England squad for Lisbon announced

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Liam Pitchford again spearheads England's efforts

Promotion to the top flight of European table tennis is the target for England at the European Team Championships in Lisbon next month.

England's team will again be spearheaded by Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall, fresh from their success at the Commonwealth Games. Both were part of the silver medal-winning men's team, while Paul added mixed doubles gold alongside his wife Joanna and Liam took mixed doubles silver with Tin-Tin Ho as well as the men's singles bronze.

Both hit career highs in the world rankings as a result of their exploits in Glasgow, Liam at No 44 and Paul at No 74.

They will be joined in Lisbon by fellow Commonwealth Games team member Sam Walker and by England No 5 Darius Knight.

The women's squad comprises Joanna Drinkhall, Kelly Sibley, Tin-Tin Ho and Hannah Hicks, who all featured in Glasgow, where Sibley won mixed doubles bronze alongside Reed.

The men's squad are looking to emulate their achievement at the World Team Championships in Tokyo in May, when they won the Challenger Division to return to the top tier – the Championship Division – after a 17-year gap.

And if they repeat the feat in Portugal, they would also have the added bonus of qualifying for the inaugural European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan, next summer.

Table Tennis England's Head Performance Coach Nick Jarvis: "The men's team have been doing really well this year and all the players are improving and becoming stronger all the time.

"They got promotion at the World Team Championships in Japan, and I think the players have moved on and improved since then.

"We're confident they will play well and, if they do, it's encouraging to know that we can go there and have a chance of beating any other player at the tournament."

The championships take place in Lisbon from September 24th to 28th.

By Paul Stimpson
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