



Super Walker puts GB into quarters!

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Sam Walker saved three match points on his way to defeating world No 17 Simon Gauzy as Great Britain defeated France 3-2 to reach the Olympic team quarter-finals.

The 21-year-old, making his Olympic debut, won five points in a row from 10-7 down in the deciding game of the deciding match to seal the biggest victory of his career and set up a quarter-final against China.

This is the moment Team [#GBR](#) beat [#FRA](#)! Bring on [#CHN](#) in the next round! [@SamWalker_tt](#) [@liampitchford](#) [@pdrinkhall](#) [pic.twitter.com/kk9eo3Ez7E](#)

— Table Tennis England (@TableTennisENG) [August 13, 2016](#)

As they had in the World Team Championships in Kuala Lumpur in March, the French and British players served up an absolute classic.

And it was Walker's dramatic heroics at the end of a tie lasting almost four hours which ensured the outcome was the same, with French hearts broken once more.

All five matches went the distance and the tension tightened with each one. Liam Pitchford saved one match point against Tristan Flore in match four, but that was just a foretaste of the drama to come.

Walker, having trailed 1-0 and then led 2-1 in games, was pegged back to 2-2. He led 4-1, 6-3 and 7-5 in the final game but Gauzy, suddenly on a hot streak, pulled out to 10-7 and put France within a point of the quarters.

But seeing his first two match points saved seemed to drain Gauzy and empower Walker, who went on a dazzling run of five in a row to seal a brilliant victory which was a triumph for belief and positivity by all three players and coach Alan Cooke.

Almost four hours earlier, Pitchford twice came from a game down in the opener against world No 17 Gauzy, but could not repeat his victory in that spellbinding quarter-final at the Worlds.

He was 7-2 and 10-8 down in the first before succumbing 12-10, but pulled out an early three-point lead in the second on his way to taking it 11-7.

Both men had two game points in the third but Gauzy claimed it 14-12, only for Liam to again level, taking his first game point at 10-8.

But Gauzy's run from 2-2 to 7-2 proved decisive in the fifth, which he won 11-5.

Paul Drinkhall versus Emmanuel Lebesson had been the dramatic decider back in Kuala Lumpur but was the second match this time. Again it went the distance and again the outcome was the same as Drinkhall took it in the fifth.

He scorched to a 10-2 lead in the first, taking it 11-4, but had to come from behind as Lebesson found his forehand range in the next two. But Paul got his nose in front in both the fourth and fifth, earning his third win in Rio against a top-30 player.

Walker's introduction to the Olympics came in the doubles and he and Drinkhall made a fast start against Lebesson & Flore as they moved smoothly into a 2-0 lead. But the French pair fought back and the recurring theme of a decider reared its head again. But the momentum stayed with France as they moved 2-1 up to ensure Britain would have to win the last two matches to progress.

When Pitchford trailed Flore 2-0 – particularly as the second game had been an 11-2 blitz in the Frenchman's favour – that mountain looked a lot steeper. 11-6 in the third kept Pitchford in it but in a tense fourth, he faced a match point. No problem – three points later, it was 2-2 and Liam roared with delight.

Fired up, he came at Flore in the decider, building up a 7-3 lead. Flore closed up to 7-7 but three of the next four points gave Pitchford two match points. And his fourth-set roar was repeated with interest as he grabbed the second of them to set up Walker's heroics.

Here's the final scores as Team [#GBR](#) knock out [#FRA](#) in the [#Rio2016 #TableTennis!!](#)
pic.twitter.com/pPJyfZ0EMF

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Results

Great Britain 3 France 2

Simon Gauzy bt Liam Pitchford 3-2 (12-10, 7-11, 14-12, 8-11, 11-5)

Paul Drinkhall bt Emmanuel Lebesson 3-2 (11-4, 8-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-6)

Lebesson & Tristan Flore bt Drinkhall & Sam Walker 3-2 (6-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6)

Pitchford bt Flore 3-2 (10-12, 2-11, 11-6, 12-10, 11-9)

Walker bt Gauzy 3-2 (7-11, 11-8, 13-11, 9-11, 12-10)

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