



Tin-Tin completes fantastic England win

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Tin-Tin Ho won the deciding match as England came from 2-1 down to defeat Slovenia in their European Championships qualifying match tonight.

Kelly Sibley was the star of the show with two victories as England won what is likely to be a crucial victory a campaign which will decide which division they play in at the finals next year.

With both countries having lost 3-0 to Germany earlier this season, they knew the importance of getting a victory on the board at Medway Park in a match stream live on the Team GB Facebook page.

[Click here to read about England Leopards men's match in Holland](#)

Slovenia elected to put up their third-ranked player Tamara Pavcnik as their No 1, perhaps with an eye on holding sway in later match-ups.

She started against Sibley, a gap of around 170 in their respective world rankings, and the English No 1's performance was an object lesson in dealing with whichever opponent is in front of you as she won in three straight for the loss of only 10 points in total.

Two of those were against her serve on the first two points of the match, but a booming backhand winner a couple of points later settled any nerves and Sibley was in charge from that moment, overpowering her young opponent on both flanks.



Kelly Sibley on her way to defeating Tamara Pavcnik (picture by Alan Man)

Slovenia's team selection began to pay dividends in the second match when world No 139 Alex Galic took on Tin-Tin Ho, some 52 places below her.

The first was nip and tuck and Ho was handily placed at 7-6 up when she sent a serve into the net, starting a run of points which took her opponent to 10-7.

Ho saved those three game points, the final one by pouncing on a poor serve with a vicious forehand winner.

[Click here to see more pictures from the match on Flickr](#)

But Galic took the next two points to close it out 12-10 and that was as close as it got for the English girl, despite saving three more game points in the second. That game finished 11-7, as did the third, and the visitors were level.

Karina Le Fevre's match against Manca Fajmut had the feel of a pivotal clash, no more so than in the third set.

Having lost the first and then won the second, saving a game point on the way, Le Fevre twice served for the third. Both times the chance went away and it was Fajmut who took it 13-11, going on to take the fourth and put Slovenia in front.



Karina Le Fevre takes on Manca Fajmut (picture by Alan Man)

When Sibley lost the first 11-9 to Galic, her club-mate in the French League, Slovenia might have scented victory, and she then held game point in the second. But in another pivotal moment, Sibley won three points on the bounce to level the match.

With Sibley drawing on the energy and enthusiasm of a home crowd, she won two more sets and it was all square and into the normal procedure of a Leopards deciding match – well, they do say they don't change their spots.

Ho had appeared nervous in her first match, and admitted afterwards she was probably trying too hard – and there was a bit of a hangover from that as Pavcnik took the first game.

But the Paddington teenager came out for the second game a completely different player, blitzing into a 6-0 lead and taking it for the loss of only two points.

When she won the third set to five, England were within touching distance of another famous win.

There were a few bumps in the fourth, but a 12-10 scoreline brought the crowd to its feet and gave England a vital group win as they head into their home clash with Germany in Preston on December 13 ([click here](#) to buy tickets).

Afterwards Tin-Tin said:

“It feels really great, playing at home I wanted to take the opportunity and perform under pressure.

“In the first match I wasn't really playing my game, I was trying too hard. In the second match I relaxed a bit and even when she opened up I was able to block it back and get it on the table and move her around.

“We had really good team spirit. Kelly played really well to take it back for us and give me the opportunity and

Karina also played well.

"Now I'm really excited to play Germany again – it's always good to play against higher-ranked players."

Kelly Sibley added:

"I think it was absolutely fantastic. We knew it was going to be very tight and it proved that way and went down to the wire. When it got tight and we needed to step up, we all did it really well.

"We all had chances in the games we lost, we weren't outplayed at all and we showed we've got great team spirit. I'm very proud of the team for getting over the line together.

"On a personal note, I'm very pleased with my own performance. Against Alex Galic, we play at the same club and I knew it was going to be tight but I thought I handled it well and the home crowd got me through when I was struggling."

Karina Le Fevre said:

"It was just a few points here and there that made a difference in my match, it was close all the way through, I won a deuce game then lost a deuce game. I wish I could have done a few things a bit better but I tried my best.

"It's a good feeling though, to win in front of a home crowd. We knew we had a chance to win but obviously executing it is difficult. We had a great start and then the momentum changed.

"When Kelly went on for her second game, I don't think the momentum was with her either but there's a good spirit in the team and we helped to lift her and change the momentum back again."

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