing to lose but Andrew won't give you anything, always keeps his level and focus so I had to work hard for every point."

He will now face Hungarian defender Adam Pattantyus who launched a spectacular recovery against Walker's Commonwealth Games team mate Daniel Reed in their quarter-final to win 3-2 (7-11, 9-11, 12-10, 11-8, 11-8).

The Hungarian's defensive style is rare in the men's game, but the Englishman is prepared for the challenge.

"Pattantyus is a top player, the number two seed, but again I've got nothing to lose against him either. It'll be a test and it's always good to test yourself against different styles but I'll take it all positively going forward." He added: "I suppose now in the last four I'm the underdog but I believe I can do it so I'm just going to go out there and enjoy it."

England will also have a representative in the women's singles semi-finals after England's no. 2 Kelly Sibley beat the current no. 1 Joanna Drinkhall to secure her spot at the final stage.

Both players had been untroubled until their meeting but found each other to be tough opponents once more as the Warwickshire girl had to battle hard to earn her 3-1 (11-9, 6-11, 11-4, 11-9) win.

She said: "Yeah it's great a match against Jo in the quarters and it was always going to be a bit 50/50 but I managed to get over the line and I'm really excited for the next round."

The 26-year-old now faces Wales' Charlotte Carey who upset the top seed Petra Lovas (HUN).

"On paper it was meant to be Petra but anything can happen. I didn't actually see the match because I was playing but she must have played well so I've got to play my best to beat her."

Carey, another player heading to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow with the Welsh squad, had never beaten Lovas before, but emerged victorious at the K2.

"I've played her before in the Hungarian league and I've had a bit of a chance but not anything like that. This time I felt a bit more confident and controlled and I felt mentally better in that match."

The British duo will await the winner of the other semi-final between French defender Agnes Le Lannic and former world no. 44 Fangxian Yi from China.

French no. 7 Le Lannic saw off fellow choppers Sarah Berge (FRA) and Hannah Hicks (Hants) to make the semi-finals while Fangxian Yi overcame surprise package Daria Luczakowska (POL) 3-2 (4-11, 11-4, 9-11, 11-6, 12-10) and English cadet Tin-Tin Ho 3-0 to seal her place.

All eight players will now head to the BT Sport Hub in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on Monday (5pm start) with the matches being filmed ready for broadcast on Saturday 12th at 9pm.

#### **Men's Semi-Finals:**

Liam Pitchford vs Enio Mendes (POR)

Sam Walker vs Adam Pattantyus (HUN)

#### **Women's Semi-Finals:**

Kelly Sibley vs Charlotte Carey (WAL)

Agnes Le Lannic (FRA) vs Fangxian Yi (CHN)

Full knockout draw results can be viewed at the links below:

[Men's Singles](#)

[Women's Singles](#)

By Russell Moore (July 5, 2014)

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