

# Disappointment as promotion slips away

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Tin-Tin Ho will be in action this morning

Day 3 meant it was time for play off action in Lisbon, with both the Women's and Men's teams battling it out for positions 17-24 and looking for promotion into the Championship division.

England's women were first on court and faced a Greece side that finished second behind Croatia in Group F, winning two of their three matches. Unfortunately it wasn't to be, despite a valiant effort from our women they were on the wrong end of a closely fought 3-2 match that went in the favour of Greece.

Kelly Sibley got the women off to the best possible start. Comfortably winning in three straight games. At 4-4 in the first Sibley found another gear to clinch it 11-6. She then started the second as she finished the first, racing into a 5-1 lead. However, her opponent, Papadaki, wasn't going without a fight winning four straight points of her own to level at five a piece. But it wasn't to be enough as Sibley powered her way to an 11-7 end. The third was a routine victory for Sibley as she put England 1-0 up with a final 11-6 game.

The match was levelled at one each, as Aikaterini Toliou defeated young Tin-Tin Ho by a 3-0 scoreline. Tin-Tin, ranked 45 places lower than her opponent, couldn't double England's advantage as the Greek took a strong hold on the match and wouldn't let go.

Hannah was next on court and put England 2-1 up and within touching distance of a team victory, after coming through a five set thriller with Filareti Exarchou. Hannah eventually clinched it 11-8 in the decider, in what was a much closer match than their last outing (Hannah winning 3-0 in the same competition 4 years ago in Ostrava, Czech Republic). Hannah twice lead (1-0 and 2-1) with two 11-5 games, but left it till the fifth to confirm victory.

Sibley agonisingly saw 12 games points go by in the course of her second match. She lost 3-0 in three very, very close games all going to deuce. Despite having more game points than her opponent during the match, Sibley failed to convert any of them and was later punished by Toliou, who claimed her second match for the Greek women. Sibley will no doubt be left feeling frustrated, but she fought till the end going down, 11-13, 16-18, 13-15.

This meant that the match was all level at 2-2, with one match to go. Tin-Tin faced Maria Christoforaki in the decider, but it wasn't to be for the English girl, bidding to help her team progress. Ho lost 3-0 going down 10-12, 5-11, 9-11. Game one was neck and neck all the way but at 10-10 the Greek faired better, taking two on the trot to win it 12-10. Unfortunately Tin-Tin couldn't stay with her opponent in game two, as seven straight points sealed it for Christoforaki. It was a similar story in game three, as the early exchanges went both ways, but it was in the latter stages that Christoforaki pulled away to take it 11-9.

The men started the day at 13.00 with a tie against Belgium. The Belgians finished second behind Serbia in their group.

The theme of close games that we saw in the women's match carried on over into the first of the men's matches. Liam Pitchford started slowly but came form 9-2 and 10-5 down in the first game, before eventually sealing it 14-12. Pitchford had to come from behind once again in game two. Trailing by three points for the majority of the game he took charge from 9-6 down winning 5 consecutive points. Game three also went the distance with no more than two points separating Pitchford and his opponent at any time, the Englishman finally taking it 17-15.

Looking to capitalise on Liam's good start, Paul Drinkhall walked out onto court to face Cedric Nuytinck (WR 273). Unfortunately he was unable to double England's lead as he fell 3-1. In game two, Drinkhall always had the lead and it appeared as though the English number 2 had turned a corner and could force a comeback to take the match. However, it wasn't to be as Nuytinck comfortably took game three 11-5 and edged the fourth 14-12.

With the men's match equal at 1-1 Darius stepped up, hopeful of giving England an advantage going into the fourth match. Knight started well, taking the first game 11-9. But it was downhill from here as he lost three consecutive games to his opponent, Robin Devos. The world number 237, and Belgium's number two scraped the second game 11-9, but the margin was more comfortable in games three and four winning 11-4 and 11-7 respectively.

Cedric Nuytinck dealt England a double blow as he backed up his win against Drinkhall with another unexpected victory, this time against Liam Pitchford. Pitchford twice had the lead, taking games one and three 11-7. But it was the Belgian that held his nerve taking the fourth 11-9 and crucially the decider by the same scoreline. This defeat ended the men's hope of another promotion, following a successful World Team Championships campaign earlier this year.

This morning's narrow defeat for our women meant playing for positions 21-24 this afternoon, with a Bulgaria side providing the challenge.

Proceedings didn't start too well with Tin-Tin tasting defeat against Sibel Remzi. The Bulgarian started the quicker of the two, racing out of the blocks to win the first couple 11-4 and 11-5. Tin-Tin showed good determination and spirit to claw an end back winning 11-7. For a moment it looked as though Ho would take it to yet another decider. Leading 9-7 the Paddington youngster couldn't convert and saw her lead slip away into an 11-9 loss, Remzi clinching it 3-1.

Sibley restored hope, with a devastating 3-0 win versus Anelia Karova. In quick time Sibley wrapped up the match 11-8, 11-5, 11-4. This levelled the match, and things quickly looked a lot better for the women.

Especially when Hannah Hicks soon after put England into a 2-1 lead. Hicks didn't experience any problems in her match against Elitsza Zamfirova cruising through the gears to dispatch the Bulgarian 11-5, 11-9, 11-8.

A routine Kelly Sibley win meant that England's women ended the day on a positive note and would return to the hall on day 4 fighting for 21st place. Sibley beat Sibel Remzi 3-1 winning the first two ends very comfortably. A slight blip saw her lose the third 11-9. However, Sibley quickly regained her composure to finish her Bulgarian counterpart off 11-4 in the fourth.

England men faced what looked like a tough draw against Slovenia at 19.00 on day three, and tough it proved. Too tough in fact, as the boys succumbed to 3-1 defeat.

England's number one, Liam Pitchford got things under way with a closely fought 3-2 win against the dangerous Bojan Tokic. They took it in turns to take a game each, Pitchford opening 11-6 and Tokic levelling by the same scoreline. Pitchford re-took the lead, this time with an 11-8 end. Tokic made sure that it would go all the way by winning a close fourth 11-9. Then as they do, the decider went all the way deuce. Tokic led the way till Pitchford opened up a game point at 10-9, having missed his first opportunity he made no such mistake second time round taking it 12-10.

Unfortunately, this was as good as it got late into Friday evening, as three straight losses followed. First Sam Walker lost 3-0 to Jan Zibrat world ranked 280. The Slovenian proving too strong on this occasion, taking the match comfortably 11-9, 11-6, 11-8.

Darius Knight fared slightly better against Sas Lasan, but disappointingly the outcome remained the same. Knight started well and took the first 11-9, but quickly found himself 2-1 down following 11-8 and 11-5 games for Lasan. Knight pushed his opponent all the way by winning the fourth but was just kept from crossing the finishing line as he lost out 14-12 in the deciding fifth game.

At 2-1 down, the men's chances of victory rested on the young shoulders of Worksop's Sam Walker. He faced Bojan Tokic who, sadly for Sam, showed his class to power past the Englishman. In just 17 minutes Tokic wrapped things up winning 11-6, 11-8, 11-6.

This means that on day four, our men will battle it out for a final finish of either 23rd or 24th place.

Be sure to follow us on Twitter tomorrow for all of the latest news and results as they break out from Lisbon.

## Results/latest scores

### England 2-3 Greece

Kelly Sibley bt Angeliki Papadaki 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-6)

Tin-Tin Ho lost to Aikaterini Toliou 0-3

Hannah Hicks bt Filareti Exarchou 3-2 (11-5, 11-13, 11-5, 9-11, 11-8)

Kelly Sibley lost to Aikaterini Toliou 0-3 (11-13, 16-18, 13-15)

Tin-Tin Ho lost to Maria Christoforaki 0-3 (10-12, 5-11, 9-11)

### England 1-3 Belgium

Liam Pitchford bt Jean-Michel Saive 3-0 (14-12, 11-9, 17-15)

Paul Drinkhall lost to Cedric Nuytinck 1-3 (9-11, 11-8, 5-11, 12-14)

Darius Knight lost to Robin Devos 1-3 (11-8, 9-11, 4-11, 7-11)

Liam Pitchford lost to Cedric Nuytinck 2-3 (11-7, 9-11, 11-7, 9-11, 9-11)

### England 3-1 Bulgaria

Tin-Tin Ho lost to Sibel Remzi 1-3 (4-11, 5-11, 11-7, 9-11)

Kelly Sibley bt Anelia Karova 3-0 (11-8, 11-5, 11-4)

Hannah Hicks bt Elitsza Zamfirova 3-0 (11-5, 11-9, 11-8)

Kelly Sibley bt Sibel Remzi 3-1 (11-4, 11-5, 9-11, 11-4)

### England 1-3 Slovenia

Liam Pitchford by Bojan Tokic 3-2 (11-6, 6-11, 11-8, 9-11, 12-10)

Sam Walker lost to Jan Zibrat 0-3 (9-11, 6-11, 8-11)

Darius Knight lost to Sas Lasan 2-3 (11-9, 8-11, 5-11, 11-6, 12-14)

Sam Walker lost to Bojan Tokic 0-3 (6-11, 8-11, 6-11)

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