



England's women fall to opening defeat at ITTF World Cup

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England's women fell to an opening defeat at the ITTF World Cup as they were brushed aside by third seeds Hong Kong at the Copper Box in London.

Kicking-off the ITTF World Cup was always likely to be a hard task for the English squad who earned their place as the hosts nation and an opening fixture against one of the medal favourites was always going to prove troublesome.

Testing the new playing format ahead of the Olympics in 2020 with the doubles coming first, England sent forth the partnership of 29-year-old Kelly Sibley and 20-year old Maria Tsaptsinos. Ranked 188th and 360th respectively, it was a daunting prospect to come up against the Hong Kong duo of Lee Ho Ching (ranked 13) and Soo Wai Yam Minnie (25) who started the fixture as heavy favourites.

Although the English pairing of Sibley and Tsaptsinos were able to win a close second game 11-9, the Hong Kong partnership were frequently in control of matters and took the opening rubber with a 3-1 result.

That victory would be a sign of things to come as next on court was world no. 9 Doo Hoi Kem against Tin-Tin Ho (WR 144). Again, there were promising signs for the English teen but a 3-0 scoreline reflected the confidence the world no. 9 exuded.

A third victory, this time for Minnie over Sibley (3-0), secured the result for Hong Kong in quick fashion and allowed them to focus on the evening's Group C game with Singapore – and most likely, the knockout stages and the search for a medal.

For England, the result means they now need to beat Singapore tomorrow to stay in contention. England Women's Head Coach Marcus Gustafson hopes the team will learn from the experience and carry it into tomorrow's big fixture:

"Obviously we knew it was going to be a difficult match but I think the girls did everything they could. I'm happy with how they fight and keep trying. They did their very best and we're trying to bring the experiences from this match to move on to Singapore tomorrow."

They face a straight knockout fixture on Friday as the strong Hong Kong side were also able to defeat Singapore 3-1. Singapore's gamble to start top ranked players Feng Tianwei and Yu Mengyu up front back fired as they fell to defeat in the opening doubles.

The Singaporean duo of Feng Tianwei (ranked 3) and Yu Mengyu (51), faced off against Lee Ho Ching (13) and Soo Wai Yam Minnie (25) from Hong Kong. What ensued was a five-game thriller. The women from Hong Kong able to eke out the win by holding their nerve under pressure and taking the decider by a score of 11-9.

Doo Hoi Kem (9) then played Yee Heng Hwee (363) in a match that was not as lopsided as the world rankings of the two players would indicate. World number 9, Kem, eventually seeing off the threat in four games.

The second singles match witnessed the world number 3 and world number 13 taking each other on, and they did not disappoint. The quality of play was taken to a higher level as the first two games were decided by a score of 12-10 with Singaporean Feng Tianwei taking the first, while Lee Ho Ching from Hong Kong won the second. Tianwei prevailed in the third game, winning the game 11-6, a relatively stress-free game for her when compared to the other games in the match. Tianwei, a bronze medallist in London 2012, showcased her pedigree by winning a hard fought fourth game by a score of 12-10.

Doo Hoi Kem who had already won her first match took on world number 51, Yu Mengyu in the fourth match of the tie. While, the first two games were close, Kem was able to step up during the important points and was able to win the two games 11-7 and 11-9. She then pulled ahead into a 7-2 lead in the third and was able to hold on easily for a 11-6 win, leading her country to victory.

With the win Hong Kong topped Group C while Singapore will look to bounce back quickly against England to secure a place in the quarter-finals.

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Top seeds dominate opening day

Elsewhere in the opening day of the women's event at the ITTF Team World Cup, top seeds China, second seeds Japan and fourth seeds Chinese Taipei were all victorious in back-to-back matches to secure top spot in their groups.

China romped home with 3-0 victories over DPR Korea and Brazil while Japan also recorded a clean sweep, despatching USA and Egypt 3-0.

Fourth seeds Chinese Taipei meanwhile overcame European Champions Romania to secure their own top spot despite Bernadette Szocs best efforts for the Europeans. After Chinese Taipei had beaten Australia 3-0 in their opening fixture, they were dealt a big blow as Szocs beat Cheng I-Ching (wr 8) 3-0 in their second match. However, her colleagues rallied around and saw off the Romanian threat with Cheng Hsien-Tzu beating Elizabeta Samara 3-2 in a crucial fourth rubber to secure the win.

England Results

Group C

Hong Kong 3-0 England

Lee Ho Ching/Soo Wai Yam Minnie bt Kelly Sibley/Maria Tsaptsinos 3-1 (11-3, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7)

Doo Hoi Kem bt Tin-Tin Ho 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 14-12)

Soo Wai Yam Minnie bt Kelly Sibley 3-0 (11-3, 11-3, 11-3)

Other Results

Group A

Japan 3-0 USA

Hina Hayata & Mima Ito bt Amy Wang & Wu Yue 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-8)

Kasumi Ishikawa bt Lily Zhang 3-1 (11-6, 11-5, 11-13, 11-4)

Ito bt Wu 3-1 (11-5, 13-15, 11-2, 16-14)

Japan 3-0 Egypt

Mima Ito/Hina Hayata bt Yousra Helmy/Farah Abdel-Aziz 3-0 (11-8, 11-4, 11-6)

Kasumi Ishikawa bt Dina Meshref 3-1 (11-7, 11-5, 9-11, 11-9)

Hina Hayata bt Yousra Helmy 3-0 (11-5, 11-6, 11-7)

Group B**China 3-0 DPR Korea**

Liu Shiwen & Ding Ning bt Cha Hyo Sim & Kim Nam Hae 3-1 (11-7, 11-6, 9-11, 11-9)

Zhu Yuling bt Kim Song I 3-0 (15-13, 13-11, 11-7)

Ding bt Kim 3-1 (11-8, 12-14, 11-2, 11-5)

China 3-0 Brazil

Zhu Yuling/Chen Xingtong bt Bruna Takahashi/Caroline Kumahara 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-9)

Wang Manyu bt Gui Lin 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-5)

Chen Xingtong bt Bruna Takahashi 3-1 (11-6, 11-8, 8-11, 11-7)

Group C**Hong Kong 3-1 Singapore**

Soo Wai Yam Minnie/Lee Ho Ching bt Yu Mengyu/Feng Tianwei 3-2 (5-11, 11-9, 11-7, 9-11, 11-9)

Doo Hoi Kem bt Yee Herng Hwee 3-1 (11-7, 11-3, 8-11, 11-4)

Feng Tianwei bt Lee Ho Ching 3-1 (5-11, 12-10, 11-6, 12-10)

Doo Hoi Kem bt Yu Mengyu 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-6)

Group D**Chinese Taipei 3-0 Australia**

Chen Szu-Yu & Cheng Hsien-Tzu bt Parleen Kaur & Melissa Tapper 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-6)

Cheng I-Ching bt Jian Fang Lay 3-1 (11-3, 11-4, 3-11, 11-6)

Cheng Hsien-Tzu bt Tapper 3-0 (11-5, 11-2, 11-6)

Chinese Taipei 3-1 Romania

Cheng Hsien-Tzu/Chen Szu-Yu bt Daniela Dodean Monteiro/Elizabeta Samara 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-9)

Bernadette Szocs bt Cheng I-Ching 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-9)

Chen Szu-Yu bt Elizabeta Samara 3-1 (11-13, 11-9, 11-7, 11-4)

Cheng I-Ching bt Daniela Dodean Monteiro 3-2 (11-13, 11-6, 11-7, 7-11, 11-8)

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