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# OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

28/29 December 2020 LANXESS arena Cologne



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## Ladies and gentlemen, dear handball friends,

These are special times. Usually, the days between Christmas and New Year's provide a break from European club handball. This year is – in so many ways – different. When at the beginning of September, the European Handball Federation and EHF Marketing GmbH confirmed that VELUX EHF FINAL4 would take place on 28 and 29 December, it was not only because of the event's significant importance for the promotion and reputation of European club handball.

It was furthermore a confirmation of the long-standing partnership between the EHF, EHF Marketing, the City of Cologne and LANXESS arena which has seen ten successful editions of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 since 2010. It is now with these partners that we make the 11th edition happen.

Above all is the players' safety. We are doing our utmost to ensure the health of everyone involved in this tournament. At the same time, we remain confident that we can provide conditions that allow the players to perform to their best on court.

With Barça, Paris Saint-Germain HB, THW Kiel and Telekom Veszprém HC, the best-ranked teams of the interrupted season 2019/20 will fight for the ultimate prize – the VELUX EHF Champions League trophy. Outstanding action is guaranteed when Europe's best players face each other; new and state-of-the-art entertainment ideas will add to a memorable experience for all fans – even though they are watching from home.

As in previous years, the VELUX EHF FINAL4 will be a special event that will add to the continuing legacy this tournament has already created.



**Michael Wiederer**  
EHF President





## Dear handball fans,

It is the eleventh anniversary – the City of Cologne is yet again proud host of the VELUX EHF FINAL4. This final tournament has always been the most important title in European Club Handball. It is an internationally renowned highlight-event, making it one of the flagship moments on our sports calendar here in Cologne, too.

The symbol of this success story is the 'Ball of Fame'. The sculpture in the shape of a handball is not only a real eye-catcher as well as a popular photo motif, it is also a tribute to every team who has ever won the title in Cologne since 2010. The statue is a demonstration of our joint efforts for handball: the European Handball Federation (EHF), the LANXESS arena and the City of Cologne.

The value of this partnership is particularly evident in difficult times. Unfortunately, the VELUX EHF FINAL4 cannot take place in the usual exhilarating setting this year. It is a great pity that such an international sporting event cannot be celebrated with thousands of fans. However, the EHF has come up with an alternative solution. "Become a Virtual Fan" is the EHF answer to cheering from a far: here fans can support their teams by sending in short videos and messages.

May all participating teams be successful in a fair and exciting competition. And I hope to see you all back in Cologne next year after the pandemic is over – for yet another top-notch sporting event at the handball capital of Europe.

*Henriette Reker*

**Henriette Reker**

Lord Mayor of Cologne

## Dear handball fans

Major sport events play a significant role for a state's image. The happy and peaceful atmosphere in North Rhine-Westphalia at events such as the football World Cup, at the start of the Tour de France in Dusseldorf, at the ice hockey and handball World Championships and, of course, at the annual EHF FINAL4 at LANXESS arena is a fond memory for many and did positively shape our state's image as a state for sports. The people remember the smiles and cheers of the winners but also the losers' sadness. That's what sport is all about: It's about the competition, it's about the best performance, about greatness and emotions which take everyone with them.

However, this year, the VELUX EHF FINAL4 will take place without fans from all over Europe, without its incomparable atmosphere. Things will look different in the arena's ranks, without the cheer- and colourful groups of handball fans.

Nevertheless, the four European top-class teams taking the court will give it all they have to win the EHF FINAL4. Maybe the players will even give that little extra to give their fans a bit of distraction and inspiration in these challenging times.

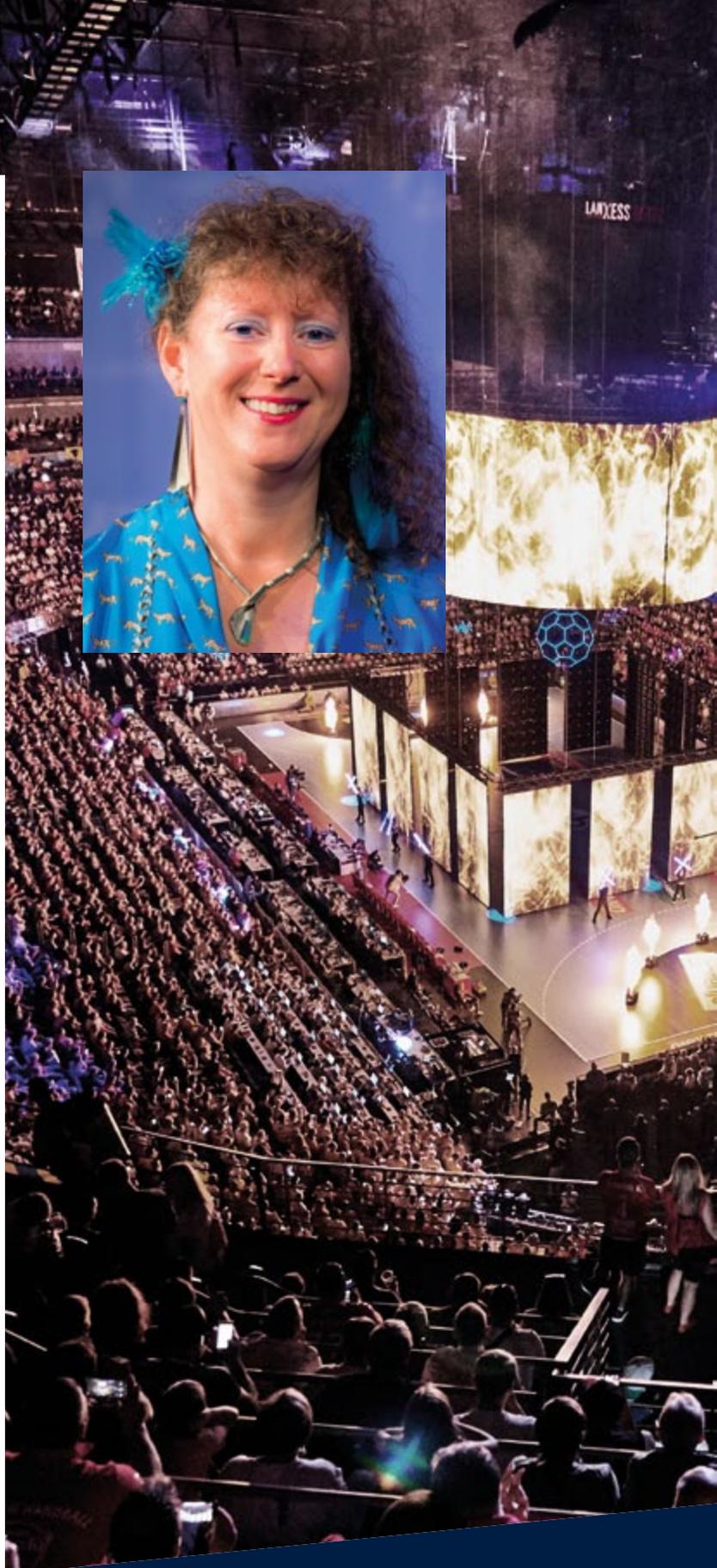
Even more so I wish the teams and the players fair and injury-free matches, and I would like to extend my gratitude to the European Handball Federation and EHF Marketing for the organisation: thank you for making the tournament happen.

I hope the fans will witness great matches and that we can meet again in Cologne at next year's EHF FINAL4.

Stay healthy!

**Andrea Milz**

Undersecretary for Sport and  
Honorary Office at the State  
of North Rhine-Westphalia



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BECOMING

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# BARÇA



## TEAM ROSTER

Number	First name	Surname	Nationality	Position	Date of birth	Place of birth	Height	Weight	Goals in 2020/21
1	Gonzalo	Perez de Vargas Moreno	ESP	Goalkeeper	10.01.1991	Toledo, ESP	190	93	1
9	Raul	Entrerrios Rodriguez	ESP	Centre Back	10.02.1981	Gijon, ESP	195	89	13
10	Cedric	Sorhaindo	FRA	Line Player	07.06.1984	La Trinite, FRA	192	110	5
11	Jure	Dolenec	SLO	Right Back	06.12.1988	Kranj, SLO	191	95	13
13	Aitor	Ariño Bengoechea	ESP	Left Wing	05.10.1992	Penarth, GBR	187	81	22
18	Blaz	Janc	SLO	Right Wing	20.11.1996	Brezice, SLO	185	85	22
19	Timothey	N'guessan	FRA	Left Back	18.09.1992	Massy, FRA	196	105	12
20	Aleix	Gómez Abelló	ESP	Right Wing	07.05.1997	Sabadell, ESP	182	71	30
22	Thiagus Petrus	Goncalves Dos Santos	BRA	Line Player	25.01.1989	Juiz de Fora, BRA	199	100	2
23	Mamadou Lamine	Diocou Soumare	ESP	Right Wing	10.03.2000	Fassada, SEN	180	71	
24	Dika	Mem	FRA	Right Back	31.08.1997	Paris, FRA	194	90	43
25	Luka	Cindric	CRO	Centre Back	05.07.1993	Ogulin, CRO	182	90	23
28	Alex	Pascual Garcia	ESP	Left Wing	13.02.2000	Vigo, ESP	175	83	3
34	Aron	Palmarsson	ISL	Centre Back	19.07.1990	Reykjavik, ISL	193	96	29
35	Domen	Makuc	SLO	Centre Back	01.07.2000	Postojna, SLO	188	82	6
36	Kevin	Møller	DEN	Goalkeeper	20.06.1989	Tondern, DEN	200	103	1
37	Haniel Vincius	Langaro Inoue	BRA	Left Back	07.03.1995	Umuarama, BRA	196	100	13
72	Ludovic	Fabregas	FRA	Line Player	01.07.1996	Perpignan, FRA	198	100	27
82	Luis	Frade	POR	Line Player	11.09.1998	Rio Tinto, POR	194	115	12

# FACTS & FIGURES

## Barça

# 3

Barça can become the first time to win the VELUX EHF FINAL4 for the third time, after 2011 and 2015. It would also be the third title for coach Xavi Pascual, matching Alfred Gislason's tally with Magdeburg and Kiel.



# 5

Barça players have won the EHF FINAL4 twice: Aitor Arino, Raul Entrerrios, Gonzalo Perez de Vargas, Cedric Sorhaindo (all with Barça) and Aron Palmarsson (with Kiel, in 2010 and 2012).



# 9

Barça playmaker Aron Palmarsson is set for his record ninth appearance at the EHF FINAL4; he currently shares the best mark of eight with his former Kiel and Veszprém teammate Momir Ilic.



# 8

Barça are taking part in the EHF FINAL4 for a record eighth time.

# 16

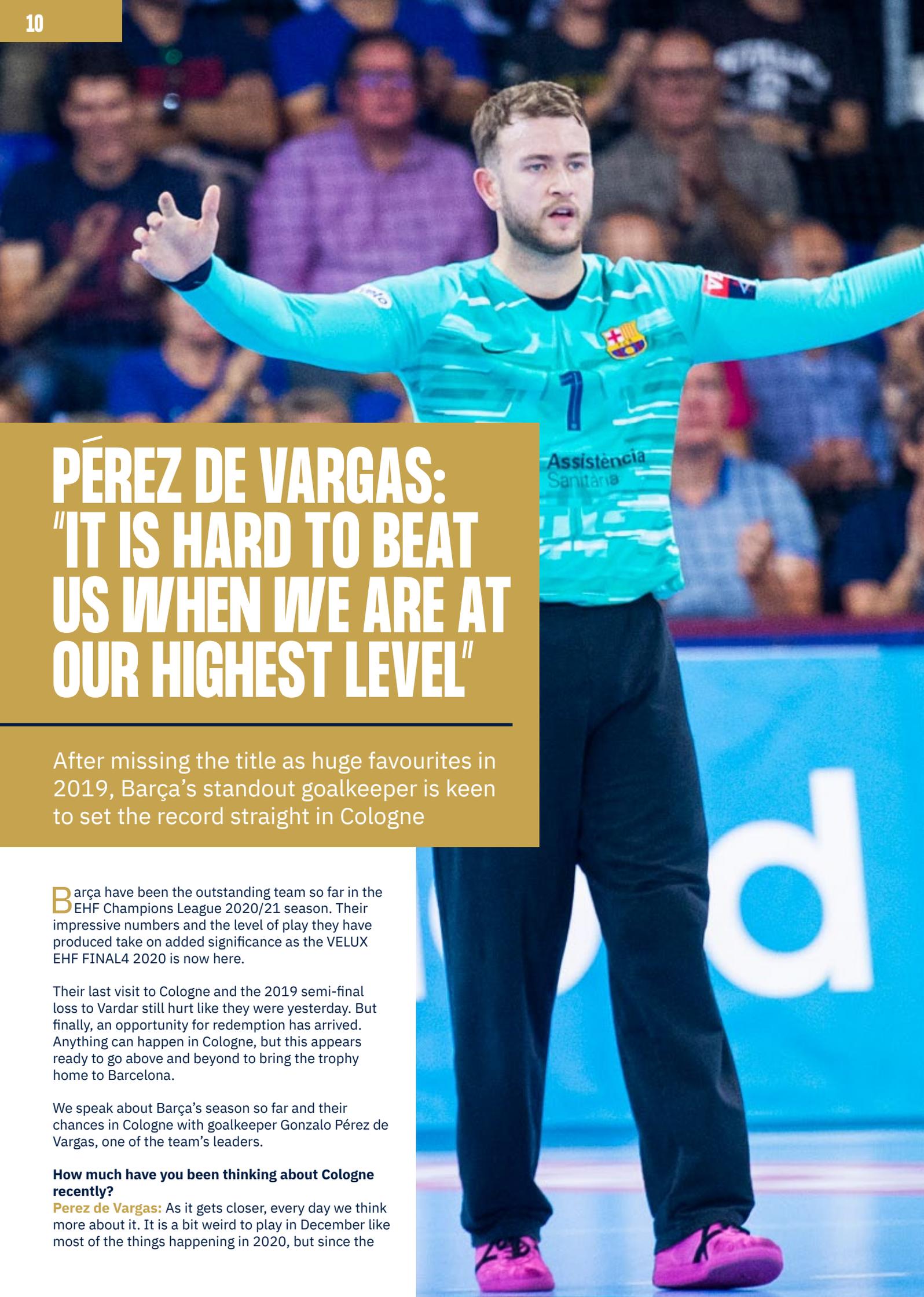
times, including the match against PSG Handball on 28 December, Barça have been in the semi-final of the EHF Champions League; 11 times they made it to the final.

# 241

victories from 318 matches (plus 20 draws and 57 defeats) is Barça's record in EHF Champions League history to lead the all-time standings since 1993.

# 34.6

goals Barça scored on average per match in 2019/20 season; they had the best attack (485 goals) and a goal difference of +105.



# PÉREZ DE VARGAS: "IT IS HARD TO BEAT US WHEN WE ARE AT OUR HIGHEST LEVEL"

After missing the title as huge favourites in 2019, Barça's standout goalkeeper is keen to set the record straight in Cologne

Barça have been the outstanding team so far in the EHF Champions League 2020/21 season. Their impressive numbers and the level of play they have produced take on added significance as the VELUX EHF FINAL4 2020 is now here.

Their last visit to Cologne and the 2019 semi-final loss to Vardar still hurt like they were yesterday. But finally, an opportunity for redemption has arrived. Anything can happen in Cologne, but this appears ready to go above and beyond to bring the trophy home to Barcelona.

We speak about Barça's season so far and their chances in Cologne with goalkeeper Gonzalo Pérez de Vargas, one of the team's leaders.

#### How much have you been thinking about Cologne recently?

**Perez de Vargas:** As it gets closer, every day we think more about it. It is a bit weird to play in December like most of the things happening in 2020, but since the

beginning of the season, we have been doing different preparations to arrive at the end of the year in a good shape.

**You are the only team that has recorded more than 20 straight wins in the competition. Are you the favourites?**

**Perez de Vargas:** There are no favourites in Cologne, the favourites rarely win. There will be four teams built to win and just one can become the winner. Anything can happen and it will be even more unpredictable without fans. What I can say is we are happy with our season so far. We are playing how we want, with our style, and with a lot of players involved, which means we have a balanced team.

**Your last time in Cologne was in 2019, the semi-final against Vardar and everybody knows how that ended.**

**Perez de Vargas:** We threw away the work of many months in 20 minutes, we all have it inside. We know that if something happens, we must react quickly and differently. We have to be tougher and more aggressive in defence and more direct in attack.

**This time you will face PSG in the semi-finals. Are you surprised by the start of the PSG season with three defeats in the EHF Champions League?**

**Perez de Vargas:** Yes, I think the fact they did not win at home on the first day took its toll on their confidence. This year it will be difficult to be in the top positions, but in the EHF FINAL4, with 120 minutes of success and delivery, you can get a very big prize. They have enough quality to match anyone.

**What influence will Nikola Karabatic's absence have for the French side?**

**Perez de Vargas:** It is a very important loss. He is one of the best in the world if not one of the best in history. PSG lose without him on the court, so we will see how Luc Steins adapts. We expect a complete PSG, with players capable of making the difference - for example Kristopans, we already know what he can do by himself.

**In the other semi-final, Kiel and Veszprém will fight. You were victorious against Kiel twice (32:26 in Kiel and 29:24 in Barcelona) this season. Are these results a reference for Cologne?**

**Perez de Vargas:** It is good for us to know we are on the right track, especially in terms of the game. However, each match is a world of its own and efficiency can make the difference. There are high-quality players in every teams capable of changing a game, that is why is so difficult to win. But if we play at our high level, as we did

in most matches, it is hard to beat us. If we play well and do the things we want, we have a good chance of winning.

**What areas could you improve?**

**Perez de Vargas:** We talked about it after the game in Germany, we were very solid in defence but in different phases of the game, where we tend to be more effective, we were not so disciplined in the fast break. And that is one of the factors to improve to be a better team. At a defensive level, the indications are clear and there will not be a lack of intensity in the EHF FINAL4.

**The goalkeeper position is producing good numbers. Of the last few seasons, is this the best shape and level of confidence Barça have had in goal?**

**Perez de Vargas:** Yes, and it is positive we are both doing good numbers and team can count on us regardless of who plays. We want to get this championship and the one in 2021 as well. Kevin Møller knows he will leave the club at the end of the season and is showing more determination - that is a great goalkeeper.

**Barça have not won the EHF Champions League since 2015, too many years for a club like this. Are you arriving to Cologne with pressure?**

**Perez de Vargas:** Depends on how you look at it: PSG and Veszprém have been looking for their first title for ages, Kiel has not won since 2012. I think Barça should have some more titles but if you compare with other teams, we are in a similar situation. Since I am in Barcelona, the year that hurts me the most was 2019. I think we were the best team, but we were not able to capture it.

**Barça will miss Casper Mortensen but this season you have a deep roster. What do you think about the adaptation of newcomers?**

**Perez de Vargas:** I'm happy how they have adapted. Blaz Janc is a young veteran, a physical marvel, a team player. Domen Makuc is very young and comes to play in a difficult position but we are looking at one of the players of the next decade. Haniel Langaro has a lot of shooting in him and can unlock a defence, while Luis Frade is the present and future, physically he can make the difference.

**We spoke about arrivals, but this season is the first one without great captain Victor Tomas, who retired prematurely.**

**Perez de Vargas:** We miss him. He is a person who has dedicated his whole life to the club. You notice that something is missing, even though he is next to the team and comes to some matches. It cannot be easy for him, but we appreciate this support. I hope we can win this title for him as well as Lasse Andersson and Abel Serdio.





# PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN HANDBALL



## TEAM ROSTER

Number	First name	Surname	Nationality	Position	Date of birth	Place of birth	Height	Weight	Goals in 2020/21
1	Vincent	Gerard	FRA	Goalkeeper	16.12.1986	Woippy, FRA	189	104	1
6	Luc	Steins	NED	Centre Back	22.03.1995	Voerendaal, NED	172	76	
9	Adama	Keita	FRA	Left Wing	05.06.1997	Paris, FRA	185	81	5
10	Dainis	Kristopans	LAT	Right Back	27.09.1990	Ludza, LAT	215	135	16
11	Benoit	Kounkoud	FRA	Right Wing	19.02.1997	Versailles, FRA	188	78	11
12	Yann	Genty	FRA	Goalkeeper	26.12.1981	Enghien les Bains, FRA	185	89	1
14	Ferran	Sole Sala	ESP	Right Wing	25.08.1992	Sant Quirze, ESP	192	88	8
15	Henrik	Toft Hansen	DEN	Line Player	18.12.1986	Skive, DEN	200	106	12
18	Nedim	Remili	FRA	Right Back	18.07.1995	Creteil, FRA	195	94	21
20	Mathieu	Grebille	FRA	Left Wing	06.10.1991	Paris, FRA	198	94	6
21	Kamil	Syprzak	POL	Line Player	23.07.1991	Plock, POL	206	120	16
22	Luka	Karabatic	FRA	Line Player	19.04.1988	Strasbourg, FRA	202	108	13
23	Viran	Morros de Argila	ESP	Back	15.12.1983	Barcelona, ESP	199	99	
24	Mikkel	Hansen	DEN	Centre Back	22.10.1987	Helsingør, DEN	192	93	46
44	Nikola	Karabatic	FRA	Left Back	11.04.1984	Nis, SRB	196	104	11
71	Elohim	Prandi	FRA	Left Back	24.08.1998	Istres, FRA	193	96	10
99	Dylan	Nahi	FRA	Left Wing	30.11.1999	Paris, FRA	192	94	10

# FACTS & FIGURES

## Paris Saint-Germain Handball

1

time PSG Handball coach Raul Gonzalez won the EHF Champions League, in 2017 with Vardar - in a final against PSG.



2

former EHF Champions League top scorers play for PSG Handball: Mikkel Hansen (2011/12 - 98 goals for AG København, 2015/16 - 141 goals for PSG) and Nikola Karabatic (2006/07 - 89 goals for Kiel), though the latter will miss the EHF FINAL4 due to injury.



3

EHF Champions League trophies were won by defender Viran Morros, the last one in 2015 with Barça.

9

seasons, including 2020/21, PSG have been playing in the EHF Champions League; for the fourth time they have reached the EHF FINAL4.

2

former IHF World Handball Players of the Year play for PSG Handball: Nikola Karabatic (2007, 2014, 2016) and Mikkel Hansen (2011, 2015, 2018), the only three-time winners.



41

centimetres make PSG's Dainis Kristopans the tallest player at the EHF FINAL4; the Latvian player, who arrived from Füchse Berlin in the summer of 2020, won the title with Vardar in 2019.

straight home matches since November 2014 was the extent of PSG's unbeaten streak, until a 35:32 defeat to Barça on 1 December 2019.

213



# HANSEN: "I AM AS EXCITED FOR COLOGNE AS I HAVE EVER BEEN"

Playing at the VELUX EHF FINAL4 for the sixth time, PSG star Mikkel Hansen finally wants to win it in 2020

For everything that Mikkel Hansen has won in his glorious career so far, one trophy is still missing. The Danish standout has been at the VELUX EHF FINAL4 five times with three different teams - Barça, København and PSG - but he is yet to hold the most coveted trophy in men's club handball.

It is not that the EHF Champions League does not like Mikkel Hansen, though. The 33-year-old left back with his trademark headband, playing for PSG since 2012, made the competition's All-star Team four times and still holds the record for most goals scored in a single season, 141 in 2015/16.

On 28/29 December, Hansen will get another chance to win EHF Champions League with PSG at the EHF FINAL4 2020, with Barça their opponents in the semi-final.

In this interview of the week, Hansen talks about: PSG's season so far, playing Barça at the EHF FINAL4, being excited for another visit to Cologne.

**What do you think of the season so far?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** I think the best term to sum it up would be hectic. It is hard, for a player, not being able to know what's going to happen next. I find it very complicated to focus on a game, suddenly for it not to be played. It's not anybody's fault, though, that's just the way things are at the moment. This is, to be fair, one of the toughest things in my career. You might prepare for a game for weeks and, the day before, it is postponed. But I look on the bright side of things, we, as players, are lucky to be able to go to work every day.

**Can it explain why Paris Saint-Germain had problems finding their rhythm at the start of the season?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** PSG is a club full of ambitions, and I won't tell you anything new by saying that we want to win every game. As a group, we have not played well enough and we have to work harder, play harder to get things done. The game in Porto in November was the best example. We might have been in trouble in the first half, but then we did everything 10% more, and we finally won the game.

**Can the often-changing playing schedule be a reason for Paris woes?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** I don't think so. Or, maybe yes, but it is the same for everybody. In Paris, the team is full of players used to playing to big crowds, and playing in empty arenas is strange, that's for sure. But, as I said, all teams are in this situation and we are not going to hide under any excuse. We are not satisfied with ourselves so far, that's the bottom line. How does Nikola Karabatic's absence affect Paris, in terms of responsibilities to be taken on the court? **Mikkel Hansen:** No matter which team, losing a player like 'Niko' is a big blow. I felt bad when I saw him going down with that knee injury. But there are a lot of great players in Paris, and even though you can't replace Nikola 100%, you can still try to give something extra to make up for his absence. He's very important on and off the court, but if during games all the players give 10% extra, I'm sure we can still achieve everything we want.

**What do you think of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 in Cologne?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** Of course, we are very motivated to play there, I am really looking forward to travelling to Cologne again. The EHF FINAL4 remains the EHF FINAL4, no matter the time of the year, it has got this special taste to it. Even if you're tired, you want to play there. This time, there are no surprises, I think the four

best teams in Europe will be there, and this event might be of an even higher level than the years before.

**Does PSG's presence at the EHF FINAL4 feel like a reward for the 2019/20 season?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** It kind of does, yes, because we had a very good run in the Champions League, we only lost to Barcelona twice and in Szeged, which I think is still pretty good. We fought hard to finish second in the group phase and it paid off. But now is not the time to think about what happened anymore, it is time to look ahead.

**What went through your mind when you saw Barça being drawn as your opponents in the semi-final?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** Not much. I mean, playing Veszprém, Kiel or Barça was in my opinion equally tough. I saw Barça play in Kiel last Thursday, they sure are an amazing team with great players, but I think we are very good, too. In Cologne, anything can happen, so it's better not to focus too much on the names of your opponent.

**Even if that opponent beat you twice in the past season?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** Yes, Barça might have won twice when we played them last season, but statistics don't mean anything in Cologne, so I don't even pay attention to them. When we enter the court, both teams will be even at 0:0 and everything will have to be decided.

**You have taken part in five EHF FINAL4s, though you never won it. Do you still have good memories of it?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** I guess that the best memory I have was when we won the semi-final, that's as good as it can get for me. Not being able to lift the trophy so far is a huge motivation for me. To be able to win it with Paris, a club I've been with for eight years, would be something amazing.

**Is it something that is on your mind all the time?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** Not in the way that winning the EHF FINAL4 would wake me up at night. It is, for sure, a huge motivation for me, but as much as winning the next World Championship with Denmark or winning the French league with Paris are. I think about it because I want to win every competition I take part in, not because I have not lifted the trophy yet.

**Going there for the sixth time, is the level of excitement going down bit?**

**Mikkel Hansen:** Never ever! The EHF FINAL4 remains one of the biggest handball events on the planet and I want to compete with the best players. It might be tough physically, playing two games in less than 24 hours, but I'm as excited this year about going to Cologne as I was in the past.





# THW KIEL



## TEAM ROSTER

Number	First name	Surname	Nationality	Position	Date of birth	Place of birth	Height	Weight	Goals in 2020/21
1	Niklas	Landin	DEN	Goalkeeper	19.12.1988	Søborg, DEN	201	102	
3	Sven	Ehrig	GER	Right Wing	26.06.2000	Kiel, GER	197	95	2
4	Domagoj	Duvnjak	CRO	Centre Back	01.06.1988	Dakovo, CRO	197	99	21
5	Sander	Sagosen	NOR	Centre Back	14.09.1995	Stavanger, NOR	192	88	45
6	Harald	Reinkind	NOR	Right Back	17.08.1992	Tønsberg, NOR	195	95	26
7	Magnus	Landin	DEN	Left Wing	20.08.1995	Helsingør, DEN	196	88	12
9	Oskar	Sunnefeldt	SWE	Centre Back	21.04.1998	Mölnådal, SWE	197	84	3
13	Steffen	Weinhold	GER	Right Back	19.07.1986	Fuerth, GER	191	94	17
17	Patrick	Wiencek	GER	Line Player	22.03.1989	Duisburg, GER	201	110	15
18	Niclas	Ekberg	SWE	Right Wing	23.12.1988	Ystad, SWE	191	89	43
21	Dario	Quenstedt	GER	Goalkeeper	22.09.1989	Burg, GER	193	98	2
23	Rune	Dahmke	GER	Left Wing	10.04.1993	Kiel, GER	189	85	10
24	Miha	Zarabec	SLO	Centre Back	12.10.1991	Novo Mesto, SLO	177	77	18
28	Pavel	Horak	CZE	Left Back	28.11.1982	Přerov, CZE	198	113	1
61	Hendrik	Pekeler	GER	Line Player	02.07.1991	Itzehohe, GER	203	101	21
99	Mattias	Andersson	SWE	Goalkeeper	29.03.1978	Malmö, SWE	186	95	

# FACTS & FIGURES

## THW Kiel

# 0

players of the current THW Kiel squad have won the EHF Champions League with the club: Domagoj Duvnjak won it with Hamburg in 2013, Steffen Weinhold with Flensburg in 2014.



# 2

THW Kiel were the first club to win the trophy at the VELUX EHF FINAL4 twice, in 2010 and 2012, but they have not won it since.

# 6

goals will likely be enough for Niclas Ekberg to become the EHF Champions League 2019/20 top scorer; currently he is on 70 and trails leader Hugo Descat (Montpellier HB) by five goals; THW Kiel newcomer Sander Sagosen scored 64 goals for PSG Handball in the 2019/20 season.

For the seventh time in 11 editions, THW Kiel are part of the EHF FINAL4 in Cologne.

# 7

# 300

either the final or the 3/4 placement match on 29 December 2020 will be Kiel's 300th EHF Champions League match.

# 22

seasons THW Kiel have played in the EHF Champions League, and they missed the quarter-final only twice, in 1995 and 1996, while they reached the final seven times.



Harald Reinkind's goal for 7:6 in the group match against Barça in the 2020/21 season was Kiel's 9,000th goal in the EHF Champions League.





# SAGOSEN: "A FINAL AGAINST MIKKEL WOULD BE A DREAM"

THW Kiel's super star Sander Sagosen is going into his second EHF FINAL4, but first with his new club

He was the top scorer and outstanding player of the EHF EURO 2020, adding a bronze medal to the silver ones he won with Norway at the World Championships in 2017 and 2019.

There is no doubt that Sander Sagosen (25) is among the most complete handball players in the world. Having started his professional career at age 18 in the Norwegian town Haslum, he went to Aalborg in Denmark for three seasons. And after his star rose at the EHF EURO 2016 in Poland, he made the next major step - to Paris Saint-Germain Handball in 2017. Playing with stars like Mikkel Hansen, Nikola Karabatic and Thierry Omeyer taught him lessons for life and career. With PSG, Sagosen has his first, and so far only, appearance at the EHF FINAL4 in 2018, but they missed the final.

Now the left and centre back is back – with THW Kiel, the club he joined in the summer of 2020. In this interview, Sagosen talks about:

- Kiel being similar to his home town, Trondheim,

- the ambitions he has with Kiel,
- his friendship with Mikkel Hansen, and
- the semi-final against Veszprém.

**eurohandball.com: How have you settled in Kiel so far?**

**Sander Sagosen:** It is perfect from all departments. I play in a great team, I am very satisfied with the way we train. Everything connected to handball is absolutely perfect, and everything outside of handball is the same. It is a great pleasure for me to be here.

**eurohandball.com: You are from Trondheim, lived in Paris for some years and now moved to Kiel – how different were those cities?**

**Sander Sagosen:** Paris was very different compared to the other two. Kiel is a city like Trondheim, close to the sea, you smell the sea in the air, you have beaches, it is like Scandinavia here. Paris is a huge mega city, Kiel and Trondheim are much smaller, and both are close to the nature. I love to be in the nature, so even from this perspective this transfer was perfect for me.

**eurohandball.com: And what about Kiel, when it comes to handball?**

**Sander Sagosen:** Of course, Kiel is the city of handball, they live and breathe handball in Kiel, this is one reason to come here. When you went out in Paris, you were unknown to the people, here in Kiel you are surrounded only by handball fans. And it is such a pity that in these times we have no fans in the arena. I really love this moment when the pandemic is over, and I have my first home match for THW in a sold-out arena, with this very, very special atmosphere.

**eurohandball.com: Do THW Kiel and Sander Sagosen share the same ambition, or is yours even higher?**

**Sander Sagosen:** Of course, I came to Kiel to win as many trophies as possible, and the next chance I have is at EHF FINAL4 in Cologne end of December. I am very ambitious, but when you look upon the history and the silver ware of the club, it is even more ambitious than me.

**eurohandball.com: When we talk about the EHF FINAL4, we have to talk about your special history. What is the biggest difference between PSG and THW?**

**Sander Sagosen:** Both teams are absolute top teams in the world of handball, with top players, maybe the best in the world. But the biggest difference I guess is the relationship of the players. In Paris, you said 'au revoir' after the training and everybody went home in the districts where they lived, because it was such a huge city. In Kiel, we all live so close that we see each other in the evening for a dinner or something else. We as THW

players do a lot of things together, there is a very special team spirit among us. Though I am only here since summer, it feels already like a handball family for me.

**eurohandball.com: When your transfer to Kiel was announced, many people wondered if it would work out with two top playmakers - Sander Sagosen and Domagoj Duvnjak - in one team. What is your experience so far?**

**Sander Sagosen:** We fit perfectly. We have a match every third day, and in the Bundesliga you have to play 100 percent if you want to win. So, 'Dule' and I share this position, we share the time on the court, and we cooperate better day by day. It really functions, and of course this we want to prove in Cologne as well.

**eurohandball.com: In the semi-final in Cologne, Kiel will face Telekom Veszprém, the team you recently lost 41:33 to...**

**Sander Sagosen:** We wanted to win there, but we had three tough away matches in six days, from Barcelona to Göppingen to Veszprém. We were on an equal level for 45 minutes, then we lost our power and energy against a really strong team. Veszprém can more or less focus on the Champions League, we have two tough competitions to play.

**eurohandball.com: Were you sad that Kiel had not drawn your former club PSG for the semi-final?**

**Sander Sagosen:** Why should I be sad? There is still the final left for this match (laughing)! Of course, I would love to face Paris in a crucial match in Cologne, and if we beat Veszprém it could be a final against PSG. I focus on my current tasks, and I am playing for Kiel now. But definitely, I will enjoy to see some good friends. I am still in contact with many PSG players.

**eurohandball.com: One of your best friends is Mikkel Hansen – both of you still wait for the first trophy in the EHF Champions League... who will win it?**

**Sander Sagosen:** We are really close friends, it was great to play with him at Paris, and it would be a dream to play a Champions League final against him. But to be honest, we should not talk so much about the final and the semi-final and the tournament, we shall just play and see.

**eurohandball.com: What are Veszprém's strengths?**

**Sander Sagosen:** They have strong individual players and they really got better as a team in the last year. And as I said, they can save some power for the EHF FINAL4, preparing only on this event and on us, while we had Bundesliga matches right before the tournament.

**eurohandball.com: What does it mean personally for you to be back on the big stage at Cologne?**

**Sander Sagosen:** We have a chance to win a highly important title there, this is my ambition, this is our goal. If you are so close – in the semi-final – you want to have it. I am totally looking forward to the event.



# TELEKOM VESZPRÉM HC



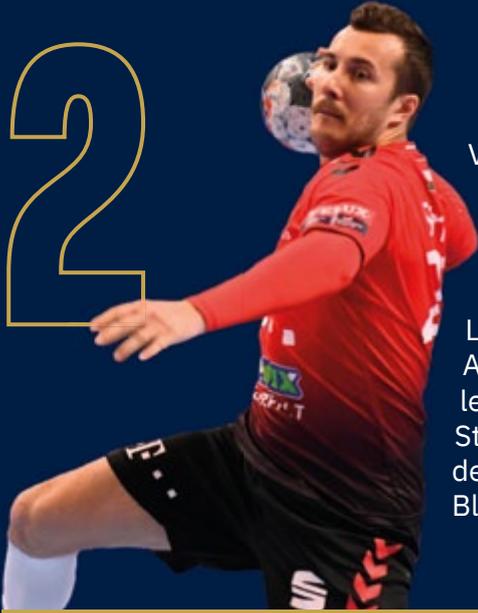
## TEAM ROSTER

Number	First name	Surname	Nationality	Position	Date of birth	Place of birth	Height	Weight	Goals in 2020/21
2	Dejan	Manaskov	MKD	Left Wing	26.08.1992	Veles, MKD	181	78	18
5	Yahia Khaled	Fathy Omar	EGY	Right Back	09.09.1997	Giza, EGY	197	96	33
12	Márton	Székely	HUN	Goalkeeper	02.01.1990	Budapest, HUN	194	92	
13	Rogério	Moraes Ferreira	BRA	Line Player	11.01.1994	Abaetetuba, BRA	204	129	15
15	Kent Robin	Tønnesen	NOR	Right Back	05.06.1991	Partille, SWE	194	90	4
16	Vladimir	Cupara	SRB	Goalkeeper	19.02.1994	Beograd, SRB	198	105	1
18	Andreas	Nilsson	SWE	Line Player	12.04.1990	Trelleborg, SWE	197	110	37
22	Nikolaj	Markussen	DEN	Left Back	01.08.1988	Gribskov, DEN	211	95	2
23	Patrik	Ligetvári	HUN	Left Back	13.02.1996	Várpalota, HUN	201	104	
24	Gasper	Marguc	SLO	Right Wing	20.08.1990	Celje, SLO	181	84	22
25	Rasmus	Lauge Schmidt	DEN	Left Back	20.06.1991	Randers, DEN	193	96	22
26	Manuel	Strlek	CRO	Left Wing	01.12.1988	Zagreb, CRO	181	79	12
31	Blaz	Blagotinsek	SLO	Line Player	17.01.1994	Celje, SLO	202	110	1
33	Daniil	Shishkarev	RUS	Right Wing	06.07.1988	Kostanay, KAZ	190	85	5
34	Petar	Nenadic	SRB	Centre Back	28.06.1986	Beograd, SRB	198	95	47
35	Kentin	Mahe	FRA	Centre Back	22.05.1991	Paris, FRA	186	86	8
36	Rodrigo	Corrales Rodal	ESP	Goalkeeper	24.01.1991	Cangas, ESP	202	99	
55	Jorge	Maqueda Peno	ESP	Right Back	06.02.1988	Toledo, ESP	197	105	7
66	Mate	Lekai	HUN	Centre Back	16.06.1988	Budapest, HUN	190	83	6
87	Vuko	Borozan	MNE	Left Back	09.04.1994	Cetinje, MNE	202	113	36
66	Mate	Lekai	HUN	Centre Back	16.06.1988	Budapest, HUN	190	83	6
87	Vuko	Borozan	MNE	Left Back	09.04.1994	Cetinje, MNE	202	113	36

# FACTS & FIGURES

## Telekom Veszprém HC

# 2



Veszprém players were part of the EHF Champions League 2019/20 All-star Team: left wing Manuel Strlek and defender Blaz Blagotinsek.

# 3

different Spanish coaches have steered Veszprém to the VELUX EHF FINAL4 through the years: Carlos Ortega, Xavi Sabate and David Davis.

# 4

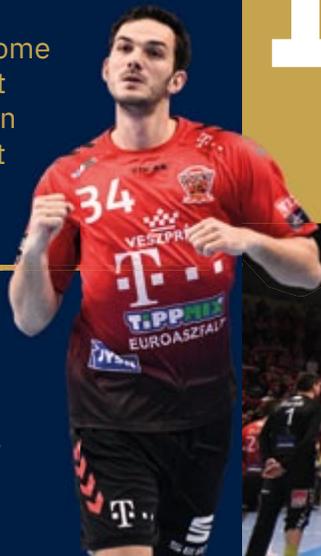
times Veszprém have played the final, and four times they lost: in 2002 against Magdeburg, in 2015 against Barça, in 2016 against Kielce, and in 2019 against Vardar.

# 14

nationalities are included in Veszprém's squad, more than at any other EHF FINAL 4 participant.

# 8

Veszprém can become the eighth different winner of the title in Cologne in the past nine years.



# 9

Veszprém are going into their ninth EHF Champions League semi-final.



# 22

times Veszprém and Kiel have met so far, with the Hungarian side winning 11 duels and Kiel 10; the 31:31 in November 2020 was the only draw they ever had.

# 200

the 37:25 win against Zagreb in round 2 of the 2020/21 group matches was Veszprém's 200th win in the EHF Champions League.

# STRLEK: "VESZPRÉM FINALLY WANT TO BE ON THE THRONE"

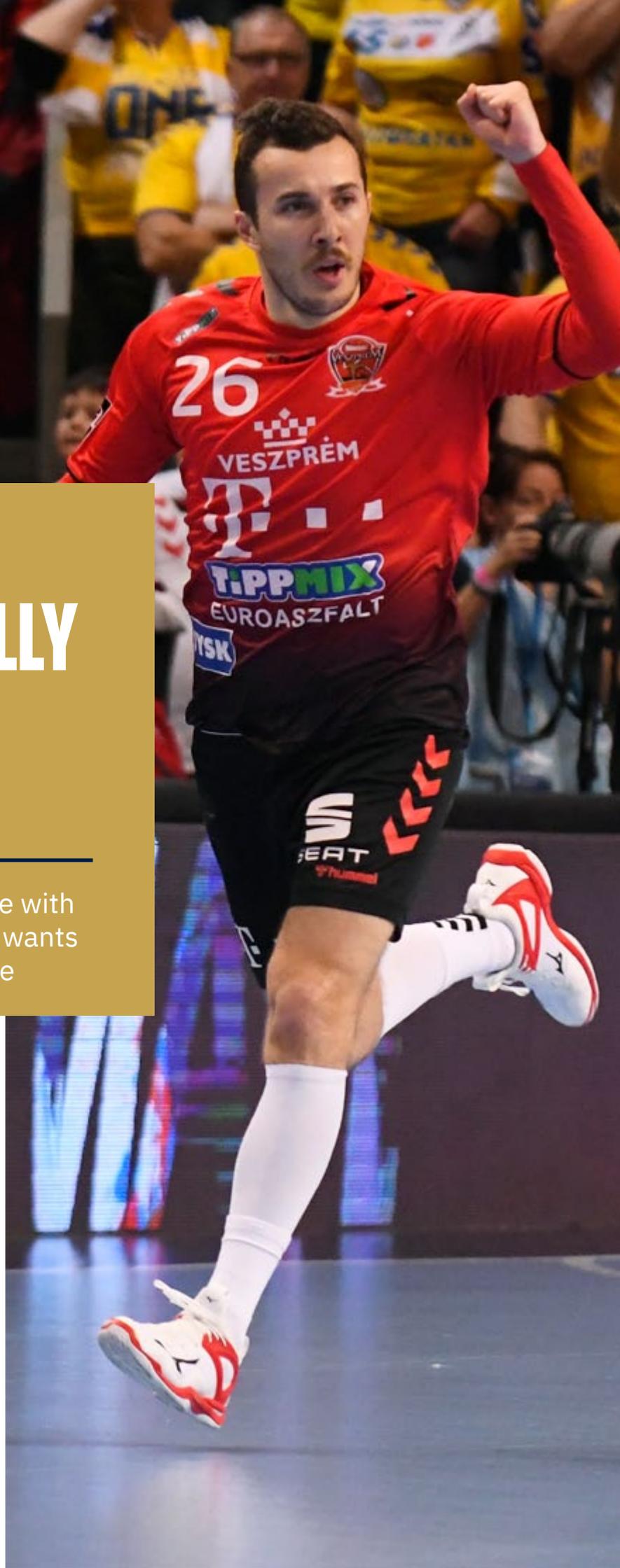
He won the EHF Champions League with Kielce in 2016, now Manuel Strlek wants to help Veszprém win their first title

**I**n 2016, Manuel Strlek was part of the Kielce team that won the EHF Champions League. In 2019, the Croatian left wing returned to the final with his new club Veszprém, but this time lost to Vardar. This month, Strlek gets another chance to help Veszprém win their first title, as the Hungarian champions are appearing at the VELUX EHF FINAL4 2020.

After scoring 54 goals for Veszprém in 2018/19, Strlek netted 42 times and was named All-star Team left wing in the shortened 2019/20 season. In this interview, Strlek talks about the mid-season preparations for the VELUX EHF FINAL4, the key to Veszprém's success, and what he will do when Veszprém win the trophy in Cologne.

**What are your biggest challenges in the current season?**

**Manuel Strlek:** It is a tough and challenging season. You cannot really prepare for everything as you do not know what will happen tomorrow. The pandemic



is making it hard the whole year, with all the testing. If you have to go in isolation, you have three games the next week. It is really hard to give your absolute best, without training, without practicing the tactics. This situation demands the utmost from us. However, the organisation and we players are professionals, so we have to deal with the circumstances.

#### How does the team overcome the problems?

**Manuel Strlek:** We only lost to Aalborg Håndbold, the team is doing great. We have the chance to advance from the group as the first or second-ranked team. There are some very important matches ahead of us, but the squad and the management are confident. I think this confidence helps us to deal with the problems.

#### Still, Veszprém are playing well this season. What is the key to your success?

**Manuel Strlek:** The key to success is easy, you need to win (laughing). Everybody here understands that. We keep our focus on the main reason why we are here: to win everything.

#### Last season you were voted into to the All-star Team. Has your way of playing changed?

**Manuel Strlek:** I would not say that I have changed my game too much. The tactics stayed more or less the same. Obviously, there are new parts in our game and we prepare for each opponent differently. I am very thankful for being nominated and chosen for the All-star Team. I am really proud of that. Although it is a great achievement, handball is a team sport. There are always three, four players who will score more than the others. Last season, I was one of them and I took my chances. So, huge thanks go to my mates as well.

#### How do you rate the other three teams at the VELUX EHF FINAL4?

**Manuel Strlek:** It is going to be really hard for us, we are among the top four clubs of Europe. We have 25 percent chance to win, however, Paris, Kiel and Barcelona are experienced and very talented teams. But in Cologne everything is possible.

#### What should happen for Veszprém to win the trophy?

**Manuel Strlek:** We need to play without tactical mistakes and not allow the opponents to score easy goals. We need to be ready and focused, so we can show

our best in the game. The whole club finally wants to be on the throne at the VELUX EHF FINAL4.

#### First up are Kiel in semi-final. Your thoughts?

**Manuel Strlek:** Against Kiel, it will be very tough. Last season and this year we had great games against each other. You can never underestimate them. We need to force them into making mistakes and use those opportunities. If we get to the final, anything can happen.



#### How do you prepare for the VELUX EHF FINAL4 during the season?

**Manuel Strlek:** It is not easy as we play in every second or third day. When we finish with the first part of the current season, the team will have seven to 10 days to prepare. We will use this time to improve our tactics, to get to know as much as possible about our opponents and to get ready physically.

#### If Veszprém triumph in Cologne, what will happen?

**Manuel Strlek:** I hope for a short celebration as I will join the national team for the World Championship 2021 in January. There is no time to rest. This is the life of a handball player, but only the trophy counts, so I hope that we can bring it home.





# SAFETY FIRST — HOW WE'RE KEEPING THE TEAMS' WELFARE PRIORITY

From a comprehensive testing programme to bubble life for competing teams, we're doing everything to ensure everybody's safety

This will be a very different and unique VELUX EHF FINAL4 but one that the EHF and EHF Marketing are committed to make the event safe for everyone who will be involved.

With the health of all participants paramount, all players and officials arriving in Cologne will isolate in a bubble and unable to mix with anybody outside of it. Each team will undergo three tests for Covid-19 – one before Christmas, another on 26 December, one on the day they arrive in Cologne. Only after a receiving a negative test can players and officials move freely within the bubble, in compliance with protective measures.

EHF Marketing managing director David Szlezak said: "We will be doing everything in our power to ensure the health and safety of players and officials are protected.

"We have left no stone unturned in our preparation for the event to be able to give each team the confidence that it will be played in secure surroundings.

"Although it will be a strange experience to witness our most prestigious club competition event without spectators, we respect and understand that regulations enforced by the authorities."

### The 'bubble' explained

As soon as teams arrived at the airport in Cologne, they were placed in the so-called 'bubble' once they arrived at the hotel.

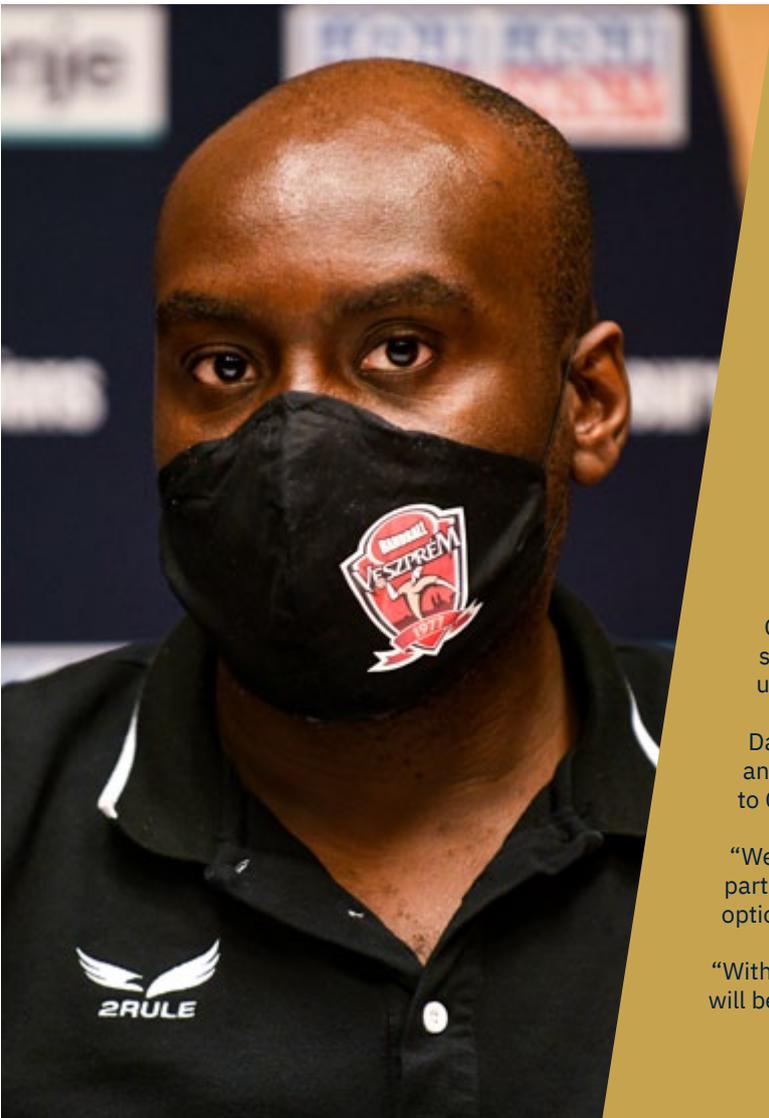
Players and officials from the clubs are no longer able to have contact with anyone outside the bubble. They arrived on a separate team bus before they were taken to their accommodation and tested once more.

In the hotel teams are living on separate floors with a separate dining room for officials. Training for each team will take place in four different halls, again with strict rules, where nobody out of the bubble is forbidden from accessing the floor or surrounding area.

### The test regime

To prevent any potentially Covid-19 positive player travelling to Cologne, all four teams underwent a test two times before arriving.

Having arrived in Cologne the entire were tested again at their hotel, with tests carried out with the cooperation of the Wisplinghoff Laboratory in Cologne, one of the leading labs in Germany. Only after a negative test are players able to move freely around the bubble.



Throughout the duration of the event, EHF Marketing will be working in close cooperation with the German health authorities to ensure the protocols are kept in place.

### Working zones

In order to restrict and control movement of personnel who are involved in the event, seven work zones have been designated to prevent any potential spread of Covid-19.

The seven work seven work zones are designed in such a way that there is as little overlap as possible between the individual areas and groups of people during the organisation and implementation of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 2020.

Each zone and the respective assigned group of people will have their own entrance/access to the LANXESS arena. The respective zones have to be entered and left at the designated and marked entrances and exits.

### Looking ahead to 2021

The safety protocols in place mean that for the first time, volunteers will not be able to play their special roles in the event.

Every year, around 200 volunteers from all over Europe have actively contributed to the final tournament of the EHF Champions League, with enthusiastic and hard-working faces volunteering in fields of media, logistics, accommodation and visitors.

Given this year's situation, and in line with the strict health and safety protocols, no volunteers will be on site, with the tasks now undertaken by EHF, EHF Marketing and Stadionwelt.

David Szlezak added: "Volunteers are the beating heart of this event and we are truly saddened that we will not be able to welcome them to Cologne.

"We know many volunteers return year after year in order to play their part at the VELUX EHF FINAL4, but this year we were faced with no option to keep things in-house in order to protect teams and staff.

"Without promising too much, we naturally hope that the 2021 event will be a different proposition."



**"THE ONLY THING WE CAN SAY IS A BIG 'THANK YOU'"**



In early 2010, the most successful partnership in European club handball to date saw the light of day: EHF Marketing and the VELUX Group announced the title sponsorship of, first, the EHF FINAL4 and a bit later also for the Men's EHF Champions League.

Together with Anton Kragh Lauritzen, Senior Manager Experience Marketing at the VELUX Group, we look back on some of the most remarkable moments of this partnership.



**VELUX and the Men's EHF Champions League have always gone hand in hand. Looking back at the past 10 years, what are the thoughts ahead of the last VELUX EHF FINAL4?**

Yes, we do go hand in hand and the partnership has become such a big part of the VELUX history over the years – which we are truly proud of. Engaging both fans, business partners and employers across the VELUX Group throughout the years. The last VELUX EHF FINAL4 is, of course, a special feeling and brings back a lot of memories. Adding to that the Covid-19 situation, it has been important for VELUX to keep supporting both fans and the EHF Marketing in having final VELUX EHF FINAL4 – celebrating the sport, the handball community, the fans and creating a memorable end for the partnership.

**Going back in history, how come VELUX decided to partner with handball in the first place?**

Before entering into the world of handball, VELUX was engaged in the 'VELUX Five Oceans Sailing Race' across the globe. Another successful partnership. However, there was a need to identify a sponsorship platform which first and foremost could deliver on brand awareness in Europe, secondly deliver a world class hospitality set up in our key markets in Europe. And we found that in the Men's EHF Champions League – and more. It has been a massive success to our brand and customer proximity by spending time enjoying world class handball.

**Throughout the years there have been a lot of highlights and special memories. Is there a special moment VELUX will remember the most?**

A cliché maybe, but it is simply not possible to pick a single highlight. I have to say that the intensity of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 is the pinnacle of the tournament. You can simply not predict the outcome of the finals, and that to me, is the true highlight – each year, all years.

**What did the long-term cooperation with EHF Marketing bring to VELUX?**

As mentioned earlier, it has brought what we set out to achieve in relations to our brand awareness and the interaction with our professional business partners through a world-class hospitality setup. In addition, it has also created a truly strong interaction among employees in the VELUX Group - it has in many ways been a unique meeting point in everyday conversations among colleagues locally as well as across borders. It has been a common identification for VELUX employees across the world – that is something not always mentioned in relations to sponsorships, but a very valuable element.

**VELUX employees from all over the globe were a part of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 from year to year. How did they experience final events?**

Yes, we have had colleagues and customers from countries such as China, US and the UK, not particular handball nations, but after the first visit to the VELUX EHF FINAL4 they were hooked, and we gladly welcomed them each year. In addition, almost all markets from Europe were present at the event. Also they were given the opportunity to meet top-management and the board members in a more informal environment – a great way to interact for both parties.

**The plan for the end of the partnership was to offer fans an unforgettable experience at the last VELUX EHF FINAL4, but the Covid-19 pandemic has changed everything. Do you feel sorry you will not be able to mark the end of the partnership in a festive way?**

The short answer is yes. But not as sorry as we are for the fans not being able to participate – cheering their teams in the LANXESS Arena with 20,000 fans cheering for their team. It is all about the fans.

**VELUX has supported the VIRTUAL FAN campaign, enabling fans to be digitally present in LANXESS Arena. What was the reasoning behind that?**

Again, it is all about the fans. That has always been our take on the partnership. Especially in these troubled times, we truly see the meaning of fans and the absence of fans. Not only in handball but in all sports. The fans are the key element. Therefore it was natural for us to support, in whatever way we could, to bring fans closer to the event with unique experiences and engagements.

**What was the reasoning for ending the cooperation?**

The strategy for the VELUX Group has changed over the years and we are heading in a new direction where we currently are looking for new ways of working and engaging with customers and business partners. Furthermore, we can after 10 years of partnership tick of all our objectives and a bit more. Therefore, we felt that the time was right to pass on the torch to new partners that can take the tournament to the next level.

**How does the future look like – is VELUX planning on working with some other sports organisations?**

The future for VELUX looks generally very bright. The demand for better and healthier homes by adding more daylight & fresh air through the roof is greater than ever. The VELUX Group is always looking for opportunities, but whether it would be with sports organisations or elsewhere is unknown. But, with the results in mind I'm sure that the VELUX Group in some point of time are to be seen as partner again, somewhere, we will see.

**Is there a goodbye message from VELUX for EHF Champions League and its fans?**

The only thing we can say is a big THANK YOU! Thank you to the fans, the players and to the EHF Marketing for a truly world leading partnership.





# THE 'FAMOUS ARM' WAVES GOODBYE AFTER 10 YEARS

The Austrian piece of art as the competition's unique trophy, introduced at the inaugural VELUX EHF FINAL4 in 2010, will be handed over for the last time

It saw daylight on 28 May 2010, place of revelation was the German Sports and Olympic Museum in Cologne, on the shores of the river Rhine, from where you can see the LANXESS arena. The new trophy of the Men's EHF Champions League had been crafted earlier, but on this day in May 2010, it got its final touch from two Austrian metal artists, Herbert and Stefan Gahr, during the opening ceremony on the eve of the first-ever VELUX EHF FINAL4 in Cologne.

When the curtain was raised and the trophy revealed, reactions were varying. This trophy was simply different from all trophies in other major sports: A unique metallic arm, a mesh of stainless steel and brass, forged in fire by the Austrian sculptors, who bond the ball to the arm for the first time that night.

The idea behind the trophy: to reinvent the ultimate prize and think beyond the ordinary cup.

Artist Stefan Gahr on how the process shaped up in his mind: "I looked through hundreds of snapshots of top handball games

and the mighty throwing arm had caught my eye. Symbolising the throwing arm of a player, the moment between victory and defeat, is encapsulated in this sculpture."

Then EHF President Tor Lian, Mayor of Cologne Jürgen Roters, and the team captains of the four participants in the inaugural EHF FINAL4 were truly impressed. "All players want to get this trophy on Sunday, but only one team will receive it," said THW Kiel's Marcus Ahlm. His teammate Dominik Klein, however, noticed a disadvantage with the new trophy. Jokingly: "How on earth shall we drink champagne out of it? This is impossible!" Two days later, Ahlm and Klein did lay their hands on this magnificent trophy. And already some hours after celebrating on the winners' podium, Klein backtracked from his earlier doubts: "We will not tell you how, but we managed to drink our champagne from, by and through this metal arm."

From that moment this trophy was in the hearts of all players and fans. The tens of thousands of fans flocking to Cologne each year, were offered the opportunity to take pictures with the most coveted arm in European handball. It became a





real tradition that each year the trophy, newly created, was presented to the fans during the opening party on the night before the semi-final.

While the previous cup was damaged during Kiel's winners party in 2007, this massive trophy turned out to be unbreakable, no matter the intensity of the celebrations. For some players, the metal arm trophy sparks special memories. Kiel's goalkeeper Thierry Omeyer has kissed the trophy twice, in 2010 and 2012: "It is really heavy, but actually you don't care about its weight when you raise it. And every time I entered the THW office and saw the two trophies, I remember those exciting matches in Cologne."

On 29 December 2020, 10 years and six months after it was raised for the first time, the metal arm waves goodbye. A new trophy – this time an identical design for the men's and women's editions of the EHF Champions League – will be handed over by EHF President Michael Wiederer in May and June 2021.

The newly designed, iconic trophy has been partly made from recycled materials, including handballs. Created by Spanish agency Sustain Awards by Oiko Design Office in Barcelona. The new trophy shows the moment the ball hits the net.

Before this new piece art will be awarded in 2021, the final question is which team will raise the metal arm for the last time?

In the end, even Dominik Klein, who ended his international career at the EHF FINAL4 2018 after seven appearances at the event with Kiel and Nantes, fell in love with it: "I love this trophy. Every time I see it, I can feel its character. The trophy honestly became my friend."



# GORENJE PARTNERSHIP FLOURISHING

EHF Champions League Men and Gorenje - simply the perfect match

In September, EHF Champions League Men partner Gorenje committed to a future with European top-flight handball by signing a two-year sponsorship extension.

Gorenje, who are part of the Hisense Group, began their sponsorship in 2017. In accordance with the new deal – agreed through EHF Marketing and its exclusive media and marketing partners Infront and DAZN – the Slovenian company will continue to be an official partner of the EHF Champions League Men up to and including the 2021/22 season.

The continuation of the partnership, which focuses on fan engagement, ensures that Europe's leading home appliance manufacturer will have a presence inside arenas within Gorenje's regional markets as well as inclusion in all marketing activities and communications.

As part of the extended partnership, the EHF and Gorenje launched the Breakfast for Champions series, powered by Gorenje, for the EHF Champions League 2020/21 season. Breakfast for Champions is a virtual adaptation of the live interview with star players before each week's Match of the Week. Each Breakfast for Champions episode features a player from each team in the respective Match of the Week and is conducted by one of the Faces of EHF Champions League. The series so far this season has been hugely popular with

some of the most famous faces in handball taking their time to discuss the upcoming MOTW over a coffee and their cornflakes. As part of the feature Gorenje are giving away small home appliances to players in the interview who correctly answer the Gorenje #simplyfans question and have also equipped the Faces of the EHF Champions League with small home appliances.

On the extension of the partnership David Szlezak, EHF Marketing Managing Director, said: "In recent seasons Gorenje have proven to have a strong and successful tradition when it comes to supporting top-class handball and therefore we are thrilled to have them as partners for further two years." Hisense Gorenje Europe Marketing Director Alenka Potočnik Anžič added: "Handball is gaining viewers and fans daily, which we hope to approach and to attract. I believe Gorenje's life-simplifying products will save them plenty of energy and time in the household, which they can spend for other activities like watching games."



**gorenje**  
*Life Simplified*



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THE GOOD**

**BEST WISHES  
FOR 2021**

Let's turn on the good side of 2021. Share warmth and positive moments. Connect with the ones you love. Gorenje is here to help you make your everyday life and chores that come with it a little easier, less complicated and more pleasant. Enjoy your life simplified.

[gorenje.com](http://gorenje.com)



# EUROPEAN HANDBALL AS HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE SPONSORSHIP

UNIQA is a long-term partner of the EHF Champions Leagues, focusing on core markets in central and eastern Europe - and have now extended their cooperation to the EHF European Leagues

UNIQA have been partner of the EHF Champions League competition and the EHF FINAL4 events for many years. Since the start of the 2020/21 season, the multinational, Austrian-based insurance company have also been partner of the newly implemented EHF European League Men and Women competitions. To be a supporter in their core markets in now four European handball competitions is a perfect fit for UNIQA, says Carl Gabriel, the Group Sponsoring Responsible of the company.



“Our long-term cooperation with the EHF is a cross-border showcase project with many synergy effects. It enables us to do exactly what we want and can bring us in as a regional premium sponsor,” says Gabriel.

In Austria, UNIQA are the number one insurance provider and it is in Austria that UNIQA make approximately 60 to 70 per cent of their sales. “We are a top player all over central and eastern Europe, and handball is one of the top sports there,” says Gabriel. “For us, European handball is a highly attractive yet affordable sponsorship that fits our strategy exactly. For UNIQA, handball is a wonderful, international project that brings us closer to our customers in our markets through a great presence on TV, OTT platforms and social media.” Handball is one of the most important sports in, for example, Hungary, Romania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Croatia and Poland, and many of the most successful Champions League teams come from these core UNIQA countries.

‘A strategy with regional synergies’ is UNIQA’s motto for all sponsorships – this is why the company are supporting different sports all over Europe. “All sponsorships differ in different countries, as we focus on and want to show presence at top performers in top sports, and even use them as brand ambassadors, from skiing in Austria to water polo in Serbia and Hungary to handball in all of these countries,” says Gabriel, who has been responsible for the partnership between the EHF, EHF Marketing and UNIQA since it started.

“Handball fits perfectly in all our core market regions. We have great TV exposure and great numbers in all media types, which shows that UNIQA and handball are perfect and successful partners.” The EHF FINAL4 participants in recent years, mainly in the women’s competition, underline this regional success, with names such as Győr, Vardar, Buducnost and Bucharest; the men’s winners from Kielce and Vardar; and the multiple-time finalists from Veszprém. On a mutual basis and with a joint approach, UNIQA and EHF Marketing have created a long-term and outstanding partnership.

Gabriel says: “The European Handball Federation is a small but excellent sports federation, which offers great opportunities for its partners by being highly innovative. For example, EHF Marketing was a pathfinder in terms of board advertisement from analogue to LED, they were one of the first with a focus on social media strategies or their OTT station, EHFTV. “On a technical and mainly digital basis, the EHF and EHF Marketing have always been trailblazers in terms of development, always trying to engage the partners with tailor-made ideas and concepts.”

Furthermore, the constant development of the product is important for UNIQA, as Gabriel concludes. He said: “The competitions are clearly structured, transparent and easy to understand. The top leagues are strong brands, and with the implementation of the European Leagues, many more top teams have the chance to develop, like, for example, clubs from Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia, which means a much wider range of regions for us as a supporter of the competitions.

“We can raise local awareness, as we, under normal circumstances, use our sponsorships for hospitality for customer relationship management. “Sponsorship in European handball and EHF competitions is worth every euro – this is why we extended our long-term partnership until the end of the 2022/23 season for all four competitions.”

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# PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER FOR THE VIRTUAL FANS!

Players to be backed by virtual supporter messages from across the continent

Players running out into the LANXESS Arena are going to feel right at home thanks to a concept implemented by EHF Marketing.

In order to show players from the four competing clubs the support of the handball community, videos from fans will be shown on LED screens during the match as part of the Become a Virtual Fan campaign.

The idea, which was run across official EHF Champions League social media channels, was aimed at bringing fans closer to the action and making them feel involved in the event, while also giving players the support they would otherwise receive inside a capacity-crowd arena.

To be virtually present in Cologne, all handball lovers had to do is put on their shirts and record a short video showing how they cheer, clap and dance in the stands. The most creative ones submitted by fans were rewarded with an exclusive goodie bags with official VELUX EHF FINAL4 merchandise.

The campaign proved to be a massive success with over 170 videos from all over Europe received throughout the campaign, with fans of all ages showing their colours and doing the La Ole wave.

All four clubs and their respective national federations – France, Germany, Spain and Hungary – got behind the campaign to further amplify the call for fans to be virtually involved in

supporting their club. Together, the clubs and federations helped share information and produced a wealth of engaging content surrounding the campaign to help keep fans interested and up to date with the event.

The second component of the campaign was also a huge success story. It focused on targeted national federations, teams and schools that offered those participating the opportunity to win merchandise and SELECT handballs for their school or entire class. The City of Cologne also got involved, sharing it with all schools as part of their sustainability concept for sports.

Every video received saw hygiene regulations maintained, with all fans shooting videos at a safe social distance from others.

Lisa Wiederer, Director Events, said: "This VELUX EHF FINAL4 is a highlight not just for the fans but also for every player, and that's why we wanted to do something to make them feel special in what will be a different event this year.

"Fans will get to see their own videos live on TV, appearing as if they were in the arena for real and with the introduction of these messages on the LED screens inside the arena, players will feel the support from their passionate supporters.

"At the same, this concept will show the rest of the sporting world that the whole community of our sport care about the players, the stars of the show."

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# EXPERIENCE THE EVENT IN A NEW DIMENSION

How augmented reality will bring the event to the living rooms of fans across the world

Thousands of passionate fans around the globe will witness the legendary atmosphere inside the LANXESS arena this year.

With the event being played behind-closed-doors without spectators for the first time, EHF Marketing have gone to great lengths to ensure fans watching at home can still experience that same spine-tingling feeling as if they were in the arena ready to support their team.

Thanks to augmented reality, that not even Covid-19 can stop the production of the breath-taking opening shows that the VELUX EHF FINAL4 is famous for.

Augmented reality technology will be used at a VELUX EHF FINAL4 for the very first time and will see elements added in to the opening show and also during each match.

Fans will get to experience each game as if they were still in the arena with a specially-adapted entertainment programme created to fit the small screen, with TV production paying particular attention to supporters' needs for entertainment.

What would a VELUX EHF FINAL4 be without Markus Floth, DJ Peter Vikström and the TV crew? Markus, the Face of the EHF Champions League, will be inside the LANXESS arena to bring his voice and presenting expertise to everyone at home. Together with Peter spinning the tunes, the atmosphere for a VELUX EHF FINAL4 is complete.

EHF Marketing managing director David Szlezak said: "It goes without saying that this VELUX EHF FINAL4 will not be the same inside an arena without fans, but we are committed to keeping fans entertained with a variety of new and high-tech features to make them feel they are in the arena support their teams and we are excited to see how fans will react to what is going to be a unique event.

"In Markus and Peter we have two people who have the knowledge, talent and passion to recreate the atmosphere that will be sorely missed inside the arena. However, with their skills being transferred to TV, fans will still be able to turn the volume up and have fun from the safety of their living rooms."





# EHF FINAL4 MEN 2021

12/13 JUNE

LANXESS arena, Cologne, Germany





# TROPHIES AND TEARS, GOALS AND GALAS

A quick journey through the previous ten EHF FINAL4 tournaments in Cologne

Ten tournaments, seven different winners, 15 participating clubs and 2313 goals – it has been a wild ride for the EHF FINAL4, the pinnacle event in club handball. What were the highlights since the event's premiere in 2010? Who were the biggest stars? Here is everything you need to know.

A record set which has yet to be beaten. Barcelona's Juanin Garcia scored 13 goals in a single EHF FINAL4 match, but it still was not enough in the final as THW Kiel turned a six-goal deficit into a 36:34 win. Kiel became the first champions of the event and ended the German club's curse against Spanish sides in the final. Previously, Kiel lost finals, in 2000 against Barcelona, 2008 and 2009 against Ciudad Real. In the semi-final, Filip Jicha and his teammates had taken revenge against Ciudad Real.

"Those who thought an EHF FINAL4 only works with German teams, were proved the opposite is true in that match," says EHF President Michael Wiederer, who was EHF Secretary General in 2011. 20,000, mostly German, fans in the LANXESS arena cheered for two Spanish finalists, and finally Barcelona had taken their first title at Cologne, after eliminating defending champions Kiel in the quarter-finals and beating Ciudad Real 27:24 in the final. It was the seventh trophy for Barcelona and they made a special double that weekend as for the one and only time, the same club won the UEFA and the EHF Champions League within the space of 24 hours.





After losing the final as Ciudad Real in 2011, the club was renamed to Atletico Madrid – and again lost the final in Cologne, this time against THW Kiel 26:21. It was the end of an era as that summer, Atletico closed the handball team and after three EHF Champions League trophies as Ciudad Real, this Spanish powerhouse had come to an end. AG København, another debutant in 2012, fell to a similar fate. Kiel became the first club to win the trophy for the second time in Cologne, yet they wait to this day for the next title.

The era of Cinderella stories began. On his birthday, Croat Domagoj Duvnjak almost single-handedly eliminated THW Kiel in the semi-finals, then Martin Schwalb became the only German coach to win the trophy after the first extra-time in a final at Cologne with HSV Hamburg winning the title as huge underdog. HSV's Danish wing Hans Lindberg was the top scorer, helping his side become the third German club, after Magdeburg and Kiel, to win the trophy.

In northern Germany, a new adjective was created: Flensational! For the first time, SG Flensburg-Handewitt made it to Cologne and again the biggest underdog flew home with the trophy, unfortunately for the defeated finalists THW Kiel, they were on the same plane. The final was not even the most remarkable match of this tournament, it was the semi-final. With eight minutes to go, Barcelona were ahead by six goals and SG coach Ljubomir Vranjes sent his young guns on court to get some FINAL4 experience. They levelled the scores at 32:32 after 60 minutes and 36:36 after 70 minutes. In the event's first penalty shootout, young Swede Hampus Wanne scored the winner, finishing 41:39 – the highest-scoring game in Cologne. One day later, Flensburg were again were six goals down against Kiel but won 30:28 and took revenge for the 2007 finals.

In his fifth attempt with his fourth club, Gudjon Valur Sigurdsson won the title for the first time alongside Kiril Lazarov, who needed four visits to Cologne to raise the trophy. Both took their one and only title, with Barcelona after beating Veszprém in a quite one-sided final. After a 13-year break, Nikola Karabatic won for the third time after 2003 with Montpellier and 2007 with Kiel, while Sjarhei Rutenka became the fifth player in the history of the competition to raise the trophy for the sixth time, he did it with three clubs: Celje, Ciudad Real and Barcelona.

2016

Julen Aguinagalde ended the longest EHF Champions Final with a bang and a scream – and the rest was pure joy for Kielce, the first ever Polish club to win the competition. Kielce were down by nine goals with 14 minutes left on the clock and in his famous time-out, coach Talant Dujšebaev just said: "Boys, finish this match with style." His players understood, sensationally turned the tide to take it to extra-time and eventually the first penalty shootout in a Champions League final. Aguinagalde scored the winning penalty and made history for his coach: Dujšebaev became the second coach after Alfred Gislason (Magdeburg, Kiel) to win the title with two different clubs.

The sensations continued – and tens of thousands of people gave their heroes a frenetic welcome in Skopje. Vardar did it! They beat Barcelona with a buzzer-beater from Luka Cindric in the semi-final, then PSG in the final with a buzzer-beater from Ivan Cupic, who became the first player to win two years in a row after his triumph with Kielce the year before. Arpad Sterbik was the MVP and took his fourth title. 2017 was historic in another way as no German team qualified for the first time.

"Ils parlent français" – they all speak French was the motto in 2018, when for the first time in the history of the EHF FINAL4, three teams from the same country took part. 15 years after beating Portland San Antonio in the 2003 final, Montpellier coach Patrice Canayer and left wing Michael Guigou took their second trophy, beating Nantes in the final of the first event without any Spanish or German teams. The first a non-European player was awarded the MVP: Argentine Diego Simonet.

2019

After Kiel and Barcelona, HC Vardar became the third team to win the trophy twice in Cologne – coach Roberto Parrondo became the second man in handball after Talant Dujšebaev to win as a player (under Dujšebaev at Ciudad Real) and coach. Ivan Cupic became the first player to win the trophy three times in Cologne, Igor Karacic capped his time with the club with a second title and the MVP award. The Vardar story reached a new height, while the river of despair continues to flow at Veszprém as they lost their fourth final and still wait for European glory.



# EHF FINAL4 QUIZ

- 1 **How many EHF Champions League titles have the four coaches won combined in their playing and coaching careers?**  
A 6    B 8    C 10
- 2 **As Nikola Karabatic is ruled out through injury, who is the only player that can win his fourth EHF Champions League trophy on 29 December in Cologne?**  
A Raul Entrerrios  
B Domagoj Duvnjak  
C Viran Morros
- 3 **How many times have Telekom Veszprém been EHF Champions League finalists?**  
A 3    B 4    C 5
- 4 **How many different teams have won the previous 10 editions of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 in Cologne since 2010?**  
A 5    B 6    C 7
- 5 **Which player will overtake Hugo Descat as the EHF Champions League 2019/20 top scorer if he scores at least six goals at the EHF FINAL4 2020?**  
A Niclas Ekberg (THW Kiel)  
B Petar Nenadic (Telekom Veszprém)  
C Aleix Gomez (Barça)
- 6 **Which two players might face the clubs that had they qualified with for the VELUX EHF FINAL4, but have subsequently left?**  
A Sander Sagosen and Kentin Mahe  
B Sander Sagosen and Jorge Maqueda  
C Sander Sagosen and Rodrigo Corrales
- 7 **How many different Spanish coaches have won the EHF Champions League since the start of the competition in 1993/94?**  
A 5    B 7    C 9
- 8 **Which of the four participating teams had earned the highest number of points in the EHF Champions League 2019/20 group phase?**  
A Kiel  
B Barça  
C PSG



- 9** How many former or current IHF World Player of the Year winners will there be on the court or the benches?  
**A** 2    **B** 3    **C** 4
- 10** Which player can become the first with nine EHF FINAL4 appearances?  
**A** Raul Entrerrios  
**B** Mikkel Hansen  
**C** Aron Palmarrsson
- 11** How many clubs have defended their title at the VELUX EHF FINAL4 in Cologne?  
**A** 0    **B** 1    **C** 2
- 12** How many players from the current THW Kiel squad have won the EHF Champions League with Kiel?  
**A** 0    **B** 1    **C** 2
- 13** Which former Barcelona player is the only one who has scored 13 goals in a final at the EHF FINAL4?  
**A** Kiril Lazarov  
**B** Victor Tomas  
**C** Juanin Garcia
- 14** Who are the only players that have won three VELUX EHF FINAL4 trophies since 2010?  
**A** Ivan Cupic and Nikola Karabatic  
**B** Ivan Cupic and Thierry Omeyer  
**C** Ivan Cupic and Tobias Reichmann
- 15** What is the biggest winning margin in a final of the EHF FINAL4?  
**A** 3 goals  
**B** 5 goals  
**C** 7 goals



# ANSWERS

- 1** B is correct: David Davis won three as a Ciudad Real player (2006, 2008, 2009), Filip Jicha won two as a THW Kiel player (2010, 2012), Xavi Pascual won two as coach of Barcelona (2011 and 2015) and Raul Gonzalez won one as coach of Vardar (2017), making a total of eight.
- 2** C is correct: PSG defence specialist Morros won the trophy with Ciudad Real twice (2008, 2009) and once with Barcelona (2015), while Entrerrios won the title twice with Barcelona (2011 and 2015) and Duvnjak only once (2013).
- 3** B is correct: Veszprém have played in four finals – in 2002 against SC Magdeburg, in 2015 against FC Barcelona, in 2016 against Kielce and in 2019 against Vardar.
- 4** C is correct: THW Kiel, Barça and Vardar have won the trophy twice in Cologne, while HSV Hamburg, SG Flensburg-Handewitt, Kielce and Montpellier won it once.
- 5** A is correct: Ekberg is on 70 goals, five goals behind Hugo Descat (Montpellier), while Nenadic and Gomez are on 62 goals currently.
- 6** C is correct: Sagosen (now at THW Kiel) and Corrales (now at Telekom Veszprém) played for PSG until June.
- 7** C is correct: Nine Spanish coaches have won the title since 1993/94: Valero Rivera (Barcelona), Talant Dujshabaev (Ciudad Real and Kielce), Xavi Pascual (Barcelona), Francesc Espar (Barcelona), Javier Garcia Cuesta Santander), Julian Ruiz (Irun), Francisco Equisoain (San Antonio), Raul Gonzalez (Vardar), Roberto Parrondo (Vardar)
- 8** B is correct. After their opening defeat against MOL-Pick Szeged, Barça won 13 consecutive matches and were on 26 points, ahead of PSG (22), THW Kiel and Telekom Veszprém (both 20).
- 9** C is correct: Four: Mikkel Hansen (PSG), Niklas Landin and Domagoj Duvnjak (both THW Kiel) as players, along with Filip Jicha as Kiel's coach.
- 10** C is correct: Palmarrsson has played at eight EHF FINAL4 events with THW Kiel, Telekom Veszprém and Barça – and he won the trophy twice with Kiel.
- 11** A is correct. No club has won back-to-back titles at the EHF FINAL4 in Cologne. As defending champions Vardar are not part of the 2020 event, it will not happen this year.
- 12** A is correct. No Kiel player has won the title at the club. Domagoj Duvnjak won the trophy with Hamburg in 2013 and Steffen Weinhold won with Flensburg in 2014.
- 13** C is correct. But Juanin Garcia's 13 goals in the 2010 final against Kiel were not enough for Barcelona to win the trophy.
- 14** C is correct. Cupic and Reichmann won the trophy together at Kielce in 2016. Reichmann also won it twice with Kiel previously (2010, 2012), and Cupic subsequently won twice more with Vardar (2017, 2019)
- 15** B is correct. On three occasions, the final has been won by five goals: THW Kiel vs Atletico Madrid 26:21 (2012), Barcelona vs Veszprém 28:23 (2015) and Montpellier vs HBC Nantes 32:27 (2018)

# MATCH SCHEDULE



MONDAY, 28 DECEMBER



18:00H

VS



20:30H

VS



TUESDAY, 29 DECEMBER

18:00H

**3/4 PLACEMENT MATCH**

20:30H

**FINAL**



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