



FIVB WORLD LEAGUE PREVIEWS WEEK 1 – MAY 23-25, 2014

General preview: 2014 World League (23 May - 20 July 2014)

World League expands to 28 teams

- The 2014 World League will see a record 28 teams participating.
- This is 10 more than last year, when the competition first expanded to 18 teams.
- Sixteen had been the norm after 2000, before which there had never been more than 12 teams competing for the World League. There were two seasons (2004 and 2005), in which the competition briefly returned to 12 teams.
- The expansion has opened the door for five debutants: Belgium, Mexico, Slovakia, Tunisia and Turkey. These are the most newcomers to the competition since 1990, when eight teams contested the inaugural edition.
- With the five debutants joining, a total of 31 teams have now taken part in the World League at some point in time.
- The only three teams that once participated, but will be missing in action this year are Egypt, Greece and Venezuela.

Russia out to defend their title

- Russia are the defending champions, having beaten Brazil in the gold medal match last season.
- For Russia it was their third World League title, following success in 2002 and 2011. Each time, they overcame Brazil in the final.
- Russia hope to join Italy and Brazil as the only teams that have won the World League in back-to-back seasons.
- Russia are also the defending Olympic champions. At London 2012, it was another victory over Brazil in the final that won them the gold.
- Brazil are the three time defending world champions and they will defend their throne this August and September in Poland.
- Russia are hoping to win a fourth World League crown. Their three titles rank behind only the nine by Brazil and the eight by Italy.
- Russia's 15 podium finishes already rank second in the competition, behind Brazil's 17.

Brazil and Italy enter 25th WORLD LEAGUE season

- Brazil and Italy enter their 25th World League seasons. These teams have taken part in every edition of the competition since it started in 1990.
- Cuba only missed the first World League season and will now take part in the competition for the 24th successive season.



- Titleholders Russia will embark on their 23rd World League campaign, having only missed out in 2004 and 2005.



Pool A: Brazil - Italy (23 and 24 May)

Head-to-Head

- Brazil and Italy have met on 24 occasions in the World League with each team claiming 12 victories.
- These teams have not met in a World League match since 2006. Brazil won that most recent encounter.
- Brazil have won their last four World League meetings, following a defeat against Italy on 21 June 2003
- This is a rematch of the World League gold medal matches from 1995, 2001 and 2004.

Brazil

- Brazil and opponents Italy are the only ever presents in the World League. Both will enter their 25th season in the competition.
- Brazil have won the World League a record nine times, most recently in 2010. Italy have won it eight times. No other side has won it more than three times.
- Last season, Brazil finished runners-up. In the World League final, they were beaten by Russia.

Italy

- Last season, Italy finished third in the World League. They were coming off their worst finish in the competition (11th in 2012). It was their first podium finish since 2004, when they came runners-up.
- Italy are guaranteed a top six finish this year, as they will host the Final Six in Florence from 16 to 20 July.
- Italy won the World League in eight of its first 11 seasons, but have not lifted the trophy since 2000.
- Last season, Italy lost to eventual champions Russia in the semifinals, before beating Bulgaria in the bronze medal match.



Pool B: Bulgaria – USA (23 and 24 May)

Head-to-Head

- Bulgaria and USA have met 11 times before in the World League. Bulgaria have won eight matches and USA have three wins.
- The teams will clash for the third consecutive World League season. In 2012, USA beat Bulgaria 3-0 in the final round group stage. Last season, both teams won each one of the two intercontinental round clashes.
- Before claiming gold at the 2008 Olympic Games, USA beat Bulgaria 3-1 in the group stage.
- Nikolay Penchev (BUL) and Paul Lotman (USA) are teammates at Asseco Resovia (POL).
- Zlatan Yordanov (BUL) and Murphy Troy (USA) both play for Saint-Nazaire VB Atlantique (FRA).
- Danail Milushev (BUL) and Vaafuti Tavana (USA) are teammates at Spacer's Toulouse Volley (FRA).

Bulgaria

- Bulgaria are making their 17th appearance in the World League. Despite never making the podium, they have finished fourth on five different occasions.
- Last year, Bulgaria came fourth, falling to Italy in five sets in the bronze medal match to just miss out on what would have been their first ever World League medal.
- Bulgaria have won only one of their previous five World League opening matches. Their only opening day victory in this time span came in 2013, when they beat France 3-2.

USA

- USA have won only one of their last nine World League opening matches and have lost their last five, since beating Finland 3-1 in 2008.
- USA are one of seven teams to have won the World League, triumphing in 2008.
- USA have lost their last five World League matches and can lose six in a row for the first time since 1994 when they recorded 13 straight defeats.
- Last season, Erik Shoji was the World League's most prolific digger with 118 (average of 3.03 per set).



Pool C: Belgium - Australia (23 and 25 May)

Head-to-Head

- Belgium will make their World League debut, meaning this will be the first World League meeting between these teams.
- Belgium's Florian Malisse (14-12-1997) is the youngest player in all of the 2014 World League squads. He could face Australia's Arshdeep Dosanjh (30-07-1996) in this match, the fifth youngest player in the 2014 teams. Age wise, only Cuba has three different players between these two.
- In Pool C, Finland (9), Canada (7), Australia (1) and Belgium (0) have 17 combined World League appearances, fewest of all seven pools. Pool F follows with 23 combined appearances (all for Cuba).

Belgium

- Belgium are one of five teams making their World League debut, alongside Tunisia, Turkey, Mexico and Slovakia.
- Last year, Iran, the only debutants of that edition, ended in overall ninth place winning half (five) of their 10 matches. This included wins over traditional powerhouses Italy and Cuba.
- The best result by a debuting team since the start of this century is a fourth place by the Czech Republic in 2003. They lost their semifinal against Brazil and the third place match against Italy that year and have not competed ever since, but will compete again this year.

Australia

- Australia will participate in the World League for the second time, after finishing in 10th place in 1999.
- Fifteen years between consecutive appearances will be a new World League record, surpassing the 13 years between Finland's first (1993) and second (2006) participation.
- They have lost all of their World League matches so far (12), a feat only equalled by Puerto Rico (also no wins in 12 matches).
- Australia and Puerto Rico have also won and lost the exact same number of sets: five wins and 36 losses each.



Pool D: Argentina - France (24 and 25 May)

Head-to-Head

- Argentina and France have met 14 times and each team has won seven matches.
- Only one of these 14 matches ended in a 3-0 win, Argentina defeating France 3-0 in 1999.
- France won both encounters last season, 3-2, 3-1. Argentina won the previous two matches, in 2009.
- Neither France nor Argentina have won three matches in a row against each other. France can be the first to do this.

Argentina

- This is Argentina's 16th appearance. They finished sixth last year as they were guaranteed a ticket for the final six as hosts. They finished fourth in 2011, their best final rank.
- Argentina began last year with a win against USA, before losing their next 11 matches. This is their worst run since losing 17 in a row in 2009-2011.
- New head coach Julio Velasco won five of the first six editions of the World League as coach of Italy: (1990, 1991, 1992, 1994 and 1995).

France

- France won their last three matches of last year. If they beat Argentina twice they can set a winning streak of five for the first time since five in July 2004-May 2005.
- France have lost their first two matches of the World League season in three of the last four editions. The last time they won their opening two games was in 2008 vs Venezuela.
- Ludovic Castard is the only 2014 squad member who also played for France in their silver medal winning campaign in the 2006 World League.
- That second place finish is France's best in their previous 18 World League campaigns.
- Earvin Ngapeth had the highest efficiency rate of all receivers last year: 62.3%.



Pool D: Germany - Japan (23 and 24 May)

Head-to-Head

- Germany and Japan have each won four of their eight matches against each other.
- Germany have won three of their last four matches against Japan, including the last two encounters.
- Germany can win three matches in a row against Japan for the first time. Japan have won three in a row against Germany once before (1993).

Germany

- Germany are playing in their 11th World League and in their fifth campaign in a row. Their seventh (2013) and fifth (2012) place finishes in the last two editions are their best two rankings.
- Germany started last year's World League with two defeats against Italy. They won their first two matches in 2012.
- Germany beat Iran 3-0 in their last match of 2013 and they can claim two 3-0 wins in a row for the first time since June 2012, when they defeated Portugal and Argentina.
- Georg Grozer will not be playing in this year's World League. He won the FIVB Men's Club World Championships with his Russian club Belogorie Belgorod this month.

Japan

- Japan are playing in their 21st World League campaign. Only Brazil (25th), Italy (25th) and Cuba (24th) have more participations.
- They finished in 18th and last place in 2013. Their last top six finish was in 2008: sixth. Together with sixth place finishes in 1990 and 1993 this is Japan's highest rank in all of their World League campaigns.
- After Japan's last victory against Germany in 2011, they lost 25 of their 28 following matches, including 22 in a row immediately after that win against Germany.
- Japan are one set short of 300 set wins in their World League history.