

Another good win for the Men against Greece

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Another great team win for the Men against Greece today, another real team effort. The star Greek defender Panagiotis Gionis was too much for both Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford to handle but both beat Dimitrios Papadimitriou. The key to the match was a tremendous recovery by Darius Knight against Konstantinos Papageorgiou, the Greek took the first two games but Darius played superbly in the final three to take the key third match.

The final match against Poland was without Paul Drinkhall who was resting what is hopefully a slight injury. Liam Pitchford began, went to 5 games as usual, went to deuce in the fifth but lost it 15-13 to Daniel Gorak, the world no 167. Danny Reed managed to take the second game in a 3-1 defeat to the world no 122, Bartosz Such. Darius Knight was unable to overcome Jakub Kosowski, the world no 123. England Men finish tenth, a very credible performance with the whole team putting an immensely improved performance over that seen in Moscow a few months ago.

The overall team statistics were

Paul Drinkhall Played 8 Won 3 Lost 5

Liam Pitchford Played 7 Won 3 Lost 4

Darius Knight Played 4 Won 1 Lost 3

Danny Reed Played 5 won 1 lost 4

of Liams 7 matches 5 went to 5 games and he won 2 superb unexpected ones and lost 3 of them. He came so close to much better results. But the key message is one of a team performance that was a joy to behold.

The Women could not find a win on the final day but it was not without trying, against Serbia, Kelly Sibley started with a superb win over Ana Maria Erdelji, the world no 86. Joanna Parker found world no 103, Gabriela Feher too strong and Hannah Hicks was dominated by world no 236 Andrea Todorovia.

The fourth match was an unbelievable battle, Ana Maria Erdelj is a defender with the backhand and a hitter looper with the forehand, Joanna is a defender with a few attacking shots on either wing now. Erdelj took the first game but Joanna looked to be on her way as she took the next two games and stood 8-3 ahead in the fourth game. Then all changed, Erdelj shut up shop and Joanna just could not move off 8, it went to expedite at 8-6, Joanna had her chances in that game still but in the end it slipped away 12-14, the fifth was not really a contest, the additional power and spin of the Erdeli forehand dominated and the team match went to Serbia 3-1.

The Womens team thus faced Russia in their final match for 19th/20th place. Once again Kelly Sibley started with a superb win over Oksana Fadeeva, the world no 114. Russian no 1 and World no 73, Anna Tikhomirova was the key to the Russian win, a girl who stood right at the table and effortlessly pushed back float or chop against Joanna or effortlessly blocked with superb control and speed drive or loop from Kelly Sibley. Neither of our women could find any answers to the problems she posed and in addition Hannah Hicks found world no 111 Svetlana Ganina far too good losing in three straight games. Russia 3-1 and the England Women finish 20th.

Commendable but not as good as I suspect the Women themselves aspired to, Kelly Sibley was superb only losing two matches, both to players ranked well above her. Joanna fought hard but in key matches she couldn't quite find those last two points, Hannah Hicks found it tough but she made one key contribution in the match against Greece, Karina Le Fevre played only one match and that against the minnows from Kosovo, still 100% in the team event, 1 from 1 is not to be sniffed at.

The overall team statistics were

Kelly Sibley Played 10 Won 8 Lost 2
Joanna Parker Played 9 Won 4 Lost 5
Hannah Hicks Played 6 Won 1 Lost 5
Karina Le Fevre Played 1 Won 1 Lost 0

There was possibly one other key component to the successes of both teams and that is a very large contingent of English Supporters, loads of parents included, cheering and encouraging at all matches which certainly will not have done anything but to spur the players on.

Results

Mens team

9-12th Playoff

England 3 Greece 2

194 PITCHFORD, Liam (ENG) – 227 PAPADIMITRIOU, Dimitrios (GRE) 11:7 11:9 11:1
191 DRINKHALL, Paul (ENG) – 225 GIONIS, Panagiotis (GRE) 11:9 9:11 8:11 9:11
192 KNIGHT, Darius (ENG) – 226 PAPAGEORGIU, Konstantinos (GRE) 6:11 8:11 11:9 11:9 11:5
194 PITCHFORD, Liam (ENG) – 225 GIONIS, Panagiotis (GRE) 8:11 11:9 4:11 7:11
191 DRINKHALL, Paul (ENG) beat 227 PAPADIMITRIOU, Dimitrios (GRE) 11:9 8:11 11:7 11:6

9th/10th Playoff

England 0 Poland 3

194 PITCHFORD, Liam (ENG) lost to 317 GORAK, Daniel (POL) 11:8 7:11 3:11 11:9 13:15
193 REED, Daniel (ENG) lost to 318 SUCH, Bartosz (POL) 3:11 11:9 9:11 6:11
192 KNIGHT, Darius (ENG) lost to 316 KOSOWSKI, Jakub (POL) 7:11 11:13 5:11

Womens team

17-20th playoff

Serbia 3 England 1

356 ERDELJI, Ana Maria (SRB) lost to 188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) 7:11 9:11 11:6 11:7 6:11
357 FEHER, Gabriela (SRB) beat 187 PARKER, Joanna (ENG) 12:10 8:11 11:8 11:5
359 TODOROVIC, Andrea (SRB) beat 190 HICKS, Hannah (ENG) 11:2 11:6 11:5
356 ERDELJI, Ana Maria (SRB) beat 187 PARKER, Joanna (ENG) 11:6 5:11 8:11 14:12 11:4

19th – 20th Playoff

England 1 Russia 3

188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) beat 339 FADEEVA, Oksana (RUS) 11:8 11:6 4:11 11:9
187 PARKER, Joanna (ENG) lost to 338 TIKHOMIROVA, Anna (RUS) 4:11 8:11 7:11
190 HICKS, Hannah (ENG) lost to 337 GANINA, Svetlana (RUS) 3:11 2:11 3:11
188 SIBLEY, Kelly (ENG) lost to 338 TIKHOMIROVA, Anna (RUS) 5:11 6:11 9:11

Photo Darius Knight, a superb recovery against Greece – courtesy Henk Hommes

By Malcolm Macfarlane

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