

Brilliant Pitchford into last 32 but Drinkhall is out

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Liam Pitchford in action in Suzhou (ITTF picture)

Liam Pitchford today notched one of the best victories of his career at the World Championships.

The 21-year-old from Chesterfield beat world No 20 Tiago Apolonia of Portugal 4-2 to move into the last 32 in Suzhou.

And he came from 2-1 down to do it, advancing courtesy of an 11-8, 8-11, 10-12, 11-4, 11-6, 11-9 scoreline.

He will meet Saehyuk Joo in the next round tomorrow after the Korean beat Daniel Habesohn of Austria in four straight.

The players have the incentive of a probable match against world No 1 Ma Long in the last 16.

Paul Drinkhall could not provide England with a memorable double as he was beaten 4-1 by world No 18 Chun Ting Wong of Hong Kong.

It was a somewhat flattering scoreline though as the 25-year-old acquitted himself superbly in a match in which there was very little between the two players.

The 23-year-old Wong took the first 12-10, having not led until the very end. But Paul levelled 11-9 in the second. The match continued to be nip and tuck but Paul's serve into the net gave the 16th seed the third 11-8.

The fourth followed 11-9 and it was only in the final set that the gap in rankings showed slightly as Wong took it to six to complete a 4-1 (12-10, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-6) victory.

Meanwhile, Liam has been reacting to his 4-2 (7-11, 11-5, 11-5, 10-12, 11-7, 11-7) first-round victory over Kalinikos Kreanga of Greece.

"You cannot underestimate a player like Kalin Kreanga," said Liam. "I lost the first game, it was difficult to get used to the conditions in the hall and he was very sharp.

"After losing the opening game I settled down, I changed my service and receive of service; I put my foot on the pedal.

"In the fourth game I rather lost my way, so it was a case in the fifth game of start all over again and play my game."

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