



Drinkhall silences home crowd to book last-32 spot

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Paul Drinkhall is through to the main draw at the German Open thanks to a 4-3 win over a host nation opponent.

The English No 1 overcame Ricardo Walther, who at No 40 in the world is ranked one place higher than Drinkhall. The match was as close as the rankings would suggest but Drinkhall held his nerve in the decider after seeing two match points slip away in the sixth.

Drinkhall lost a close first game but three on the spin put him in control. Walther closed up by taking the fifth but Drinkhall led the sixth 10-8 and had one foot in the last 32. However, the German reeled off four points on the spin to level the match.

Having almost won it once, Drinkhall was in no mood to pass up his next chance and was always in front in the decider. This time, he had four match points but needed only one as he took it 11-6 to set up a last-32 clash against world No 9 Kenta Matsudaira of Japan at 2.30pm UK time on Friday.

Liam Pitchford impressed in his first match of the day, a 4-1 win over world No 105 Jon Persson of Sweden, recovering from seeing his opponent reel off eight successive points to take the second. Pitchford regained control to win the next three games.

But he ran into world No 17 Marcos Freitas of Portugal in the final preliminary round and his opponent was in no mood to give the Englishman a foothold as he closed out a 4-0 victory.

Results

Preliminary round 1

Liam Pitchford bt Jon Persson (SWE) 4-1 (12-10, 5-11, 11-9, 11-2, 11-9)

Preliminary round 2

Marcos Freitas (POR) bt Pitchford 4-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-9, 11-4)

Paul Drinkhall bt Ricardo Walther (GER) 4-3 (11-13, 11-4, 11-9, 11-9, 6-11, 10-12, 11-6)

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