



## Pitchford delight at 'MVP' honour

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Liam Pitchford admits it was a surprise to be awarded Most Valuable Player at the inaugural Ultimate Table Tennis League in India – but he is “over the moon” about the accolade.

The Chesterfield ace helped his Falcons TTC franchise win the title with a personal record of seven victories from 10 matches. He took at least one point for his team in all 10 of the three-set matches.

Pitchford got off to a slow start with a 2-1 defeat to Stefan Fegerl in the first match against RP-SG Mavericks and then missed the next fixture with a stomach upset.

When he returned, he was in great form, helping Falcons into the semi-finals and then winning the player-of-the-match award against DHFL Maharashtra United to inspire his team into the final.

He won one match and lost the other in the final against Shaze Challengers, both by a 2-1 margin, but Falcons triumphed 14-9 overall and Pitchford duly picked up the MVP award.

“It was a bit of a shock to get Most Valuable Player, I’m over the moon with that,” said the 24-year-old.

“I lost my first match to Stefan Fegerl – I was a bit nervous for that one – and then I missed a couple of matches with food poisoning but I managed to come back and I thought I played well.

“I knew we had quite a good team and I think we all played well as a team – we were probably the most steady team and performed well in every match.”

The format saw each of six franchises featuring eight players – four men and four women, with two of each from India and two from overseas.

Each fixture consisted of eight singles and one mixed doubles match, all best of three sets, with every set counting towards the final score in the group stage. In the semi-finals and final, the first team to 14 points won.

Among the other rules, if the score got to 10-10, the next point was known as the golden point and would win the game.

"I thought the format was really exciting and all the players I spoke to thought so too, especially the golden point at 10-10," said Pitchford. "Every match being three sets meant the fixtures were quicker.

"I enjoyed it and three weeks was a good duration. Seeing a different culture was interesting and enjoyable. The crowds were good and the organisation was second to none, they really looked after us. If I get invited, I would definitely go back.

"It's given me a lot of confidence and now it's back into training for the new season."

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