

Group A (Tuesday)

19.00 Zodiac Athletic Barceloneta (ESP) v Radnicki Kragujevac (SRB)

Elvis Fatovic, coach, Barceloneta

“Radnicki has several really experienced players such as Vrlic and Cuk, and many young players who won the junior world championship. They grow and prosper every year. The match that awaits us will not be easy, but we expect to end this year with the best possible result.”

Daniel Lopez Pinedo, goalie, Barceloneta

“This will be our last game before the Christmas break and we want to show a good water polo game for our fans. For us, as a team, it is good to receive this kind of rival to improve our water polo. Radnicki is a very good and strong team, that’s why we have to prepare for this game perfectly. For me it is a pleasure to welcome Vrlic in his Spanish home.”

Fran Fernandez, player, Barceloneta

“Although there is still a lot of matches ahead, this one is of vital importance. Based on our recent results, we need to start adding three points, especially playing at home, for the classification and for our morale. Radnicki has high quality players and a dominant centre like Josip Vrlic, who we will have to guard well. We must keep progressing in our game, be more solid and consistent throughout the match. If we also manage to impose our rhythm and style, we will have a great chance to obtain the victory.”

Uros Stevanovic, coach, Radnicki

“This is the most important match for both teams. The team that loses will have far less chances of qualifying for the F8, because Brescia and Olympiacos opened the prelims well. This will be a great experience for all our players, Barceloneta is a phenomenal team, practically the Spanish national team. They have been playing in a similar line-up for many years. They finished last season fourth in Europe and that says a lot about them.”

Josip Vrlic, player, Radnicki

“Barceloneta is one of the strongest teams in Europe, especially in their home pool. It will not be easy for us, but we have prepared well, and we will try to take three points which would mean a lot to us in the fight for the F8. The Barceloneta team is composed of Spanish national team players. They have a new coach this year and it is certainly another motive for them to prove themselves.”

20.30 FTC-Telekom Budapest (HUN) v Jadran Split (CRO)

Zsolt Varga, coach, Ferencvaros

“This is such a strong group, and everyone is so close in the standings that each and every point counts. Therefore, we’d like to close out 2021 with a win to build a strong base for the new year and preserve our unbeaten run in the process. Mind you, this won’t be easy as we’ll play with a dangerous team which made Olympiakos’ run for their money in the very recent round. We need to recover a couple of

players who felt under the weather the last couple of days and produce a high-level performance to give our fans something to cheer about even before Christmas!”

Vendel Vigvari, player, Ferencvaros

“We’d like to finish 2021 in style: with a victory at home, keeping our unbeaten start to the season intact. This will be a hard game, of course, even more so because it seems that all our CL games are close... However, to reach our targets, we need to get three points this time around.”

Mile Smodlaka, coach, Jadran

“We did it. We won the Croatian Cup in final against Jug Adriatic Osiguranje and that was our main goal this winter. Because of that goal, we were not that focused on some Champions League games, but now we are going to Budapest relaxed and hopefully we can get another victory against a strong Hungarian side.”

Niksa Dobud, player, Jadran

“I won many trophies and played a lot of finals in my time, but for many Jadran players winning Croatian Cup is a first and this can really be game-changer. That win definitely boosted their confidence which I hope we will show against Ferencvaros.”

20.30 Brescia (ITA) v Olympiacos Piraeus (GRE)

Stefano Luongo, player, Brescia

“It will be a very tough game. They are the first and they built a team in order to win the Champions League. At the same time, our confidence is growing quickly match by match. There is the game we love to play, if we stay focused, we can beat anyone in this group.”

Theodoros Vlachos, coach, Olympiacos

“As we move forward in the group, each game and each result forms a clearer picture of our dynamics. It will also be a game of special conditions for us in a difficult venue with a very good opponent. Games like this you enjoy playing especially at a time when you do not judge many things.”

Marko Bijac, goalie, Olympiacos

“I expect a very hard game, Brescia is great team especially in their pool, and I am sure we will have to play our best game to take points there. We still don’t know if all of us will play and that is a problem that bothers us through this first part of the season, and I hope the in second part we will be healthy. Whoever will play, for sure, will give 100% to finish this year with victory and to bring points to Piraeus.”

Wednesday

19.00 Dinamo Tbilisi (GEO) v Novi Beograd (SRB)

Dejan Stanojevic, coach, Dinamo

“Another game, another great team to play with. Honestly, although we know the quality of all the teams in our group compared to us, it is still difficult to see the result at the end of the games. But despite that, we train to the maximum, we give our best in every training session and my players are

aware that only in that way can we progress. In this game I will ask my players to give their best in every duel, every defence and attack. To fight for every ball and to play till the end, regardless of the result and the difference in quality which is evident. It is difficult, but we have to get through it, and we have to keep training and progressing.”

Revaz Imnaishvili, player, Dinamo

“After a disappointing loss to Radnicki, we have a great desire to show a positive reaction, it means to play 100% and prove one more time that we deserve to be here, in the Champions League. We play against one of the best clubs, but we play at home and that gives us some extra motivation and we wish to present ourselves on a decent level!”

Group B (Wednesday)

19.00 CN Marseille (FRA) v Spandau 04 Berlin (GER)

Milos Scepanovic, coach, Marseille

“We have already faced the Spandau Berlin team. Even though there have been a few changes this season, but we know what to expect. We are doing everything we can on our side to get the victory at home and to finish this year on a positive note. Good fatigue management will be the key to this match for both teams.”

Ante Vukicevic, player, Marseille

“I’m very happy with the season we’re having. Our team has changed very little compared to last year and newcomers Mike and Alex found their place very quickly. We play well and organised, with a lot of confidence, with a strong desire to win. I’m sure that if we continue like this, the match against Spandau will be tough but we will be able to win especially since we play at home in front of our incredible Marseille audience.”

Petar Kovacevic, coach, Spandau

“We are facing a team that has shown this season that they can go head-to-head with Pro Recco. Now that the Marseille goalkeeper is back, they have a strong backing in goal and show a lot of confidence. It will be very difficult. But we want to show our best water polo game and take the fight. Against Steaua, we were able to do that in some good phases and we were able to realise our match plan. Apart from the game, I’m happy to come back to Marseille, where I spent six good years.”

Maurice Jungling, player, Spandau

“Marseille is a very good team and deserved to be in the Final 8 last season. They are showing very strong games this year as well. Therefore, it will be a very difficult match for us. But we played well against Steaua and we want to build on that and will give everything in Marseille to upset the favourite.”

19.00 Waspo 98 Hannover (GER) v Pro Recco (ITA)

Karsten Seehafer, coach, Hannover

“This is the last game of the year. It was a very successful year, and we will finish it with Recco. We will do our best and we hope to see an exciting game. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for everyone!”

Petar Muslim, player, Hannover

“It’s certainly a strong game for the end of the year. Recco is the favourite, but I believe we might put up a strong resistance.”

Ivan Nagaev, player, Hannover

“We will play our last game in this year against a strong team and they are the favourites in this game. I think it will be very important for us to play well in the first two quarters, and then try to keep and control the result until the end of the game. And of course, we should give our best. Good luck for both teams.”

Sandro Sukno, coach, Pro Recco

“We are preparing to face the last game of 2021, the third battle in 7 days. We are playing against Hannover, a tough team at home, with excellent shooters, experienced players and with the ambition to reach the Final 8. It will take 100 percent to win.”

19.00 Jug Adriatic Osiguranje Dubrovnik (CRO) v OSC-Budapest (HUN)

Vjekoslav Kobescaj, coach, Jug

“Last weekend we lost the cup final against Jadran and we are certainly not in a good moment. Still, we don’t have time to cry, we have to reset ourselves and play much better in the last game of this year against OSC.”

Marko Zuvela, player, Jug

“We are still under the impression of yesterday’s defeat against Jadran. We didn’t play well and we deservedly lost, and if we go on like that, we won’t have a chance against OSC on Wednesday either.”

Danel Varga, coach, OSC

“Our last game in 2021 will be our 35th since September. We gained plenty of experience over the last months, and we are still hungry. To win in Dubrovnik is still one of the biggest challenges for every team, but we will try to give our best.”

Vince Vigvari, player, OSC

“We are looking forward to our last game of the season. I know that Jug is a strong team with a lot of good players. We will be well prepared for the game. Dealing with tiredness will be the key. The team that wants it better will win.”

20.00 Steaua Bucharest (ROU) v Crvena Zvezda (SRB)

Ivan Basara, player, Crvena Zvezda

“The last four games did not end well, now we are training a little harder and in my opinion we should stop this bad series and record a victory on Wednesday.”

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