



## Pitchford: I can take a lot from Ovtcharov clash

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Liam Pitchford says he made world No 5 Ovtcharov 'nervous' during the match and is confident he can use the experience to take his own game to another level.

"It was probably the best game I've played for a while. I came out with nothing to lose," said Pitchford.

"I spoke to Cookie (Alan Cooke, Performance Coach) before and we spoke about how I needed to play. I started off well and that first set was probably the best I've ever played.

"He's very hard to play against because he's always changing his game. I think I made life hard for him and he looked nervous, but he's No 5 in the world for a reason and he found a way.

"I honestly believe if I'd have played anyone else it would have been a different story and I'd have won.

"I'm disappointed to lose but I'm quite proud of how I performed."

Along the way, Pitchford won an amazing 30-shot rally, which was rated one of the points of the tournament and in which both players seemed to defend and attack in turns.

"That was probably the point of my life," admitted Pitchford. "It was a nice match to be involved in and that point was a bonus – and it's always better when you win them!"

On the doubles, where he and Paul Drinkhall reached the last 16, Pitchford said: "I think me and Paul played some of our best doubles we've played in a while. "We had three match points, so it was disappointing to lose, but I can't see why we can't have a chance of getting a medal next time, and I'm pretty confident for the singles next time as well."

The other members of the men's squad have also given their reaction to the tournament:

### **Paul Drinkhall**

On being defeated 4-2 by Lubomir Jancarik of the Czech Republic (9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 7-11, 3-11, 6-11) in the last 64 of the singles: "I felt better than Jancarik but he just kept a steady level all the way through and it's happened a few times now when I've lost games maybe because I'm not able to keep my focus long enough.

"It's something I've got to put right for the future. It's one of the worst feelings, losing because of something like that. I've got to get fitter but it happens sometimes when I'm in great shape and it's quite tough knowing exactly how to work on that part of the game.

"I think I have got a lot better over the last year or two. I've just got to keep working hard and hopefully get it right for the majors, like the Worlds and hopefully Olympics if I get there."

On the team event and losing 3-1 to Belgium: "I think it's disappointing. We've come here to try to win the category. Obviously we didn't do that. We found out the different system during the tournament and we've done pretty much as much as we could have as far as next year goes.

"I'm disappointed and the team are disappointed. Obviously Liam picked up a niggles so it was a tough match against Belgium but I still think with our team we could have or even should have won the match."

### **Andrew Baggaley**

"I think overall it was a good team performance. Obviously we're slightly disappointed with losing to Belgium. I think we're a better side than them but it's all on the day and they played better, that's how it goes.

"I ended up winning eight matches and I lost three (across team and individual singles), so I'm pretty pleased with that. Obviously I know I can do more but overall I think I played well and I've got more to come.

"In the singles I won three matches and lost a very tight match to get through. Zhmudenko is also a top player, he can also beat lots of top players. It was nip and tuck.

"I'm there or thereabouts now. I'm quite optimistic about my game, I've just got to move on and play some international opens."

### **Sam Walker**

"I think we did what we needed to do. It would have been nice to win the division outright so that was a bit disappointing to lose in the semi-final against Belgium, particularly for me coming into that match."

On the men's singles: "I didn't start at my best. My confidence was a bit low going from the start of the season I've had – I've not had the best start. But I managed to scrape through my group just about, on countback and I had a good win in that, so that was positive for me.

"My first-round match against Skachkov was good, it was very close. I lost 4-0 but I had my chances and just a few things didn't go my way and he was a bit better in a few areas on the day.

"I think I can take away some positive from the tournament and hopefully next time I can improve on my results."

\* Danny Reed was unable to compete in the singles and doubles because of illness.

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