

Paul's off to a winning start in Rio Qualification

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Paul Drinkhall has opened his Rio Olympic Qualification Event campaign with 4-3 victory over Florent Lambiet and 4-0 victory over Ibrahim Gunduz.

Drinkhall v Lambiet

Representing Team GB, Drinkhall, who is ranked #68 in the world, made hard work of his first group stage match. His opponent, Beligum's Florent Lambiet, is ranked 133 places lower in the world rankings at #201.

Getting off to a slow start, Paul lost the first two sets 5-11 and 6-11 respectively.

However the 2016 National Champion managed to find good form in the third, fourth and fifth sets – 11-8, 11-5, 11-7 – to gain the lead in the match 3-2.

A tense sixth set saw Drinkhall save six game points, but he was unable to save the seventh, eventually losing it 11-13 and sending the match into a final deciding set.

Deuce in the final game was a nervous affair for any Team GB spectator, but fortunately it was Drinkhall who came out on top as he took the game 13-11.

Paul will be glad to get an opening victory under his belt, especially against an opponent who he has previously lost to in Sweden (2-4 at the 2014 Swedish Open).

Speaking to the ETTU, Paul said: "Two years ago Florent beat me at the Swedish open, but we played three or four matches at that time in Belgium's League."

"He is very tough adversary."

"Today I was on the top of the game most of the time. I gave him too many balls, by making easy mistakes, which is unusual for me. Although I was not afraid in the close situation, because I always felt that I was controlling the game."

Watch the highlights

Please note, this video uses flash player and therefore is only view-able on a desktop computer

Drinkhall v Gunduz

Paul faced Ibrahim Gunduz in his second match of the Rio 2016 Qualifying Event. In contrast to the opening match, Paul's second match of the day was a far more straight forward affair.

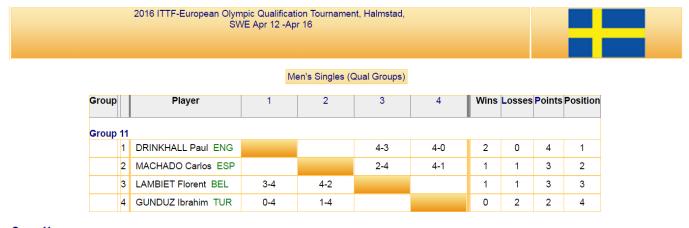
The GB player made light work of his Turksish opponent, who is ranked #302 in the world, defeating him in straight sets (11-4, 11-9, 11-6, 11-8).

It means Paul now leads his qualification group with two wins from two matches.

He will be looking to continue his 100% record tomorrow against Spanish opponent, Carlos Machado. Their match will be at 11.40am tomorrow (Tuesday) – UK time.

Another victory will guarantee him through to the main stages of the competition, where he will join fellow GB player Liam Pitchford – who automatically progressed through the group stages as he is seeded in the top #16 of the competition.

As it stands:



| Group 11 | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 1 3 11:40 12/4/2016 Table 1 | DRINKHALL Paul ENG | vs LAMBIET Florent BEL | 5-11, 6-11, 11-8, 11-5, 11-7, 11-13, 13-11 | 4-3 DRINKHALL Paul |
| 2 2 4 11:40 12/4/2016 Table 2 | MACHADO Carlos ESP | vs GUNDUZ Ibrahim TUR | 11-8, 5-11, 11-9, 14-12, 11-5, -, - | 4-1 MACHADO Carlos |
| 3 1 4 16:40 12/4/2016 Table 3 | DRINKHALL Paul ENG | vs GUNDUZ Ibrahim TUR | 11-4, 11-9, 11-6, 11-8, -, -, - | 4-0 DRINKHALL Paul |
| 4 2 3 16:40 12/4/2016 Table 4 | MACHADO Carlos ESP | vs LAMBIET Florent BEL | 11-2, 8-11, 12-14, 11-8, 13-15, 6-11, - | 2-4 LAMBIET Florent |
| 5 1 2 12:40 13/4/2016 Table 5 | DRINKHALL Paul ENG | vs MACHADO Carlos ESP | 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7 | - |
| 6 3 4 12:40 13/4/2016 Table 6 | LAMBIET Florent BEL | vs GUNDUZ Ibrahim TUR | 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7 | - |

As it stands (click to update)

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