

Announcement

The national water polo coach, Mr Sergio Afric, on ASA instructions, chose a larger than normal squad made up of 25 players from which eventually the final thirteen players would be chosen.

The full list of the players chosen is as follows:

Alan Borg Cole – Exiles
Alex Attard – Sirens
Alex Bianchi – Sliema
Brian Buhagiar – Neptunes
Clint Debono – Sliema
Daniel Paoella – Sliema
Jerome Gabaretta – Neptunes
John Brownrigg – Sliema
John Soler – Sliema
Jurgen Borg – Sirens
Mark Meli – Sliema
Matthew Zammit – San Giljan
Michael Rizzo – Sliema
Michele Stellini – Neptunes
Nicolai Lubrano – Sliema
Nikki Gouder – Neptunes
Nikki Lanzon – Neptunes
Paul Privitera – Sliema
Peter Borg – Sirens
Ryan Coleiro – Sliema
Ryan Mock – Sirens
Sean Gravina – Neptunes
Steve Camilleri – Neptunes
Timmy Sullivan – Exiles
Jordan Camilleri - Neptunes

As one may notice the bulk of the players come from the holds of Sliema and Neptunes with the former having 10 players chosen and the latter 8. Sirens and Exiles had 4 and 2 players chosen respectively and 1 player was chosen from San Giljan.

Neptunes selection of 8 players got depleted to 2 players for work and other reasons. The most noticeable loss from Neptunes side is naturally Steve Camilleri who plays in Italy. Both the General Secretary and the President of the Association contacted Steve a number of times but, quoting various reasons, Steve opted to remain outside the national selection. Matthew Pisani, also a Neptunes player, also opted to stay out of the national team due to work problems.

Sliema's selection of 10 players was reduced by only 4 players but this was influenced by the 6 Neptunes players that had to withdraw.

Regular light training started early in the year and, following initial space problems, training intensification took place during the month of April – requests made to KMS to extend the closing time of the pool by one hour during the month of April to ease the training problems produced no reactions.

Such a large pool of players has been questioned by many but this was made with Malta's future and frequent international commitments in mind. Such a pool of players would eventually help to solve work related withdrawals as we have already had the occasion to experience: Neptunes player Steve Camilleri was replaced by another Neptunes players Sean Gravina who also had to pull out, due to work reasons, with the final choice falling on Sirens young player Alex Attard.

The new state-of-affairs with regard to the national team does not appear to have been fully understood.

The young players that have been called up to form part of the national squad have begun to be groomed into national water polo players – they have replaced long serving national water polo players Jonathan Valletta and Josie Cachia and will eventually replace other long serving players who are, in the meantime, helping with their grooming; a number of these young players shall see action for the first time in Istanbul.

Sergio Afric, last Monday chose the final 13 players that shall be travelling to Istanbul, Turkey next Thursday, 29 April. His choice fell on Joe Borg Cole, Alex Bianchi, Timmy Sullivan, Nikki Lanzon, Michele Stellini, Matthew Zammit, Alex Attard, Jurgen Borg, John Brownrigg, Clint Debono, Mark Meli, Paul Privitera and John Soler. Peter Decesare and Pierre Borg shall accompany the team, the former as Assistant Coach and the latter as the Team's physio.

Malta earned a place in the Qualification Tournament of the European Championship after having finished sixth in Lugano, Switzerland, last September, placing after Turkey, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Slovenia.

Malta came up against strong opposition made up of Spain, Slovakia and the hosts, Turkey that make up Group A. The other countries that shall be playing during the same week-end are Macedonia, Greece, France and Slovenia in Group B and Romania, Russia, the Netherlands and Great Britain in Group C. The top two from each Group shall qualify to join the top six nations, namely, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro and Serbia in the championships that shall take place in Zagreb in September.

The Programme in Istanbul:

Friday, April 30: 6pm Malta vs Spain – 8pm Turkey vs Slovakia

Saturday, May 1: 5.30pm Turkey vs Malta – 7pm Spain vs Slovakia

Sunday, May 2: 10am Slovakia vs Malta – Noon Turkey Spain