



Drinkhall two wins from Rio, but Pitchford is eliminated

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Posted On: April 15, 2016

Paul Drinkhall is two victories from clinching a place at the Rio Olympics, but Liam Pitchford's competition is over.

Drinkhall beat world No 88 Lubomir Jancarik of the Czech Republic 4-2 in his first match of the day at the European qualifying event in Halmstad.

He then came from 2-0 down to overcome Ovidiu Ionescu of Romania, ranked at No 73, meaning another two victories on Saturday would see him qualify for Rio.

"It was a fantastic match with unbelievable rallies," Drinkhall said. "It is a shame it is not on video, we have practised together for years in Bremen and we knew each other so well; we have to play at our best to beat each other."

His next opponent is a familiar foe – Lei Kou of Ukraine, who [beat him in the bronze medal match](#) at last year's European Games. Drinkhall faces the world No 46 at 10am UK time on Saturday.

England No 1 Pitchford was beaten 4-1 by Zhiwen He of Spain, the 54-year-old world No 92, in a close match.

It does not end his Olympic dreams, however, as the Rio field will be finalised next month based on the world rankings after all the qualifying tournaments around the world have been played.

Results

Paul Drinkhall bt Lubomir Jancarik (CZE) 4-2 (11-8, 8-11, 11-7, 11-4, 9-11, 11-1)

Zhiwen He (ESP) bt Liam Pitchford 4-1 (11-9, 12-10, 11-8, 6-11, 11-9)

Drinkhall bt Ovidiu Ionescu (ROM) 4-2 (10-12, 9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-7, 11-8)

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