



FIVB WORLD GRAND PRIX PREVIEWS WEEK 1 – JULY 25-27

Accomplished teams v debutants

- This is the 22nd edition of the World Grand Prix. Japan and China are the only two teams who have participated in every edition.
- Brazil and USA have missed out on only one World Grand Prix season and will now take part in the competition for the 21st time.
- The 2014 World Grand Prix will feature 28 teams for the first time, expanding from the 18-team format used in 2013.
- The expansion has opened the door for five debutants: Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Kenya and Mexico.
- This year, Kenya is the only team representing Africa. They are only the second African team ever to participate in World Grand Prix after Algeria last year.
- With these five debutants joining, a total of 30 teams have now taken part in the World Grand Prix at some point in time.
- The youngest and oldest players entering this season's competition are Cuba's Chatchu-On Mokri (14 years and 262 days) and Taismary Aguero (37 years and 142 days) from Italy.

World Grand Prix statistics

- The teams to have been crowned World Grand Prix champions are Brazil (9), the USA (5), Russia (3), Cuba (2), China (1) and the Netherlands (1).
- Nine of the last 10 titles have been won by either Brazil (6) or the USA (3). The Netherlands are the only other country to have won the World Grand Prix title during this period, triumphing in 2007.
- Nine countries have a positive win-loss record in World Grand Prix play: Brazil (202-51, 80%), Russia (136-64, 68%), Bulgaria (6-3, 67%), China (167-95, 64%), Cuba (138-79, 64%), Turkey (20-12, 63%), Serbia (23-14, 62%), the USA (136-90, 60%) and Italy (90-81, 53%).

Brazil out to defend their title

- Brazil are the defending champions, having beaten China in the Gold medal match last season.
- Brazil can defend their title for the fourth time in World Grand Prix history – previously in 2005, 2006 and 2009. The only other team that was successful in defending their World Grand Prix title was USA (2011 and 2012).
- Brazil have reached the World Grand Prix final in each of the last six seasons. No other team has reached the World Grand Prix final for more than four years in a row.



Pool J – Country specific statistics

Belgium

- Belgium is one of the five World Grand Prix debutants this season, alongside Australia, Croatia, Kenya and Mexico.
- Belgium recorded their best season last year when they won a bronze medal at the European Championship by defeating Serbia. At the European Volleyball League they finished second behind Germany.

Canada

- Canada are entering the World Grand Prix for a second time. Their only previous appearance came in 2003 and resulted in 11th place.
- Canada lost all five of their World Grand Prix matches in 2003. Algeria are the only other team that are yet to win a World Grand Prix match.
- Canada have won only two sets in those five matches. One against Korea Republic and one against Thailand.

Peru

- This will be Peru's third appearance in the World Grand Prix. Their best result came in 1994 – 11th place.
- In 18 World Grand Prix matches Peru recorded only one victory (against Netherlands in 1994).
- In all World Grand Prix matches, Peru won only five sets. Three of these were in their victory against Netherlands, one against Korea Republic (1994) and one against Germany (2011).

Poland

- Since their World Grand Prix debut in 2004, Poland have been present in every edition since.
- Poland's best result in those 10 Grand Prix appearances came in 2007 and 2010, when they finished sixth.
- Their World Grand Prix win-loss record is 41-59.
- Poland have lost eight of their last 10 World Grand Prix matches.



Pool J – Head to head

Poland v Belgium

- Poland and Belgium have never met before in World Grand Prix competition.
- The last time these teams met was in a 2014 World Championships Qualifier. Belgium won the match played in January in straight sets.
- Their last encounter in a major tournament came in 2009. Poland defeated Belgium (3-1) at the European Championships.

Peru v Canada

- These teams have never met in the World Grand Prix.
- Their last meeting in a major tournament came at the 2011 Pan American Games. Peru defeated Canada in four sets.
- Peru and Canada have met four times at the Olympic Games – 1976 (twice), 1984 and 1996. Canada defeated Peru in five sets in 1996, while Peru won the first three encounters.
- Based on the World Ranking, Peru is the favourite - ranked 15th (Peru) v 20th (Canada).

Poland v Canada

- This will be the first meeting between Poland and Canada in the World Grand Prix.
- Poland and Canada met twice at the 1974 World Championship, with Poland defeating Canada in straight sets on both occasions.
- Poland have won only two of their last six encounters with NORCECA sides in World Grand Prix competition. These victories came against Cuba (3-1) in 2011 and Dominican Republic (3-0) in 2013.

Peru v Belgium

- Peru and Belgium will play their first World Grand Prix match against each other.
- Based on World Ranking, Peru (15th) is the favourite, being ranked seven places higher than Belgium (22nd).
- Peru recorded only one win in eight matches against European sides in the World Grand Prix. In 1994 they defeated Netherlands (3-1). Since then they have lost five consecutive WL matches against European opposition.



Belgium v Canada

- Belgium and Canada have never met before in World Grand Prix competition.
- Canada have lost their only meeting against European opposition in the World Grand Prix. In 2003 Russia defeated Canada in straight sets.
- Belgium is only two places behind Canada on the World Ranking (20 and 22). Since the previous ranking, Belgium have won 17 places, most off all countries in the top 40 of the World Ranking.

Peru v Poland

- This will be the first encounter between both teams at a World Grand Prix.
- The last time Peru and Poland met at a great tournament was at the 2010 World Championship. Poland defeated Peru in straight sets in the first round.
- Peru and Poland are equal on the World Ranking, both ranked 15th. Poland lost two places, while Peru won two places since the previous ranking.



Pool K – Country specific statistics:

Argentina

- Argentina have played 27 matches in World Grand Prix history. They have won four times.
- Argentina have lost their last six matches. Their longest losing streak is 14 matches, set from August 2011 to August 2013.
- All of Argentina's wins were 3-2 victories. Dominican Republic, Cuba, Germany and Kazakhstan were their opponents in those matches.

Cuba

- Cuba have played 217 matches in the World Grand Prix. They have won 138 and lost 79.
- Cuba have lost their last 14 matches in the World Grand Prix, a team record. In these matches, they won just three sets.
- Cuba have won eight World Grand Prix medals (two gold, four silver, two bronze), most of all team in Pool K.

Netherlands

- Netherlands have won three of their last four matches in the World Grand Prix. Their only loss in this streak was against Brazil (3-0).
- Netherlands have either won (3) or lost (3) their last six World Grand Prix matches in straight sets. The last time Netherlands played more than three sets was against China on 4 August 2013, when they lost 3-1.
- Netherlands have won the World Grand Prix once, in 2007. That year, they lost three of their first four matches, after which they went on to win 10 out of 10.

Puerto Rico

- Puerto Rico have played 36 matches in the World Grand Prix. They have won five times. Their last victory was their last match, played against Germany in 2013.
- Before that win against Germany, they had lost 11 matches in a row, their longest streak in World Grand Prix history.
- Puerto Rico can win two matches in a row for the first time ever.



Pool K – Head to head

Netherlands v Cuba

- Netherlands and Cuba have played each other 10 times in the World Grand Prix. Cuba have won six encounters, Netherlands four.
- The last three matches all resulted in a Dutch win. The last two were in straight sets.
- Only one of the ten World Grand Prix matches was in the final round (the rest were played in the Preliminary Round). In that match in 2005, Cuba beat Netherlands (3-0).

Puerto Rico v Argentina

- Puerto Rico and Argentina have met each other once in the World Grand Prix. In 2012, Puerto Rico defeated Argentina (3-1).
- Puerto Rico is ranked 17th on the World Ranking, one place above their opponents Argentina.

Cuba v Argentina

- Cuba and Argentina have met each other three times in the World Grand Prix. Cuba have won twice, Argentina once.
- The two wins by Cuba were their most recent encounters in the World Grand Prix. Cuba won both in straight sets.
- Cuba have played 29 times against an opponent from South America in the World Grand Prix. They have lost 19 times, including the last three encounters.

Puerto Rico v Netherlands

- Puerto Rico and Netherlands have played each other once in the World Grand Prix. Netherlands won in straight sets in the 2010 Preliminary Round.
- The teams have played each other three times at the World Championship, with Netherlands winning in straight sets on all occasions.
- In the World Grand Prix, Puerto Rico have played 11 times against a European team, winning twice, including the last match against Germany (3-2).



Argentina v Netherlands

- This will be the first match between Argentina and Netherlands in the World Grand Prix.
- This is a match between the joint-numbers 18 on the World Ranking list.

Puerto Rico v Cuba

- Puerto Rico and Cuba have played each other once in the World Grand Prix. In the 2012 Preliminary Round, Cuba won in straight sets.
- Recently in 2012, these teams met in the Olympic Qualification Tournament. In the semifinal, Cuba beat Puerto Rico (3-1).
- Puerto Rico's best result in the World Grand Prix is a tenth place in their debut year in 2009. Cuba's best results were in 1993 en 2000, when they won the World Grand Prix.



Pool P – Country specific statistics

Kazakhstan

- Kazakhstan will enter their fifth World Grand Prix. Their best result thus far came in their debut season – 10th in 2007.
- In their previous four World Grand Prix appearances, Kazakhstan won three matches while losing 33. Their scalps were Dominican Republic in 2007, Thailand in 2008 and Cuba in 2013.
- One player in the Kazakhstan squad is active outside the Kazakh league – Tatyana Mudritskaya for Schweriner SC in Germany.
- 35-year-old Inna Matveyeva is the third-oldest player in the World Grand Prix this season. Only Italy's Taismary Aguero (37) is older.

Australia

- Australia will make their World Grand Prix debut.
- Australia are the first ever participants in the competition from Oceania.
- Australia are the first non-European World Grand Prix debutants since 2009, when Puerto Rico made their first appearance on this stage.

Czech Republic

- Czech Republic made their World Grand Prix debut last season, coming in 14th.
- In 2013, they won two matches, while losing seven. Their victories came against Puerto Rico (3-0) and Argentina (3-1).
- 17-year-old Michaela Mlejnkova is the youngest player in Pool P.

Croatia

- Croatia will make their World Grand Prix debut.
- Croatia's best international results are silver medals at European Championships in 1995, 1997 and 1999.
- Croatia are the second debutants from former Yugoslavia, after Serbia, who are still the World Grand Prix's best ever debutants with a third place in 2011 (inaugural 1993 World Grand Prix not taken into account).



Pool P – Head to head

Croatia v Czech Republic

- These teams have met twice at European Championships – in 1995 and 1997. Croatia won both matches in straight sets.
- Croatia will play their debut match. Czech Republic won in straight sets on their debut in 2013, v Puerto Rico.
- Senna Ušić Jogunica, Maja Poljak (both Croatia) and Helena Havelkova (Czech Republic) play together for Eczacibasi Vİtra in Turkey. Nikol Sajdova (Czech Republic), Nikolina Jelic and Bernarda Cutuk (Croatia) play together for SC Potsdam in Germany.

Kazakhstan v Australia

- Kazakhstan and Australia have met on four occasions during the Asian Championships, with the former claiming all victories.
- Kazakhstan have never won their first match in a World Grand Prix campaign. They lost their openers v Japan (2007, 2008), China (2011) and Germany (2013).
- Australia will make their debut against an opponent playing in front of their home crowd.

Australia v Czech Republic

- These teams have never met in a main tournament.
- Czech Republic have played two matches v sides representing the AVC at the World Grand Prix, losing v China (3-0) and Japan (3-2).

Kazakhstan v Croatia

- These teams have met once in a main tournament – Croatia won 3-0 in the first round of the 2010 World Championship.
- Kazakhstan have never beaten a European nation in the World Grand Prix (15 defeats).
- In two of their 15 World Grand Prix matches against European nations, Kazakhstan managed to win two sets. One of these matches took place at Almaty – 3-2 v Italy in 2011.



Croatia v Australia

- At the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, Croatia beat the hosts 3-1 in Group A.
- Croatia eventually finished seventh in what remain their only Olympic Games thus far (Australia joint ninth).
- Both teams are in their debut World Grand Prix. This Pool contains as many debutants as the whole 2013 World Grand Prix (Bulgaria, Czech Republic back then).

Kazakhstan v Czech Republic

- These teams have never met in a main tournament.
- This match features the only Pool P teams with previous World Grand Prix experience. Kazakhstan played 36 matches (three wins), Czech Republic nine (two wins).
- Both nations will host a weekend of Round Robin play in this World Grand Prix. This weekend Kazakhstan (Almaty) are the venue for Pool P, next week Czech Republic (Brno) host Pool R.



Pool Q – Country specific statistics

Algeria

- Algeria made their World Grand Prix debut in 2013, finishing 20th. They became the first side to lose all of their matches in a single World Grand Prix in straight sets.
- Two Algerian players are active outside their own league – Lydia Oulmou at Hainaut Volley (Belgium) and Redouani Amina at Romans Volleyball (France).
- Algeria became African champions in 2009 as the host nation, beating Tunisia in the final.

Bulgaria

- Bulgaria enter their second World Grand Prix after coming ninth on their debut in 2013.
- During their only World Grand Prix season, they managed to collect a positive record of six wins and three defeats.
- Bulgaria are automatically qualified for the Final Four in Group 3 thanks to organising the event in Sarnokov.

Kenya

- Kenya will make their World Grand Prix debut.
- They are one of the two CAVB nations at the 2014 World Grand Prix, along fellow Pool Q members Algeria.
- All Kenya players are active in their home league. Kenya Prisons (11) and Kenya Pipeline Company (9) are the two main providers, while Kenya Commercial Bank add one player (Noel Murambi).
- Kenya are the most successful side in African Championships, with eight titles and a second place. They won four of the last five continental championships, including the last two.

Mexico

- Mexico will host the first week of World Grand Prix play while making their debut in the competition.
- No player in the Mexico squad is active outside the home league.
- The Mexico squad contains the only two players aged over 30 in Pool Q – Marion Frias (32) and Selena Barajas (32).



Pool Q – Head to head

Algeria v Bulgaria

- This match features the two nations in Pool Q with previous World Grand Prix experience.
- These teams have never met in a main tournament before (World Grand Prix, World Cup, World Championship, Olympic Games).
- For the first time in a main tournament, Bulgaria will meet an African nation.
- Both teams lost their opening match in straight sets last year. This proved to be Bulgaria's only straight sets defeat in the competition thus far, while Algeria are still looking for their first set won.

Mexico v Kenya

- Two debutants meet in this match. The teams have never met in a main tournament.
- For the first time since the inaugural World Grand Prix in 1993, two debutant nations play their very first match against each other.

Bulgaria v Kenya

- These teams have never met in a main tournament.
- After playing against Algeria in the first match, Bulgaria now face Kenya, becoming the only nation to meet two different African opponents in the competition. Mexico will achieve this later on the day.
- At World Championships, World Cups and Olympic Games, Kenya have played a European side on 17 occasions, losing all of these matches including 14 in straight sets.

Mexico v Algeria

- These teams will meet for the first time in a main tournament.
- In their World Grand Prix debut season (2013), Algeria met two teams representing NORCECA – Dominican Republic (3-0 defeat) and USA (3-0 defeat).
- Mexico will meet their second African side in a main tournament, after Kenya a day earlier.



Kenya v Algeria

- This is the first ever World Grand Prix match between two CAVB sides.
- The teams last met in a competitive match at the 2013 African Championships, when eventual winners Kenya beat Algeria 3-1.
- In 2007 and 2011, these teams met in the African Championships final. Kenya won both finals, held at Nairobi.

Mexico v Bulgaria

- These teams will meet for the first time in the World Grand Prix. They have clashed at the 1982 and 2002 World Championships, with Bulgaria winning on both previous occasions (both group stage matches).
- Bulgaria have played four of their previous nine World Grand Prix matches against NORCECA sides, recording two wins (Puerto Rico, Cuba) and two defeats (Dominican Republic, USA).