

Liam aiming for Glasgow gold

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Winning two Commonwealth Games medals as a 17-year-old takes a bit of beating, and Liam Pitchford is adamant the only way to do so is to strike gold in Glasgow.

The England No 1, who brought back team silver and men's doubles bronze from Delhi four years ago, believes he can complete the set by getting on the top step of the podium this time out.

He has four chances to do so – in the team and singles events, in the men's doubles with Paul Drinkhall and the mixed doubles with Tin-Tin Ho – and Pitchford said: "My only aim really is to get a gold.

"Last time was a big step for me to get two medals in Delhi. I was only 17 – this time I'm going in more of a favourite to take medals."

The Chesterfield player believes he and his team-mates can crown a year which has seen the team earn promotion at the World Team Championships in Tokyo, and has featured a string of impressive individual performances.

He said: "I think we've all had some great results, we've all played well and that's all shown now in our results.

"I went to Tokyo as the leader and I think I handled that quite well, I think I led the team well and we managed to get promotion. Hopefully I can lead the team again and we can get the same good results and hopefully better.

"In Tokyo we had a great team spirit and we proved that we could win even when we were down – 2-0 in some matches and we still came back. I think that will help especially with the young guys – Sam, and myself, to get those big wins even when the pressure is on.

"Paul did great in the Spanish Open and won it, I've had a good season with some great wins, I've progressed to number 50 in the world.

"I think it will help the other guys as well in the team when they come into their match in the Commonwealths they'll be ready, they know what to do, they know how to win – that can only help us. We've got a great chance and causing some upsets and getting in the medals."

The main barrier to Pitchford leaving Glasgow with a gold medal around his neck – in any event – is likely to come from Singapore, but Pitchford knows they are not the only threat.

"You've got the Indians, Nigerian players and Henzell from Australia, they're all strong players," he said.

"Obviously I've played Gao Ning (Singapore No 1 and world No 12) twice now and won twice, so I've got a good record and hopefully I'm not going to blemish that record and can keep it going further.

"We know how they play, we've practised against them and I think we've always got a chance against them."

Scotland's Gavin Rumgay could also threaten the odd upset, particularly with a home crowd behind him, but Pitchford is philosophical about possibly having to silence the spectators in such a clash – or even if England end up as the pantomime villains.

"You've just got to get on with it," he said. "I'm sure we'll have some English support there so we'll focus on that.

"It's going to be a great games and I'm looking forward to it. I think we can all handle it well, we've all been in that situation before."

By Russell Moore (July 23rd, 2014)

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