



Sam Walks into the top 100

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Sam Walker is at a career high No 80 in the world on the first rankings list of the new year – and has vowed to do all he can to go even higher.

The Worksop athlete's ranking means England have three men inside the top 100 – Liam Pitchford is one place above Walker at No 79, while Paul Drinkhall is at 39.

Walker, 22, said:

Obviously, it's good to be in the top 100, but there's still a lot of work to be done. Eighty is not where I want to end up – I want to be as high as I can. There's no limits, I've just got to keep pushing to improve and hopefully then my ranking will improve as well.

I'm just behind Liam now but I'm sure we'll both get even higher. I think it helps to push each other on, but we both want the best for each other because that is the best for the team as well. We want to be up with Paul and that's what we're trying to do.

Walker has benefitted from a revamp of the way the rankings are worked out, with the ITTF having replaced the previous system, which was based on players gaining or losing points according to results against individual opponents.

The new formula is based on how far players progress into tournaments – the round players are knocked out in determines how many points they receive, irrespective of their opponents – and the system is said by the ITTF to be simpler to understand and a more accurate and up-to-date reflection of the performance of players. It will also encourage players to be more active on the ITTF circuit.

Also registering career highs are David McBeath at No 183 and Tom Jarvis at No 280. Tin-Tin Ho is the highest-ranked English female player at 174, with Kelly Sibley at 181.

Gavin Rungay, Scotland's No 1 and 25-time winner on the Table Tennis England Grand Prix series, has risen to his career high of No 120, breaking Euan Walker's best ever Scottish mark of 199.

It is all change at the top of the rankings, with Germany's Dimitrij Ovtcharov taking over the men's No 1 position with Ma Long having dropped to No 7. China's top player is Fan Zhendong at No 2, one place ahead of another German, Timo Boll.

The women's list sees China's Chen Meng at the top, having swapped places with compatriot Zhu Yuling.

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