



Peake hits debut high; England men march on

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Posted On: September 27, 2015

England men kept their promotion hopes alive with a 3-1 victory over Lithuania at the European Championships today.

Alfredas Udra, world ranked No 396, did his best to upset England by beating Liam Pitchford in five and then just losing to Paul Drinkhall in a decider, but it was England who prevailed.

Drinkhall's 11-8, 11-9, 11-6 victory over Tomas Mikutis might have suggested a routine outing, but Udra was not having any of it as he twice shook off Pitchford comebacks to seal a 3-2 win (11-7, 9-11, 11-6, 4-11, 11-8).

Andrew Baggaley took only 16 minutes to see off Zeimys Kestutis 13-11, 11-9, 11-3 and restore England's advantage, before Drinkhall also found Udra a formidable opponent, twice having to come from a set down before shading it 11-13, 11-4, 10-12, 11-3, 11-9.

England are next on court at noon UK time on Monday against Belgium, who beat Turkey 3-2.

In the women's competition, Lois Peake's five-set victory on her senior England debut was a massive highlight as England lost 3-1 to Slovenia today.

The 18-year-old from Chichester, with a world ranking of No 626, beat Tamara Pavcnik to put England back in the match after falling 2-0 behind.

It was an impressive performance too as Peake let match points slip in the third against an opponent ranked 210 places above her, and then saw Pavcnik level. But Peake kept her head and took the decider 11-8 to complete the 3-2 scoreline (11-8, 11-5, 11-13, 7-11, 11-8).

After Kelly Sibley lost the first rubber 3-1 to Alex Galic (4-11, 9-11, 11-3, 4-11), the other matches all went to five sets.

Maria Tsaptsinos, taking on world No 252 Manca Fajmut, made light of her own ranking of 515 to twice battle

back to level, but her opponent ultimately shaded it 11-9, 8-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-8.

Fajmut then won the fourth rubber against Sibley 6-11, 11-7, 11-5, 5-11, 11-8 to seal overall victory and see England into the play-offs for positions 21-24.

They will face Italy, who lost 3-0 to Spain, at 6am UK time on Monday.

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