

# Sibley drama – but England notch win treble

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Kelly Sibley was involved in the day's most dramatic match, against Charlotte Carey

England's women and men have got off to the perfect start at the European Team Championships in Lisbon.

The women won both their matches against Lithuania and Wales, though not without alarms along the way, particularly against the Welsh when Kelly Sibley saw her opponent Charlotte Carey save five match points and go on to win.

The men were too good for Luxembourg, but face a bigger test tomorrow against Turkey.

The women were first in action today, and they beat Lithuania 3-1. Sibley, with no hint of the drama to follow later in the day, got England off to a flier with a 3-0 victory in just 16 minutes over world No 262 Egle Stuckyte.

Tin-Tin Ho was next on court, up against world No 80 Ruta Paskauskiene. Ho, ranked 255, led 1-0 and 2-1 – taking a marathon third 16-14 – but saw her experienced opponent fight back in blistering style to take the fourth 11-1, before clinching the decider 11-9.

That match lasted 43 minutes, but Hannah Hicks was rather quicker, taking 29 minutes to notch a 3-0 win over Vitalija Venckute.

And Sibley then sealed overall victory with her second straight-end win of the day, dispatching Paskauskiene.

The Welsh went into their clash with England on the back of a 3-0 win over Azerbaijan in the morning, but Ho put England in front with a 3-1 win over Chloe Thomas, showing her class in the fourth, which she took 11-2 after conceding the previous end.

Sibley then faced Charlotte Carey in what turned out to be arguably the match of the day. Swing, see-saw, rollercoaster – choose your cliché – all summed up a match which built to a breathless climax.

Twice Sibley battled back from a set down to level at 2-2, and the 11-2 margin of victory in the fourth augured well for Kelly as the pair again went to five sets, just as they had in the Heritage Oil Open semi-finals in the BT Sport studios in July.

At 10-5 to the Englishwoman, it looked all over, but Carey saved the five match points and then extended her run of points to seven to take it 12-10 and level the match score.

Hicks, as she had against Lithuania, won the crucial third match, seeing off Megan Phillips 3-1.

And Sibley was then back on court with a chance of redemption against Thomas, and she duly delivered 3-1, sealing the triumph on her first match point.

Meanwhile, the men made short work of Luxembourg in their opening match.

Paul Drinkhall found himself 6-1 down in the first against Luxembourg No 1 Traian Ciociu, and later had to save game points before taking it 14-12.

From then on it was almost all one-way traffic as Paul finished the task with 11-7, 11-3 ends, before Liam Pitchford blitzed Gilles Michely in only 11 minutes.

And Sam Walker completed the overall victory by seeing off Eric Glod in four, putting his foot down after his opponent had levelled at 1-1.

England's men are back on court at 10am against Turkey, in a match which will be shown on the ETTU live

streaming – a repeat of today's technical gremlins notwithstanding.

The women then finish their group campaign against Azerbaijan, before the men's final group match against Finland.

### **Results/latest scores**

#### **England 3-1 Lithuania**

Kelly Sibley bt Egle Stuckyte 3-0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-5)

Tin-Tin Ho lost to Ruta Paskauskiene 2-3 (11-9, 9-11, 16-14, 1-11, 9-11)

Hannah Hicks bt Vitalija Venckute (11-7, 11-8, 11-9)

Kelly Sibley 3-0 Ruta Paskauskiene (11-7, 11-8, 11-8)

#### **England 3-0 Luxembourg**

Paul Drinkhall bt Traian Ciociu 3-0 (14-12, 11-7, 11-3)

Liam Pitchford bt Gilles Michely 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-1)

Sam Walker bt Eric Glod 3-1 (11-6, 7-11, 11-5, 11-2)

#### **England 2-1 Wales**

Tin-Tin Ho bt Chloe Thomas 3-1 (11-8, 11-9, 8-11, 11-2)

Kelly Sibley lost to Charlotte Carey 2-3 (9-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-2, 10-12)

Hannah Hicks bt Megan Phillips 3-1 (11-6, 9-11, 11-3, 11-6)

Kelly Sibley bt Chloe Thomas 3-1 (11-2, 11-5, 7-11, 11-7)

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