



Double victory for Leopards

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England Leopards men and women got their European Championships campaign off to winning starts today at the Copper Box Arena.

The men enjoyed a quickfire 3-0 success against Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the women needed four matches to see off Norway 3-1 in the Stage 1, Round 1 matches in the European Championships team event.

Fresh from their bronze medal at the Team World Cup, Liam Pitchford, Sam Walker and Tom Jarvis brushed aside their Balkan visitors without dropping a game.

18-year-old Jarvis was given the honour of leading the match, against Edin Konjic. Jarvis, ranked 264 in the world as against his opponent's ranking of 613, set a perfect platform for England as he conceded only 14 points in the match.

Walker also conceded only 14 against world No 526 Admir Duranspahic, including rushing through the first game 11-1, and Pitchford was hardly any more inconvenienced by Armin Alicic (WR760) as he won for the loss of 16 points.

England women were led out by Tin-Tin Ho against Maja Gjelle (WR 505) and it was first blood to Norway as Gjelle fought back from 10-7 down in the first to finally take it 15-13.

When Gjelle led 9-6 in the second, it looked as if Norway might go 2-0 up, but five points in a row for Ho turned it around and she never looked back, taking the next two comfortably.

Kelly Sibley won the first against Rebekka Carlsen, but her left-handed opponent, ranked 314 in the world, fought back to level. But the experienced Sibley, ranked 185, exerted herself to see out the next two, again in straightforward fashion.

Maria Tsaptinsos faced the toughest task on paper, up against the 177th-ranked Ilka Doval. The Norwegian quickly had Tsaptinsos (WR350) under pressure with a two-game lead.

Tsapsinos fought back with some smart tactics to level it at 2-2, but Doval always had her nose in front in the decider.

That brought Ho back to the table and again she had some problems in the first game, trailing 10-7. But five in a row once more took the England player over the line. And though the next two games were close, Ho was generally in charge. Letting a 9-5 lead slip to 9-9 in the third did not matter as she took the next two points to complete England's victory.

Results

England 3 Bosnia-Herzegovina 0

Tom Jarvis bt Edin Konjic 3-0 (11-6, 11-3, 11-5)

Sam Walker bt Admir Duranspahic 3-0 (11-1, 11-9, 11-4)

Liam Pitchford bt Armin Alicic 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-5)

England 3 Norway 1

Tin-Tin Ho bt Maja Gjelle 3-1 (13-15, 11-9, 11-3, 11-6)

Kelly Sibley bt Rebekka Carlsen 3-1 (11-5, 5-11, 11-7, 11-4)

Ilka Doval bt Maria Tsapsinos 3-2 (11-5, 11-6, 6-11, 8-11, 11-6)

Ho bt Carlsen 3-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-9)

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