

MUNICH 2022 DAY 5 PREVIEW – TABLE TENNIS

IONESCU AND SZŐCS LOOK TO TURN 'PAINFUL DEFEATS' INTO ELUSIVE GOLD MEDAL IN FINAL DAY OF MIXED DOUBLES

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After early exits in the past two European championship mixed doubles tournaments, Ovidiu Ionescu (ROU) and Bernadette Szőcs (ROU) hope that this is the year that they will go all the way.

"Last year we lost against the Germans who became European champions, and four years ago, (they lost) also against the Germans, (and) they became European champions," Ionescu said.

"I know that we are capable of winning the gold medal and to fight for the podium. It was painful but we learn from these defeats and we are here in the semifinals."

ELIMINATING THE CHAMPIONS

Reaching the top four on Sunday night, the Romanian duo secured a medal in the tournament. They face Robert Gardos (AUT) and Sofia Polcanova (AUT) in their semifinal at 15:25. In their first major competition together, Gardos and Polcanova eliminated the defending champions Dang Qiu (GER) and Nina Mittelham (GER) on their way to the semifinals.

"We didn't know which level we are at," Gardos said.

"For us it means quite a lot in such a big tournament with such a difficult draw, to be in the semifinal. We will see how long we can go but if not, we are happy about the bronze."

In the other semifinal, two pairs will seek redemption for not making it to the top of the podium at the European championships in Warsaw, Poland, last year as bronze medallists Emmanuel Lebesson (FRA) and Jianan Yuan (FRA) take on vice champions Lubomír Pištej (SVK) and Barbora Balážová (SVK).

"We know that the road will be tough," Lebesson said. "It will be one hard semifinal, as always, but we will try to make better results than in Warsaw last year."

VICE CHAMPIONS IGNORE PRESSURE

Pištej and Balážová, who came into last year's competition as favourites, have enjoyed playing more with less pressure at the European Championships Munich 2022 and want to keep it that way.

"We try not to think too much about the pressure because it's more negative than positive at the end," Balážová said.

"This tournament is a goal and I've worked really hard towards this tournament so I just want to enjoy and see what the outcome will be. This year there are many more good pairs here so each round you are going forward is a big achievement."

Table tennis fans at Rudi-Sedlmayer-Halle on Monday will also get to see 63 men's and women's singles group play stage matches, starting from 09:30.