

A great day for both teams in Ostrava

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At the European Table Tennis Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic, it was a superb day for both teams.

The Womens team finished off their group matches in the morning with a 3-1 win over Norway, one for Joanne Parker, two for Kelly Sibley, Hannah Hicks had a real battle at no 3 with Marte Aasebo, Hannah lost the first end, won the second on deuce and stood 2-1 ahead after the third game but the Norwegian hit back to win the last two games comfortably. Match 3-1 to England

The Girls finished the group in 2nd place behind Lithuania who were unbeaten, this placed the team into the Championship playoffs against a group winner in the shape of Greece.

Joanna Parker started proceedings against Ekaterina Ntoulaki, the world number 150, the Greek hitting game was just too much for Joanna who took the third game but had to succumb in the fourth. Kelly Sibley had no problem at all beating Maria Christoforaki to level the match and Hannah Hicks saw off Filareti Exarchouin in three straight games to put England 2-1 ahead.

In the fourth match Kelly Sibley faced Ekaterina Ntoulaki, the world number 150, in a highly aggressive and entertaining battle Kelly triumphed in 3 straight games recovering in the third game from a 6-2 deficit to take the game on deuce.

England are still on track for the Challenge Division Championships and must face Serbia tomorrow at 1 pm in the semi finals

At the same time as the Women were playing Greece, a superb team effort by the England Mens team ensured a 9-12th place result as Romania were beaten 3-2.

Liam Pitchford started against world no 32 Adrian Crisan and what a fight ensued, the first four games were shared equally two at 11-6 each way and two at 11-8 each way. The fifth set was a point for point battle which finished 12-10 in favour of the Romanian Star. Next up Paul Drinkhall against world no 115 Constantin Cioti, it did not look too promising as the Romanian took the first two games but Paul recovered to claim the final three games for a 3-2 victory which tied the match at 1-1

Third match Danny Reed against Adrian Dodean, first game went to Danny, the Romanian recovered to take the second game but strong play by Danny won the third and fourth games to put England ahead 2-1.

Next, Paul Drinkhall against Adrian Crisan the world no 32. The Romanian was again just too good, Paul took the second game but the Romanian ran out a 3-1 winner to tie the match at 2-2.

The fifth game was a superb display by Liam Pitchford, against world no 115 Constantin Cioti, ranked almost 200 places above Liam. It didn't look that way however, Liam lost the first game on deuce but won the next two games, Cioti responding winning the fourth end 11-3 but Liam returned the favor in a storming performance in the fifth game winning the game 11-2, the individual match 3-2 and the team match 3-2. A superb team performance with all three players contributing and Darius Knight giving his all on the sidelines too.

This guarantees England Men with a 9th to 12th place finish, and secures Championship Division play at the next Championships in Gdansk, Poland. The Men face Greece tomorrow in the 9-12th playoff matches at the same time as the Women face Serbia.

Results

Womens team

Initial Groups

Norway 1 England 3

302 NILSEN, Marthe (NOR) lost to 187 PARKER, Joanna (ENG) 5:11 4:11 4:11
304 ANDERSEN, Therese (NOR) lost to 188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) 3:11 7:11 6:11
303 AASEBO, Marte (NOR) beat 190 HICKS, Hannah (ENG) 8:11 14:12 8:11 11:1 11:6
302 NILSEN, Marthe (NOR) lost to 188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) 1:11 4:11 3:11

Challenge Playoffs

Greece 1 England 3

221 NTOULAKI, Ekaterina (GRE) beat 187 PARKER, Joanna (ENG) 11:5 11:5 6:11 11:6
223 CHRISTOFORAKI, Maria (GRE) lost to 188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) 8:11 6:11 3:11
222 EXARCHOU, Filareti (GRE) lost to 190 HICKS, Hannah (ENG) 4:11 5:11 9:11
221 NTOULAKI, Ekaterina (GRE) lost to 188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) 7:11 9:11 10:12

Mens Team

Position 9-16 Playoffs

Romania 2 England 3

332 CRISAN, Adrian (ROU) beat 194 PITCHFORD, Liam (ENG) 6:11 11:6 8:11 11:8 12:10
334 CIOTI, Constantin (ROU) lost to 191 DRINKHALL, Paul (ENG) 11:3 11:8 9:11 7:11 10:12
336 DODEAN, Adrian (ROU) lost to 193 REED, Daniel (ENG) 10:12 11:3 5:11 10:12
332 CRISAN, Adrian (ROU) beat 191 DRINKHALL, Paul (ENG) 11:5 4:11 11:9 12:10
334 CIOTI, Constantin (ROU) lost to 194 PITCHFORD, Liam (ENG) 12:10 7:11 10:12 11:3 2:11

Photo: Kelly Sibley, a superb win to take the match against Greece – photo courtesy Henk Hommes

By Malcolm Macfarlane

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