



Weerasinghe sinks Pitchford at Swedish event

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Posted On: February 25, 2017

Helshan Weerasinghe defeated Liam Pitchford for the first time on his way to the quarter-finals of the Safir International tournament in Sweden.

The pair met in the last 32, Pitchford having gone straight into the knockout stage as second seed and Weerasinghe having won his group.

Pitchford started by beating Japan's Naoki Ueno in four sets in the last 64, while Weerasinghe began with defeats of Christian Friedrich of Austria in the first round and Lucas Tan of Singapore in the last 64 – the latter by 3-2 (8-11, 11-8, 12-14, 11-6, 11-7).

It was the younger player who started fastest in the all-English clash as Weerasinghe, who turns 20 next month, won the first two. Pitchford pulled one back but his opponent took the fourth to seal it 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 9-11, 14-12).

Weerasinghe said:

"I played really, really well. Before the match, I didn't really have any expectations in terms of the result but I decided to go for it and as the match went on I grew and grew in confidence and put him under pressure."

Weerasinghe next beat Magnus Mansson 3-0 (7, 5, 8) in the last 16 before losing in the quarters to Japan's Yusuke Watanabe, going down 3-0 (8, 8, 9).

The Swedish-based Englishman added:

"I played pretty well throughout the day. I took it one match at a time, played the ball and not the opponent and grew in confidence as it went on."

“Hopefully I can take that momentum into the Nationals. The last three years in the Under-21s I’ve lost in one semi-final and two finals, so I hope I can change that around.”

David McBeath was defeated 3-2 (11-8, 6-11, 9-11, 11-6, 11-5) in the last 16 by Shunsuke Togami of Japan.

Top seed Hui Xu won the tournament, defeating Masato Kakitsuka in the final.

The tournament took place in the middle of the Swedish Youth Open in Orebro and a host of other English players competed. McBeath, Tom Jarvis, Shayan Siraj and Matt Leete all won their groups to progress to the knockout stages, where Leete went out in the first round and Jarvis and Siraj in the second.

Samuel Kwan, Luke Savill, Joe Cope, Sam Chesterman, Reece Chamdal, Kieran Wardell, Amirul Hussain and Ethan Walsh were eliminated in the group stages.

Charlotte Bardsley, Ruby Chan, Gauri Duhan, Mollie Patterson, Denise Payet, Darcie Proud and Hannah Ward also competed, with only Payet reaching the knockout stage, where she was defeated in the first round.

Hiba Feredj, Emily Haskell, Payet and Duhan were all defeated in the first round of the Under-21 competition. In the U21 men’s, Weerasinghe reached the quarter-finals, while Matt Leete, Kwan, Carl Baldry, Savill, Tom Jarvis and Shayan Siraj were also competing.

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