



No regrets for proud Drinkhall as run ends

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Paul Drinkhall says he couldn't have done any more in his quest to reach the Rio Olympics quarter-finals and has no regrets.

And he believes the confidence he has gained from his great run will stand Team GB in good stead when they take on France in the team event on Friday.

Drinkhall became only the third Brit to reach the last 16 of an Olympic competition and the first since Carl Prean in 1992, beating higher-ranked players Gao Ning and Andrej Gacina on the way.

But he was unable to add world No 9 Vladimir Samsonov to his impressive list of scalps, despite a stirring comeback from 3-0 and 10-5 down, saving a total of eight match points before six-time Olympian Samsonov prevailed 4-2 (11-9, 11-6, 11-8, 15-17, 7-11, 11-8).

"I left everything out there and I don't really have any regrets," said Drinkhall. "I tried to do everything the best I could and it wasn't good enough today.

"He's obviously a great player, he's been here many times before. It's a shame because I feel I was really getting into the match, but he's got a lot of experience and he's been a great player for a long time.

"He'll be physically fit enough to play seven sets – he does it probably every day. I would have been confident had I come back from 3-0, winning three sets in a row, but it wouldn't have been a walk in the park [in the final set]. He's a top player, it wouldn't have fazed him, he'd have just come onto the table as if it was the first set again.

"From the first set it was very close, it was just a couple of points here or there that could have changed it.

"I felt good this week. I felt like I could have gone further than this. It's been a fantastic tournament, I've had some good wins, almost had a good comeback there. It's been good fun and I've got to pick myself up for the team event."

That team event will see Great Britain play familiar foes France in the first round – the team beaten by the same three England players in the World Team Championships quarter-finals in March.

Drinkhall added: “This gives me confidence going into the team event, I’ve just got to keep my game up now and get refreshed for Friday, making sure the team are confident for the game against France.

“We pretty much know who will play in the doubles already. It’s going to be a tough system for us I think because we don’t play as much doubles as the French have done. I normally play doubles with Liam Pitchford, but most likely that won’t be the case on Friday.

“We are very confident in the team as individuals and we just need to make sure we’re in the best shape we can be. And, like I did in the singles there, we need to make sure we have no regrets.”

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