

Paul and Liam pipped to bronze

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Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall

Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford have been beaten in a superb men's doubles semi-final in Glasgow tonight – but both have a mixed doubles final to look forward to tomorrow, when England are guaranteed gold and silver.

The English pair mounted a superb comeback from 2-0 down to level the tie against Singapore's Jian Zhan and Yang Zi before being shaded 12-10 in the decider.

The English pair, who had been beaten 3-1 in the semi-finals by another Singapore pair, Gao Ning and Li Hu, gave as good as they got in a pulsating match. After losing the first 11-6 they took a 10-7 lead in the second, only to see their opponents claim five points in a row to move 2-0 ahead.

But there was no *deja vu* when Pitchford and Drinkhall led 10-7 in the next as they wrapped up the set at the first opportunity, and they followed it with an 11-8 scoreline in the fourth.

The pairs traded blows in a decider which had all the hallmarks of the unstoppable force against the immovable object, but there was to be no medal for England as, after saving the first match point, they were unable to prevent Singapore grabbing the second.

Pitchford said: "We didn't plan on going 2-0 down, but we didn't give up and I think we showed good character to come back into it, we just couldn't finish it off at the end."

Drinkhall added: "Our mistakes let us down there, we didn't start well but we did well to get back in it and we had our chances.

"It's tough to come back from 2-0 down but you have to do everything right after that and we nearly managed to pull it off."

But if England were unlucky to come away from the men's doubles empty handed, they are assured of gold and silver – and possibly bronze – in the mixed when the medal matches are played on Saturday.

England were always sure to see one pair in the final – and Paul and Joanna Drinkhall emerged victorious against their compatriots Kelly Sibley and Danny Reed.

Not that the Drinkhalls had it all their own way – far from it, in fact, as Sibley and Reed bounced back from losing the first to take sets two and three. But the Drinkhalls, who won a bronze in Delhi, were in the mood to make sure they went at least one better in Scotland, coming back to take the next two 11-8.

The progress of Pitchford and Tin-Tin Ho into the final was never likely to be easy, given they were up against Zhan and Tianwei Feng, world ranked No 34 and No 4 respectively. But the English pair belied their lower rankings and lesser experience to take the first two ends.

Singapore were never likely to buckle, though, and when they edged the third 13-11 and followed up with an 11-6 in the fourth, it seemed as if the momentum had shifted.

But Pitchford and Ho – aged only 21 and 15 respectively – raised themselves again and put in a blistering final

set, never looking like being beaten as they clinched their final place with an 11-5 scoreline.

That, of course guarantees gold and silver for England, and it could be a clean sweep if Reed and Sibley can get the better of Zhan and Feng in the bronze medal match. That encounter is at 12.30pm tomorrow, followed by the gold medal match.

Sibley, Joanna Drinkhall and Pitchford have more than one bite at medal glory – the women's doubles providing the former pair with another path to the podium. They will be on court at 10.10am in a semi-final clash against Feng and Mengyu Yu, having beaten Sir Lankan and Indian pairs today. Ho and Karina Le Fevre were beaten in the third round by Australia's Jian Fang Lay and Miao Miao.

Pitchford, meanwhile, lived up to his No 4 seeding in the men's singles with victories over Nigeria's Bode Abiodun and Soumyajit Ghosh of India taking him into the semi-finals, where he will play Ning Gao of Singapore at 10.50am on Saturday.

Paul Drinkhall was beaten in the last eight by SK Achanta of India, while Andrew Baggaley went out in the last 16 to Canada's Eugene Wang.

On tomorrow's prospects, Pitchford said: "I've got singles first up so I will concentrate on that, then the mixed doubles will be great, it's brilliant to have two English pairs there and hopefully I can get the gold this time.

"Paul and I know each other's games so well so it will be interesting to see how it goes."

And Drinkhall added: "We have got to try and forget this now, Liam has got singles first up in the morning so I will be there willing him on to win.

"I will practise with him as well if he wants me to. Liam and I have spent the last however many years together so I don't think anything is going to change just because we are playing a final against each other."

Results

Men's singles, third round

Liam Pitchford bt Bode Abiodun (NGR) 4-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-7, 12-10)

Paul Drinkhall bt Ryan Jenkins (WAL) 4-0 (12-10, 11-9, 12-10, 11-7)

Eugene Wang (CAN) bt Andrew Baggaley 4-0 (11-5, 11-8, 12-10, 11-8)

Men's singles, quarter-finals

Liam Pitchford bt Soumyajit Ghosh (IND) 4-2 (7-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7, 12-10, 11-9)

Sharath Kamal Achanta (IND) bt Paul Drinkhall 4-1 (11-7, 11-6, 12-10, 9-11, 11-6)

Men's doubles, semi-final

Gao Ning/Li Hu (SIN) bt Liam Pitchford/Paul Drinkhall 3-1 (13-11, 11-9, 3-11, 11-8)

Men's doubles, bronze medal match

Jian Zhan/Yang Zi (SIN) bt Liam Pitchford/Paul Drinkhall 3-2 (11-6, 12-10, 7-11, 8-11, 12-10)

Women's doubles, third round

Joanna Drinkhall/Kelly Sibley bt Ishara Madurangi/Erandi Warusawithana (SRI) 3-0 (11-7, 11-3, 11-2)

Jian Fang Lay/Miao Miao (AUS) bt Tin-Tin Ho/Karina Le Fevre 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-1)

Women's doubles, quarter-final

Joanna Drinkhall/Kelly Sibley bt Shamini Kumaresan/Madhurika Patkar (IND) 3-1 (12-10, 12-10, 8-11, 11-2)

Mixed doubles, semi-finals

Liam Pitchford/Tin-Tin Ho bt Jian Zhan/Tianwei Feng (SIN) 3-2 (12-10, 11-8, 11-13, 6-11, 11-5)

Paul Drinkhall/Joanna Drinkhall bt Danny Reed/Kelly Sibley 3-2 (11-5, 8-11, 5-11, 11-8, 11-8)

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