



FIVB WORLD LEAGUE PREVIEWS WEEK 2 – MAY 29-JUNE 01, 2014

Pool A: Brazil - Poland (29 May and 30 May)

Head-to-Head

- These teams have met 29 times in the World League. Brazil have won 21 of those matches and Poland have won eight times.
- Poland have won four of the last seven encounters, but Brazil have won the last two.
- They will run into each other in the World League for the fourth successive season.
- None of their last seven WL meetings has been won in straight sets.

Brazil

- Brazil have lost three World League matches in a row in the World League for the first time since losing their final pool match in 2012 and then losing the first two matches in the final round.
- The 2012 season was also the last one in which Brazil started off with two defeats.
- Brazil have lost four successive World League matches only once, back in 1991. They were beaten twice by Cuba and twice by Netherlands.

Poland

- Poland are embarking on their 17th World League campaign. They have appeared in every season since making their debut in the competition in 1998.
- Poland finished in 11th place last season, equalling their worst showing from 2009.
- It was also the lowest finish by any defending World League champions.
- Netherlands hold the record for biggest improvement to win. They finished 12th in 1995 and won the World League in 1996.
- Poland's WL triumph in 2012 is their only trophy in this competition so far.



Pool A: Italy - Iran (31 May and 01 June)

Head-to-Head

- These teams have met twice before. Last year, World League debutants Iran pulled out a shock victory (3-1) against Italy on 28 June 2013.
- Italy responded by labouring to a five-set win over Iran two days later.
- Iran's victory in Modena last year was engineered by Julio Velasco, the Argentine head coach who was in charge of Italy from 1989 to 1996.

Italy

- Italy have started their 2014 WL campaign strong with two victories in Brazil, taking down the top ranked side in the world twice by 3-1.
- In each of the previous four seasons (2010-2013) they started off by winning at least their first three matches.
- They have not won a WL match in straight sets in their last 12 attempts.

Iran

- Iran are participating in their second WL season. They finished in ninth place when making their debut in the competition last year.
- Iran's debut campaign last season comprised of five wins and five defeats. They started out with three defeats and then won five of their last seven.
- Iran were in a group with Russia, Serbia, Cuba, Germany and Italy last season. They beat all of their opponents at least once, except for eventual champions Russia.



Pool B: Serbia – Russia (30 May and 31 May)

Head-to-Head

- This is the 21st and 22nd World League meeting between Russia and Serbia (including Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro). Russia have won 16 of the previous 20 encounters.
- The four Serbia victories have all come since Serbia began competing as an independent country in 2007.
- Serbia and Russia will clash for the third consecutive World League season. Russia won five of the six encounters in this period, including the last four.
- Last September, Russia beat Serbia 3-1 in the European Championships semifinal, before claiming gold in the final against Italy (3-1 win).
- Milos Nikic (SRB) plays at Russian side Guberniya Nizhniy Novgorod, alongside teammates Nikolay Pavlov (RUS), Sergey Savin (RUS) and Alexey Ostapenko (RUS).

Serbia

- Serbia are making their 17th appearance in the World League (incl. Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro). They are the most decorated country in the competition yet to win gold (four silver and three bronze).
- Serbia have won three of their last four World League opening matches. Their only opening day defeat in this time span came in 2012, when they lost 3-2 against opponents Russia.
- Serbia have lost 26 World League matches in straight sets, of which eight against Russia. No country has won more often against Serbia by 3-0. Brazil follow with five straight sets victories.
- Petar Krsmanovic celebrates his 24th birthday on the day of the second match.

Russia

- Defending champions Russia have won the World League on three occasions (2002, 2011, 2013) and are one of only three countries to have won the competition multiple times along with Brazil (nine times) and Italy (eight times).
- Russia are on 497 sets lost (including Soviet Union and Commonwealth of Independent States) and can become the fourth country in World League history alongside Japan (646), Cuba (558) and Italy (531), with at least 500 sets lost.
- Russia have lost only one of their last 13 World League opening matches and are unbeaten in their last seven, since losing 3-2 against France in 2006.
- The Russian squad includes the tallest player of this World League campaign: Dmitriy Muserskiy (218).
- Last season, Nikolay Pavlov was the most prolific scorer in the World League finals with 87 (81 spikes, 6 blocks).



Pool C: Canada – Finland (31 May and 01 June)

Head-to-Head

- Canada and Finland have each won five World League matches against each other, but Canada have won the last three encounters.
- Canada can become the first team to win four matches in a row between these two.
- Last year, Canada and Finland also met in Pool C in the Intercontinental Rounds with Canada winning 3-1 and 3-0.
- Mikko Oivanen (FIN) and Dallas Soonias (CAN) play together at Fujian VC, while Finland's Urpo Sivula and Canada's Gavin Schmitt and John Gordon Perrin all play at Arkas Sport Club.

Canada

- Canada are making their eighth World League appearance. They have won 30 and lost 57 matches so far, with their best final result coming last season: fifth.
- They won nine matches last year, three more than in their previous best World League campaign (six wins in 1992).
- Canada have won each of their last four opening matches at the World League, including in 2007 and 2012 when Finland was their first opponent of the season.
- 2012 was also the last year they won their first two matches, beating Finland and Brazil respectively.

Finland

- Finland will become the 19th team with 10 or more World League participations. They previously were present in 1993 and from 2006 onwards. Their best result is a seventh place in 2007.
- Finland won their opening match in 2006 and 2013. They won their first two matches in 2006.
- They are winless in their last four WL matches against teams from the Americas, since beating Canada 3-0 on 10 June 2012 in the Intercontinental Rounds.
- With Mikko Esko (8.90 average per set) and Lauri Kerminen (60.31% efficiency) Finland had the second best setter and receiver in last year's intercontinental round. Both players are present this year.



Pool D: Argentina - Germany (31 May, 01 Jun)

Head-to-Head

- Germany have won all eight matches against Argentina in the World League.
- They also defeated Argentina at the 1994 World Championships.
- They have won five of their eight World League matches without conceding a set, including the last four encounters.
- Apart from Argentina, Germany have also won all their World League matches against Greece (4).
- Argentina have also lost all their World League match against Brazil (22), China (4) and Netherlands (4).

Argentina

- Argentina hope to end a 13-match losing streak in the World League, their longest run without a win since 17 matches in 2009-2011.
- 2010 is also the last year Argentina lost their first three matches. They lost all 14 matches that year.
- Gustavo Porporatto (10) was Argentina's leading scorer in their 3-0 defeat against France, with five of his 10 points coming from blocks.
- Porporatto had seven blocks in his two matches against France in week 1. Only Italy's Matteo Piano (9 vs Brazil) and France's Franck Lafitte (9 vs Argentina) had more in week 1.

Germany

- Germany can win four World League matches in a row for the first time since winning six in 2012.
- They have won seven of their last 10 World League matches.
- Germany can win the first three matches of a World League campaign for the first time in all of their 11 participations.
- Christian Fromm (15 and 28) was top scorer for Germany in both matches against Japan in week 1.



Pool D: France - Japan (31 May, 01 Jun)

Head-to-Head

- France and Japan have played 16 World League matches against each other, France winning 13 times.
- Japan have won the last World League encounter against France, 3-1 in July 2007. They can win back-to-back matches against France for the first time in their World League history.
- Two of the last three editions of this match ended in five sets, the exception being Japan's last win (3-1).

France

- France have won their last five World League matches and they can win six in a row for the first time since 1999-2000.
- If France beat Japan twice, they will have won seven matches in a row for the first time.
- France lost their first four matches last year. This year, they can win their first four matches for the first time since winning the first five in 2002.
- Franck Lafitte had nine blocks in total in two matches against Argentina. Only Italy's Matteo Piano (9 vs Brazil) had as many blocks in week 1.

Japan

- Japan have lost four World League matches in a row, their worst run since 22 in 2011-2013.
- Their last win came against Portugal in Jun 2013.
- Kunihiro Shimizu had 27 points from spikes in Japan's 3-2 defeat against Germany, most of all players in any match in week 1.



Pool E: Netherlands – Korea Republic (31 May and 1 June)

Head-to-Head

- This is the 19th and 20th World League meeting between Netherlands and Korea Republic. Netherlands have won 17 of the previous 18 meetings.
- The one victory by Korea was their first ever meeting in the World League in 1993 in Korea (3-2).
- Last season, these teams also met in the first round. Netherlands won both matches by 3-1 in Korea.
- Netherlands have not beaten another country more often than 15 times, Korea have only lost more often against Cuba (28 times) and Italy (23).

Netherlands

- Netherlands are making their 18th appearance in the World League. Only six nations have participated more often.
- They have won five of the last six home matches, only losing to Portugal in this run.
- Netherlands have won at least two sets in each of their last seven home matches in the World League.

Korea Republic

- Korea are making their 16th appearance in the World League, second-most among Asian countries behind Japan (21 appearances),
- They have lost 149 matches and can become the second nation to lose 150 World League matches, following Japan who are currently on 196 defeats.
- Korea have won their last two matches (vs Portugal) and have not won three in a row in 19 years, when they defeated Japan twice and China once in 1995.



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Pool E: Portugal - Czech Republic (31 May and 01 June)

Head-to-Head

- Portugal and Czech Republic will meet for the first time in the World League.
- The countries last met in 2011 at the European Championships, when Czech Republic beat Portugal 3-2 in the group stage.

Portugal

- Portugal are playing in the World League for the 11th time. They finished fifth in 2005 and ended up in 17th place last year.
- Portugal lost their last three World League matches in 2013. They had ended a 19-match losing streak earlier in last year's edition.
- Portugal last started their World League season with a win in 2011, when they beat Finland 3-2. This is also the last year they won their first two matches.

Czech Republic

- This is Czech Republic's second World League campaign after a fourth place finish in 2003.
- Czech Republic began their campaign in 2003 with three defeats, but they still won their group to reach the next phase and then reached the semifinals in which they lost to eventual winners Brazil.
- Libero Martin Krystof and Jan Stoker are the only players left in this year's squad who also played in 2003.