



PRESS RELEASE

II FIP Arena Polo European Championship Baku: First Match Triumph for Team Azerbaijan & Team Spain

Baku, 14 September 2022. Polo in this amazing country has grown exponentially over the past 10 years, thanks to the dedication of The Equestrian Federation of Azerbaijan Republic (ARAF) and the support of World Polo.



The inaugural FIP Arena Polo European Championship in Baku was won by Team Azerbaijan in 2015 and this year sees the home team and defending champions pitted against three international teams, ranked between 10-12 goals, for the second edition of the FIP Arena Polo European Championship; will polo be coming home once again?

On Tuesday 13 September, the teams were presented at The Dreamland Golf Hotel, a 42-bedroom luxury facility overlooking the perfectly manicured 18 Hole Cynthia Dye designed golf course and just a short 20-minute drive to Baku and its World Heritage sites.

Yesterday, on Wednesday 14 September, competition kicked off at the magnificent venue of the indoor covered arena at Elite Horse & Polo Club Baku with action streamed live on Azeri national television. A day of top quality international polo saw the home team of Azerbaijan facing Austria in the opening match of The II FIP Arena Polo European Championship, followed by Spain vs Switzerland in the second match of the day. Before the first match, the players and supporters held a few moments of silence and all present wore black ribbons of remembrance in honour of those lost in the recent border incidents.



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As spectators and press from around the world gathered alongside General Elchin Guliyev, President of the Equestrian Federation of Azerbaijan Republic and Dr Piero Dillier, Vice President of FIP, in the viewing gallery, tournament favourites Azerbaijan confidently rode into the impressive arena to take on an Austrian side playing off a two goal handicap advantage. Playing strongly on their home turf Azerbaijan dominated play from the first throw-in and confidently took the lead 3-2 before half time, much to the delight of the home supporters.

Austria effectively locked down Elcin Jamalli at the start of the second half with strong marking and were rewarded with their first field goal of the match, 3-4. As both teams found their stride the competition intensified as a penalty conversion and a field goal both by Jamalli ensured Azerbaijan a convincing 6-3 lead and room to breathe. Austria finished with a lovely goal right on the final bell, but it was too little too late and Azerbaijan deservedly ran out the winners, 6-4.

The second match between Switzerland and Spain was a fast, passionate and frenetic finale to the day, with the heat rising in the arena with every passing minute. Spain began with a one goal advantage which they swiftly built upon, and despite the best efforts of Tito Gaudenzi with a well-guided goal for Switzerland, Spain had the upper hand which saw the half-time score resting at a convincing 5 goals to 2.

Spain started where they left off, with another goal despite the best efforts of the Swiss defence, but the hard work of Gaudenzi, Fabio Meier and Tomas Ruiz Guinazu paid off with back-to-back goals for Switzerland in the third chukka. However, Spain were back in goal-scoring form in the fourth, gaining traction to eventually win the match with a decisive final score of 9-5.

The II FIP Arena Polo European Championship Teams:

Team Azerbaijan (12): Elcin Jamalli (3), Agustin Kronhaus (5) & Andres Fernandez Llorente (4) (Reserve: Ali Rzayev (2), Fabian Bolanteiro (5) & Tarlan Gurbanaliyev (1))

Team Austria (10): Walter Scherb (2), Diego Braun (4) & Martin Bleier (4) (Reserve: Jakob von Plessen (1))

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)

Photograph: By Kathrin Gralla/www.derrotedrache.com



The photos of the tournament will be filed daily under the following link:

<https://www.derroteddrache.de/kunden-login/>

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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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