



## PRESS RELEASE

### **II FIP Arena Polo European Championship Baku: Austria wins II FIP Arena Polo European Championship in Azerbaijan**

*Baku, 18 September 2022.* Yesterday, Sunday 18 September, was the culmination of four days of world-class polo in Baku, Azerbaijan. Four teams competed again in the impressive grass arena at The Elite Horse & Polo Club to decide the champions of The II FIP Arena Polo European Championship. Crowds packed into the stands in to enjoy a thrilling Sunday of polo and were not disappointed with the Subsidiary Final played first which was won by the home team Azerbaijan to the delight of the spectators, followed by the Final between Austria and Spain, which saw Austria take the Gold Medal spot.



The local crowds, VIP guests and FIP officials packed out the grandstands surrounding the grass arena as Azerbaijan television streamed the event live. Wildly waving flags, the enthusiastic crowd were out in full force to cheer on their National side in the Subsidiary Final against Switzerland. Tarlan Gurbanaliyev joined forces with Elcin Jamalli for the first time in this tournament; both players were part of the 2015 I FIP Arena Polo European Championship winning team, so the odds were good for the 'boys in green' to bag a coveted Bronze Medal place.

#### **Azerbaijan wins Bronze Medal**

Azerbaijan came out of the traps with determination, quickly adding to their half goal advantage with a flamboyant flurry of goals, with just one in response from Switzerland. At half-time, the score was 3½-1 to Azerbaijan, much to the delight of the enthusiastic home supporters. Tomas Ruiz Guinazu worked tirelessly and opened the scoring for the second half with a goal for Switzerland, but Team Azerbaijan replied with a competently executed cluster of goals, with the local supporters roaring their approval. Guinazu scored for Switzerland in the dying seconds of the last chukka, but it was a case of too little, too late and Azerbaijan deservedly won the Subsidiary Final with a decisive 7½-3 score.

#### **The Gold Medal goes to Austria**

Next up it was the battle for the Gold and Silver Medal positions between Austria and Spain. The polo cognoscenti in the stands were undecided on who would have the upper hand; as both had been strong in qualification, but the one thing that was not in doubt was that this would be an exciting match



-2-

between two strong teams. The match did not disappoint, with frenetic pace and great end-to-end polo as the evenly-matched sides jostled for dominance of the scoreboard.

It was Austria who got the better start, with two confident goals in the first chukka, but Spain were not taking it lying down, showing strong defence and impressive marking to stop the Austrian goal scoring and get one of their own on the board; so at half-time the scores were close at 2-1 in Austria's favour – but only just. The fifth chukka was decisive, with Mario Gomez flamboyantly finding the posts for Spain, with one rapidly slotted through in reply by Diego Braun for Austria. Going into the sixth and final chukka it was edge of the seat stuff with the scores at 3-2 to Austria. With the close marking continuing, nobody else added anything else to this tally, with Austria running out the victors and securing the coveted Gold medal by the narrowest of margins and securing The II FIP Arena Polo European Championship.

The presentation took place with General Javid Abdullayev awarding the prizes and medals. Reto Gaudenzi, Tournament Director of World Polo summed up the sentiments of all attending by thanking the Azerbaijan nation for the superb hospitality and leading the crowd in, "Three cheers for Azerbaijan!". A fitting end to a great week of competition.

Dreamland Golf Hotel Most Valuable Player: Martin Bleier  
Switzerland for fourth place with prizes from the Dreamland Golf Hotel  
Azerbaijan for the Bronze Medal  
Spain for the Silver Medal  
Austria for the Gold Medal

#### **The II FIP Arena Polo European Championship Teams:**

**Team Azerbaijan (9):** Elcin Jamalli (3), Tarlan Gurbanaliyev (1) & Fabian Bolanteiro (5)  
Reserve: Agustin Kronhaus (5) & Ali Rzayev (2) & Andres Fernandez Llorente (4)

**Team Switzerland (11):** Fabio Meier (2), Tomas Ruiz Guinazu (6) & Tito Gaudenzi (3)  
Reserve: Stefan Roth (1) & Katja Grauwiler (0)

**Team Spain (10):** Jamie Visser (1), Mario Gomez (4) & Nicolas Ruiz Guinazu (5)

**Team Austria (10):** Walter Scherb (2), Diego Braun (4) & Martin Bleier (4)

*Photographs: By Kathrin Gralla/www.derrotedrache.com*

The photos of the tournament will be filed daily under the following link:  
<https://www.derrotedrache.de/kunden-login/>

Login: WorldPolo2022  
Password: Baku 2022



-3-

**About polo in Azerbaijan**

2013 the unique sport of polo was brought back to Azerbaijan, as one of its origin countries, where the traditional polo version Shovgan was played over the centuries. Thanks to General Elcin Gulijev, President of ARAF, and his visionaries of a new polo era in his country, the modern sport of polo was raised from zero to a remarkable international level in Azerbaijan during the last years. Information about the tournament: <https://www.worldpolo.com/event/>

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