



Walker: I never stopped believing

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Focus and belief helped Sam Walker to turn around an amazing match against Simon Gauzy to put Great Britain into the Olympic team quarter-finals.

The Worksop player, making his first Olympic appearance, came from 10-7 down in the deciding set of the deciding match against Simon Gauzy with a run of five points to seal an amazing victory.

Every one of the five matches in the tie went the distance and Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford also won a match apiece as Team GB booked a date with top seeds China on Sunday.

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

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Afterwards, Walker said: "I managed to stay quite focused. It's a noisy hall but I managed to shut it out quite well. Obviously I can hear the guys behind me supporting me.

"Our support was amazing and that helped me get through it but I think I was focused still at 10-7 down in the last and I never stopped believing that I could win it.

"I received serve really well but in the rallies I think I was quite positive as well. Gauzy is a great rally player so I tried not to go into the rallies as much as I could. Even in the rallies I was playing quite well.

"It's been hard waiting for today. Just watching everyone play the singles event, I've been training but just wanted to get out there and itching to go.

"The doubles was a bit of a disappointment today but if we hadn't lost the doubles, I wouldn't have played that

singles.

“At the end of the day, it’s a team game and the team won so we’re all really happy to be in the next round.”

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

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Drinkhall, who made it 1-1 with victory over Emmanuel Lebesson, said: “Over the last 18 months, I’ve played a lot better. I am playing particularly well here and a feel a lot more stable.

“Against Emmanuel in that match, he’s a very tough player to play so it was great to win that match.

“And then obviously for us all to get one match as well was great. For us to win as a team and all have a role in the win.”

Pitchford’s victory over Tristan Flore made it 2-2 after he had earlier lost to Gauzy and Walker and Drinkhall had been beaten in the doubles.

“In the first set against Tristan I was 10-8 up then I lost that and lost a bit of confidence,” said Pitchford.

“After the second set I tried to play with a bit more spin on my backhand, try to get it over the table faster than him and put him under a bit of pressure.

“He played well. I struggled with his serves and he had a match point but it was just about fighting through it really.

“It was nerve wracking-watching Sam to say the least. He played amazingly well and I’m really proud of him. It’s not easy to come back from 10-7 down against the number 18 in the world. But he did it and I’m ecstatic.”



The British boys celebrate their amazing victory (ITTF picture/Remy Gros)

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