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KEY RESOURCES & CONTACTS

ABOUT THE EVENT
Event Name: FIH Pro League
When: January-June 2019
Where: Various

TEAMS
Women:
Argentina, Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, New Zealand, USA

Men:
Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Spain

EVENT WEBSITE:
www.fihproleague.com

BROADCAST AND LIVE STREAMING
Global broadcast and live streaming information for each individual match will be published on the FIH Pro League website as soon as it becomes available.

FIH TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TMS)
Raw competition data including match starting line-up pdfs, pool tables, top scorers, in-match statistics and appointment sheets will be available for the media at the following links:

Women's competition
Men's competition

SOCIAL MEDIA
The FIH will provide comprehensive coverage of the event via our social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Facebook: facebook.com/fihockey
Instagram: instagram.com/fihockey
Twitter: twitter.com/fih_hockey
Hashtags: #FIHProLeague
FIH PRO LEAGUE CONTACTS & MEDIA ACCREDITATION REQUESTS

You can find an email contact for each of the competing teams below. Media accreditation for all FIH Pro League events will be handled by the host nation of the match in question. If you are interested in covering one of the matches, please contact the relevant host nation using the below contact details.

ARGENTINA (M&W)
prensa.cah@cahockey.org.ar

AUSTRALIA (M&W)
Ben Somerford – ben.somerford@hockey.org.au

BELGIUM (M&W)
Denis van Damme – denis.vandamme@Hockey.be

CHINA (W)
chinahockey@163.com

GERMANY (M&W)
Eric Gutglueck – eric.gutglueck@apollo18.com

GREAT BRITAIN (M&W)
Craig Mortimer-Zhika – craig.mortimer-zhika@englandhockey.co.uk

NETHERLANDS (M&W)
Accreditations: Arjen Rahusen – Arjen.rahasen@knhb.nl, Comms: Clarinda Sinnige – clarinda.sinnige@knhb.nl

NEW ZEALAND (M&W)
Matthew Williams – Matthew.williams@hockeynz.co.nz

PAKISTAN (M)
Ijaz Chaudhry – ijaz_phf@yahoo.com

SPAIN (M)
Rafa Gandia – prensa@rfeh.es

USA (W)
Teryn Brill – tbrill@usafieldhockey.com

FIH MEDIA CONTACT

All queries relating to competition or FIH matters should be directed to media@fih.ch
Since my early childhood, I’ve been passionate about hockey and I feel privileged to be born in a country which is so excited about this sport, as the recent Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 quite clearly showed.

But my sentiments for this fabulous sport would mean very little if I were to keep them to myself. My strongest wish is that this passion which has brought so much to my life is shared by millions of others who have not yet had the chance to live the “hockey experience”.

As President of the FIH, it is my commitment to explore all possible avenues to grow hockey’s popularity and participation worldwide. One of those is to establish a regular flagship event involving the crème de la crème of world hockey in front of home crowds. By doing so, we will enable fans to see the very best that this sport has to offer on their own doorstep, allowing teams to engage with their fans on a quasi-permanent basis. The good news is that this event is now here and very much ready to take off. The event is the FIH Pro League.

I’m convinced that, by sharing their experiences with their families and friends, hockey fans will introduce a whole new generation of enthusiasts to the game, increasing hockey’s visibility to the level that our great sport so clearly deserves. By opting for the same competition format for women and men, FIH has shown once more how the principle of gender equality lies at the very core of our values.

The FIH Pro League will not only benefit the participating teams. Thanks to the increase of popularity which it shall bring, it’s the worldwide hockey community in its entirety which shall benefit.

I wish all teams, umpires, officials and fans – both current and those yet-to-come - to welcome and enjoy our new-born child. Be ready for truly unforgettable moments!

Pro League. Pro Hockey.

Dr Narinder Dhruv Batra
FIH President
The FIH Pro League was one of the key attractions for taking the job as CEO of the International Hockey Federation. This new competition instantly captured my imagination. As far as I’m aware, this is the first time, in any sport, that international teams will play in a home and away global league. There’s so much that is exciting and challenging about that.

The establishment of this pioneering new international League in such a short space of time, only three years, is very much down to the backing of the participating National Associations.

Believe me, to put a six-month league into an existing calendar is really difficult and needs a lot of collaboration and support from the athletes, clubs and national leagues. This is a real testament to everyone’s good will and commitment to grow the game.

When I came in to the organisation, the FIH Pro League was very much in the latter stages of planning. I took this opportunity to take a step back and really understand it. I thought it was important to find out how people view it, are they supporting it? You must take the time to get a clear view of every angle in order to develop a solid strategy for success.

What’s clear is that everyone connected to this new competition is really excited to get started! And it’s not just those competing - everyone I have spoken to sees the positives in the FIH Pro League - broadcasters, partners and various other stakeholders linked to our sport.

Let’s face it, hockey will be regularly and permanently on television, with the best nations playing each other in front of packed stadiums across the world. That has to be good for the game!

Don’t get me wrong, we have faced several challenges in recent months, but, from my professional experience, I am extremely confident in this new League. Is it going generate big income at the start? The answer is no. We will have to work hand in hand with the participating countries to offer maximum attraction to all of our stakeholders. We have already learned some important lessons and will learn more during the first season, but we will use these to refine our strategy to drive future success.

Amongst all the glamour of the FIH Pro League, I also think it’s crucial that we do not lose sight of the other 126 National Federations involved in our sport. Whilst we work diligently to ensure hockey is promoted across all levels of the game, the FIH Pro League gives us an opportunity to fuel unprecedented growth never seen before.
Like with many other sports who we compete with, what’s consistent is that they all have an elite level competition that fuels development. You just have to look at my previous employer, FIFA, to see the possibilities that the World Cups have created for the game.

There are big challenges ahead. Aside from the logistics of initiating a global home and away league, there are all the other opportunities that are presenting themselves at all levels of the game. This means it is difficult to set priorities or take the time to evaluate the steps we need to take. But I have been impressed by the commitment and passion shown by all those involved in the game and I am looking forward to the challenge of leading the FIH through this period of growth and development.

Thierry Weil
FIH CEO
To see a promotional video about the FIH Pro League, please click here

1. WHAT IS THE FIH PRO LEAGUE?

The FIH Pro League is designed as an entertainment product and is the centrepiece of our New Events Portfolio, kicking off in January 2019 - replacing the Champions’ Trophy and the World League Semi Finals and World League Final. It will provide – for the first time ever – a regular calendar of must-see events played in packed stadia across the world and throughout the year.

Fans and athletes alike will enjoy a new annual global home and away league involving the world’s leading hockey nations. It will culminate in a Grand Final with one nation being crowned Pro League Champions and receiving the single largest financial prize in the sport.

We believe the FIH Pro League will transform the landscape of international hockey because hockey fans the world over will be able to watch their favourite sport for an extended period on the same channel each year. Moreover, those fans whose team is participating have the chance to be part of the noise and sheer excitement of watching their team regularly in their home country.
Our approach will ensure that international teams will play against opponents once at home and once away each year in this league. Following several months of competition, the top four ranked teams will then qualify for a stand-alone Grand Final event, which will determine the winners of the competition. This will be identical for the men’s and women’s leagues.

The Grand Final will take place within 2 weeks of the close of the league and will consist of an event involving the top 4 teams (both men’s and women’s) playing together at a pre-determined location - Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 2019.

WHAT ARE THE NUMBERS?

THERE WILL BE 9 MEN’S & 9 WOMEN’S TEAMS

THEREFORE EVERY TEAM WILL PLAY 8 HOME + 8 AWAY MATCHES

THAT MEANS THERE WILL BE 144 MATCHES (EXCLUDING THE GRAND FINAL EVENT)

MATCHES WILL BE PLAYED BETWEEN JANUARY - JUNE EACH YEAR

FIRST MATCHES WILL MOSTLY BE PLAYED IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE WITH THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE TEAMS TRAVELLING TO THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE AND THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE TEAMS PLAYING AGAINST EACH OTHER. IN OTHER WORDS, WE WILL FOLLOW THE SUN!

EACH TEAM WILL STAY IN THE LEAGUE FOR A MINIMUM OF 4 YEARS
2. WHICH TEAMS ARE PARTICIPATING?

MEN’S EVENT
- ARGENTINA
- AUSTRALIA
- BELGIUM
- GERMANY
- GREAT BRITAIN
- NETHERLANDS
- NEW ZEALAND
- PAKISTAN
- SPAIN

WOMEN’S EVENT
- ARGENTINA
- AUSTRALIA
- BELGIUM
- GERMANY
- GREAT BRITAIN
- NETHERLANDS
- NEW ZEALAND
- CHINA
- USA
3. HOW DID YOU SELECT THE TEAMS THAT WILL BE IN THE FIH PRO LEAGUE?

The teams we have selected to play in the first FIH Pro League are not simply the ‘best’ 9 national men’s and women’s teams based on traditional world ranking data. Instead, we used a much broader set of criteria as part of our application process.

We set out our participation criteria very transparently, encouraging a range of nations to apply. The aim of the process was to ensure the quality of the League and the highest possible standard of events right from the start.

The criteria were developed around meeting the three main objectives of the new event portfolio: to generate a massive change in TV and media coverage for hockey; create big, bold, packed and loud events and to make a step change in future revenues for the sport.

In December 2016, we sent application documents to the top 16 men’s and women’s hockey nations as listed in the FIH Hero World Rankings. We were clear that the teams would be chosen by a specially selected FIH Event Portfolio Implementation Panel.

National Associations were required to submit extensive information in order to be eligible, with sustainability the key aspect of the Leagues’ long-term vision.

Alongside this process, we held extensive discussions with national broadcasters regarding exposure and media coverage of hockey within each of the selected nations. The commitment of national broadcasters is fundamental to the success of the FIH Pro League in promoting the competition and ensuring millions of fans can consume hockey.

We asked for detailed financial modelling, projecting budgets for both the participation in matches overseas as well as hosting matches in their homeland. Details about marketing proposals for promoting the League plus commercial strategies aimed at generating income were required, alongside evidence of financial sustainability.

We also considered which nations could best offer the perfect stage for these teams to shine. With a requirement to host ‘Big, Bold, Packed and Loud’ events in line with the FIH’s 10-year Hockey Revolution strategy, venue selection and experience of hosting previous events was also included amongst the criteria for entry.

There was no bidding fee associated with League participation so nations did not need to worry that selection would simply be offered to the highest bidder.

The deadline for applications was the 30th April 2017 and there was an overwhelming response from NAs wanting to be part of this league.

In all there were 13 Women’s teams vying for 9 spots and 12 Men’s teams competing for their 9 places. It was an incredibly competitive process and gave the panel some hard decisions to make in choosing the teams.
Whilst it has not been easy, we know it’s been a thorough and robust process - assessing applications against the defined criteria:

- Broadcast and Media coverage
- Financial sustainability
- Commercial vision
- Legal compliance
- Proposed venues
- Match Experience and Sports Presentation
- Organisation and personnel
- Marketing strategies
- Motivation and Legacy
- Team performance history
- Previous event hosting

4. WHERE WILL FIH PRO LEAGUE MATCHES TAKE PLACE?

It was clear during the application process that nations wanted to consider using a number of different venues in different cities around their country to hold their home matches.

This means that all matches will be truly accessible to the largest number of fans as practically possible, dependent on appropriate venues. So, while our chosen teams have a home base, the concept of ‘home’ applies equally in any national venue where local fans get the chance to see their home team play ‘live’ and experience the passion, excitement and noise of the FIH Pro League in action.

**There is one notable exception:** Pakistan’s team in the Men’s League will play all of their home matches abroad. This limits the complications that other nations could face travelling to play in Pakistan.

To find out where each match will take place, [view the schedule](#).
5. HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THIS TYPE OF LEAGUE?

We formed our Event Portfolio Working Group in December 2014 to develop a set of recommendations to put to the Executive Board.

But before we made any decisions or recommendations, we knew it was critical to agree some principles that would ensure we made the right decisions for the right reasons, keeping us on track when it came to the most difficult or issues.

Our Principles were:

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<th>STAND-OUT EVENTS</th>
<th>SIMPLE AND MEANINGFUL</th>
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<td>We had to create events that would produce the maximum drama possible and be able to cut through the noise - events that will really get noticed.</td>
<td>The players, fans and our commercial partners needed to understand, engage and get involved with the events as easily and spontaneously as possible.</td>
<td>We felt it was essential that everybody involved in hockey should be able to plan ahead and develop new habits - particularly our fans who wanted to see more of the games they love.</td>
<td>We wanted fans to be able to see their team playing more often so they can build allegiance to their ‘home team’ and their ‘home players’.</td>
<td>This was about increasing the number of games played between nations “with historical sporting rivalries” - and also ensuring we were playing the quality type of matches that most fans really wanted to see!</td>
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From the outset we agreed that every event in our new portfolio had to meet not one, but all of the principles we drew up.

OUR CONSULTATION PROCESS...

Never in the history of hockey have we consulted so thoroughly with so many people from different stakeholder groups and different backgrounds in different countries. We held meetings, workshops and conference calls, presenting early drafts and many, many amended drafts - including concepts that were completely discarded along the way.

Three years of research, consultation and development with more than 600 individuals, including athletes, National Associations, Continental Federations, major broadcasters, the International Olympic Committee, individuals at Continental Federation congresses, officials and umpires, FIH Committee and Panel members and FIH staff.

In addition to this, we invited Deloitte (international specialists in audit, consulting, financial advisory, risk management and tax), to provide extensive support in developing the financial modelling for the new portfolio of events.
6. WHY WAS A HOME AND AWAY CONCEPT, SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT TO TRADITIONAL TOURNAMENT HOCKEY, CHOSEN?

The FIH Pro League will leverage - and make the most of - one of our most important, powerful and under-used assets: ‘The power of home’

Creating a Home & Away Global League is a hugely significant and exciting step for us to take because:

- It means we can hold far more home matches than ever before
- It’s like taking our most valuable asset and increasing it – overnight – by over 500%
- It means we go from holding 25 home matches to 144

At last we can say – with total conviction – ‘Hockey’s coming Home’! Every match (outside of the Grand Final) played in the FIH Pro League will be a home match.

The reason this is so important is that home fixtures provide us with a chance to drive loyalty and passion, to develop those strong allegiances that will last a lifetime, to hold more meaningful matches and encourage new habits amongst our fans.

We see the evidence of this in other sports the world over and we see it for ourselves when home teams are playing in our existing events.

The impact is huge. With more spectators and more local fans, our events are suddenly more attractive to broadcasters and commercial partners and so we are able to generate more income.

At the same time, it means playing fewer matches because we stop playing the matches that we know have minimal value.

We know it’s what our fans want. We know that “Hockey is best at home”.

The teams selected will substantially benefit from the increased number of home matches as part of a more consistent hockey calendar. With more opportunities to see their heroes in action throughout the year, national teams’ fan base and followers are expected to grow. This will not only increase the commercial value of the sport through ticket sales, hospitality and merchandising, but also commercial interest in the teams and their athletes through increased sponsorship opportunities.

It is predicted that the increased commercial potential of implementing the new structure will generate considerably more value for the sport, which will filter down into all levels, including new and developing hockey nations, from elite to grassroots level.

So we firmly believe we have an amazing new concept for hockey - chosen because it fulfils the principles we laid out and because of the potential it has to deliver so many benefits to the sport.

We want to send out a message to those millions of general sports fans around the world to say ‘come and have a look at Hockey!’

It is different from traditional tournament hockey; it will be incredibly entertaining; it’s certainly going to be Big, Bold Packed & Loud. And it’s built with TV in mind.
7. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE ATHLETES?

The FIH Pro League will raise the profile of all the teams involved, building a wider, more committed and loyal fan-base who will have so many more chances than at present to see their team in action at home.

When you add to this the essential element of more national TV broadcasters and with that, more sponsorship, it’s easy to see the impact this new League will have on the players.

We have always made one of the aims of the Hockey Revolution to build player profile. We believe the FIH Pro League will generate the kind of interest – across all media – to turn athletes into superstars.

This becomes a virtuous circle. When you create superstars, they have the power to bring new fans – young and old – to the sport for life.

We know the appetite is there. We saw, after the Rio Olympics in 2016, that the degree of passion and excitement generated back home in Argentina and Great Britain as a result of winning their respective gold medals was palpable and long lasting. Key players were known by their names and the degree of recognition went through the roof as they continued to take part in programmes and interviews that were both sports and lifestyle related.

FIH will be working hard to amplify the impact of all the participating teams specifically within the markets of the participating nations. The placement of articles within lifestyle and business publications will be important as we want to reach beyond traditional hockey and sports media.
8. WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE TEAMS WHO DO NOT MAKE IT INTO THE LEAGUE?

All nations affiliated to FIH and not playing in the FIH Pro League were eligible to enter the Hockey Series Open. However, the nine highest placed nations in the FIH Hero World Ranking as of 9 June 2017, that are not playing in the FIH Pro League were exempt from the Hockey Series Open and have qualified directly for the Hockey Series Finals.

In 2019, six Hockey Series Finals (three for Women, three for Men) will take place, each with eight teams competing.

The Hockey Series Finals will include at least five qualifiers from the Hockey Series Open but contain no more than three of the teams that qualified directly for the Finals based on World Ranking.

The Hockey Series Finals will take place between April and June 2019

For more information on the Hockey Series Open & Finals, click here

In addition, we will continue to hold our World Cup every 4 years. After all, this is our tournament – we own it – and it’s become one of the most prestigious prizes that exists in Hockey – it’s right up there alongside winning a gold medal at the Olympic Games.

Essentially the World Cup doesn’t change its purpose or its place in our calendar. It remains all about sporting excellence, qualifying for the next round and achieving the GLORY that can only come from winning a world cup.

All of these teams will continue to play in their continental events and will have the additional opportunity to play matches against FIH Pro League teams when they are geographically nearby.

9. WILL THIS GENERATE MORE MONEY FOR HOCKEY AND WILL OTHER NATIONS WHO ARE NOT IN THE FIH PRO LEAGUE BENEFIT?

We are confident that the increased commercial potential of implementing the new structure will generate considerably more value for the sport overall, which will filter down to all levels, including new and developing hockey nations, from elite to grassroots level.

Of course, this will take some time, but we believe the benefits will be measurable and wide ranging.
10. HOW DO TEAMS QUALIFY FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES?

The hosts, Japan, and the continental champions automatically qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. As Japan men and women won the recent Asian Games yet had already qualified as hosts, seven nations will qualify for each of the men’s and women’s hockey events at Tokyo 2020 through FIH Olympic Qualification Events played at the end of 2019.

The 14 teams taking part in the Olympic Qualification Events will be:

- The top four nations from FIH Pro League
- The top two nations from each of the Hockey Series Finals
- The four highest ranked nations in the FIH Hero World Rankings (at the end of the 2019 Continental Championships) not already qualified via the above routes.

The Olympic Qualification Events are scheduled to take place between October and November 2019. Official Olympic Hockey Qualification Guidelines can be downloaded here.

11. HOW WILL FANS BE ABLE TO WATCH, READ AND GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIH PRO LEAGUE?

The ‘power of home’ is not just about where our games are held, but has been fundamental to our discussions with broadcasters – now well advanced – to establish a number of long term ‘home broadcasters’. These will be channels committed to broadcasting and promoting the League, enabling fans to watch consistently and always know where the FIH Pro League is being broadcast.

This marks a step change. In the past, broadcast has moved around making it difficult for fans to find hockey when they want to watch. At last, everyone will know who the broadcaster/channels are in their home market so that fans can catch every minute of every match.

The FIH is also committed to substantially upgrading our web presence to support the New Portfolio of events, allowing us to give fans more of the information and interaction that we know they love. The new website will provide a load more stats, and game data, skills and in-depth player commentary that we know Hockey Fanatics cannot get enough of. Our social media platforms will be packed with regular, unique and engaging content 365 days of the year, going deep behind the scenes allowing fans to get to know the athletes better.

Furthermore, the games will be live on FIH.live in every market where a broadcaster will not be showing the match.
On Saturday 19 January 2019, the FIH Pro League – the ground-breaking home and away league involving many of the world's leading hockey nations – will get underway when newly crowned men's world champions Belgium travel to Valencia to take on Spain.

The battle between Belgium's Red Lions, who recently defeated the Netherlands to win the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, and the Red Sticks of Spain will be the start of a very special six months for our sport.

Over 20 venues across 11 nations will play host to a staggering 144 international matches, providing a global spread of world-class hockey, across multiple time-zones, from January to June in a competition that is very much seen as a genuine game-changer for hockey.

The 'power of home' will be key to success in this event, with packed stadiums throughout the season providing a huge boost to the nine men's and nine women's teams competing in the FIH Pro League, giving fans the chance to watch their nation taking on the world's best in eight matches on home soil. Tickets for these home and away matches are being purchased in their thousands, while millions of hockey fans and general sport lovers will be able to tune in to the action via a global network of broadcast partners as well as on the new FIH.live platform which will be launched on 10 January 2019.

After the completion of the 144 matches that will feature in the ‘League’, a further eight matches will then be played at the showpiece Grand Final, which will take place at the Wagener Stadium in Amsterdam, the Netherlands between 27-30 June 2019. The winning men's and women's nations will be crowned as the FIH Pro League champions and will receive the single largest financial prize in the sport.

With the FIH Pro League comes the launch of the brand-new website – fihproleague.com – it provides everything that you need to know about the event. As well as regular news updates, fixtures, results and standings, you can also find information about how to watch the FIH Pro League, either as a fan in the stands or watching the broadcast from the comfort of your own home.
All 18 of the competing men’s and women’s FIH Pro League teams finalised their squads in late December 2018, in readiness for the start of the inaugural edition.

Belgium – who returned home from Bhubaneswar to a glorious homecoming as thousands of fans flocked to Brussels’ iconic Grand-Place to celebrate the arrival of both the team and the newly-claimed World Cup trophy – will be rightly regarded as one of the pre-competition favourites. It is hardly surprising, with the squad selected by Head Coach Shane McLeod containing superstars from Bhubaneswar such as team captain Thomas Briels, Vincent Vanasch (FIH Goalkeeper of the Year 2017) and penalty corner ace Alexander Hendrickx, not to mention Arthur Van Doren (FIH Player and Young Player of the Year 2017), the man named player of the tournament at the Men’s World Cup in India.

Although Spain – who Belgium will meet in the opening FIH Pro League fixture on 19 January at Valencia’s Estadio Betero – did not enjoy the happiest of times in Bhubaneswar, the squad selected for the FIH Pro League by Head Coach Frederic Soyez is packed full of players determined to show the Red Lions and the world that they are very much a force to be reckoned with. Hugely gifted young attacker Enrique Gonzalez is a player capable of hurting any team, while the vast experience coming from veterans Pau Quemada, Miguel Delas, Sergi Enrique and goalkeeper Quico Cortes ensures that the Red Sticks remain a very dangerous side. It promises to be a fascinating fixture, kicking off a wonderful six months of action.

The Estadio Betero will also be the venue for game two of the FIH Pro League, with Spain’s men facing Great Britain on 25 January. The GB team features the vast majority of the England side that Head Coach Danny Kerry guided to a fourth-place finish in Bhubaneswar, including Phil Roper, Liam Ansell and goalkeeper George Pinner.

The third match of the FIH Pro League is the first match of the women’s competition, with focus switching from Europe to South America as Belgium’s Red Panthers travel to Cordoba to play Argentina in front of an impassioned crowd at the Estadio Municipal de Hockey on 26 January. As always, Las Leonas’ squad contains some of the superstars of the world game including shot-stopper Belen Succi, midfield dynamo Maria Granatto (FIH Young Player of the Year 2016 & 2017) and sensational forward Delfina Merino (FIH Player of the Year 2017). While Argentina might be seen as favourites to get their competition off to a flying start, Belgium’s women have made great strides forward in recent years and have some superb players of their own, including team captain Anouk Raes, Louise Versavel, Jill Boon and goalkeeper Aisling D’Hooghe.

As you would expect for an event featuring some of the world’s finest hockey playing nations, the squad lists named for the inaugural edition of the FIH Pro League is eye-catching to say the least.

As well as the previously mentioned Arthur Van Doren, Vincent Vanasch, Delfina Merino and Maria Granatto, a host of other FIH individual award winners will also play starring roles including John-John Dohmen (Belgium – FIH Player of the Year 2016), Florian Fuchs (Germany - FIH Young Player of the Year 2012), Christopher Rühr (Germany - FIH Young Player of the Year 2013 & 2015), Matthew Swann (FIH Young Player of the Year 2011), Eddie Ockenden (Australia - FIH Young Player of the Year 2008), Gonzalo Peillat (Argentina – FIH Young Player of the Year 2014), Lily Owsley (Great Britain – FIH Young Player of the Year 2015), Florencia Habif (Argentina – FIH Young Player of the Year 2014), Maria Verschoor (Netherlands - FIH Young Player of the Year 2013) and Stacey Michelsen (New Zealand – FIH Young Player of the Year 2011).

Other key individuals named include some of the award winners from the recent Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, with best goalkeeper Pirmin Blaak (Netherlands) as well as joint top scorers Blake Govers (Australia) and Alexander Hendrickx (Belgium) all being named by their respective teams.
Netherlands’ women’s Head Coach Alyson Annan has selected a fiercely strong squad in a bid to add the Pro League crown to the World and European titles that her brilliant team have claimed in recent years, with the extraordinary Lidewij Welten joined by true global stars such as Kelly Jonker, Eva de Goede and Xan de Waard.

However, with Argentina, Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, and USA all in the fight for the title, the task for the Oranje is certainly not straight forward by any means.

To see the squad lists in full, click the following links:

WOMEN  MEN

You can visit the TMS event pages for the FIH Pro League by clicking the following links:

WOMEN  MEN

To see the confirmed match schedule for the FIH Pro League, which includes links to ticket sites for each of the matches:

CLICK HERE

For information about how to purchase tickets for the FIH Pro League matches:

CLICK HERE
The following information has been taken from the ‘FIH Pro League Competition Regulations’ document, created in September 2018.

The complete FIH Pro League competition regulations can be found by clicking here 

3.4 ANNOUNCEMENT OF MATCH SQUADS AND STARTING LINE UPS

a. No later than 48 hours before the start of a match, team managers must submit to FIH via TMS the names of up to 18 players that will form their team’s squad for the match, the names of the 11 players that will start the match and the names of the Team Manager, Team Coach, Physiotherapist and Team Doctor for the match who will be present on the team bench.

b. A nominated player who becomes incapacitated between the announcement of the match day squad and starting line up at the start of the match may be replaced by another player whose name appears on the team’s long list, provided that a team may not nominate any player who is suspended from playing in the League. The Team Manager must notify the Match Manager on duty accordingly, who will inform the Team Manager of the opposing team and the media of such a change.

4.2 COMPETITION PLAN AND RANKING IN THE LEAGUE

a. Each team in the League will play all of the other teams in the League on a home and away basis. Based on a 9 team League this means that each team plays 16 matches in a Season (excluding the Grand Final).

b. In the event of a Match in the Season up until the Grand Final being drawn, a shoot-out competition will be played in accordance with Appendix 2. The winner of the shoot-out competition will be awarded one bonus point.

c. The following points will be awarded for each Match:
   i. three (3) points to the winner in normal time;
   ii. one (1) point to the winner of a shootout following a draw plus one (1) bonus point, making a total of two (2) points.
   iii. one (1) point to the loser of the shootout, in the event of a draw;
   iv. no points to the loser of a match in normal time.

d. During the Season up until the Grand Final, teams will be ranked by the percentage of points gained relative to the maximum number possible to have attained at any given time. In the case of two or more teams having an equal percentage, they will be ranked according to Regulations 4.2 e – k below.

e. If at any point of time during the Season two or more teams with the same percentage of points for any place in the League will be ranked according to their respective number of matches won.

f. If there remains equality among two or more teams, then these teams will be ranked according to their respective goal difference in normal time (which means “goals for” less “goals against”). A positive goal difference always takes precedence over a negative one.

g. If there still remains equality among two or more teams, then these teams will be ranked according to their respective number of “goals for”.

h. Should there still remain equality among two teams, then the aggregate results of the matches played between those teams will determine the ranking of the tied teams in accordance with clauses c, d, e and f of this Article.

i. If more than two teams are involved, then a ranking based upon the results of the matches among (only) them shall determine their respective position in accordance with clauses c, d, e, f and g of this article.

j. If there still remains equality among two or more teams, then these teams will be ranked according to the number of Field Goals scored in the League.

k. If there remains equality among two or more teams these teams will be ranked according to the lesser number of red cards, followed by lesser number of yellow cards followed by lesser number of green cards.

l. During the Season up until the penultimate round of Matches if teams are still equal after regulation 4.2 k, they will be ranked alphabetically.

m. At the point of the Season prior to the Grand Final (for clarity after the completion of all home & away fixtures) if there remains equality after 4.2 k the positions will be equal and the World Ranking Points shared.

GRAND FINAL

• At the end of the Season, a Grand Final competition will be played on dates and at a venue specified by FIH.

• The teams to play in the Grand Final shall be those that finish 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the League.

• The Grand Final will comprise two semi-final matches, a 3rd /4th play-off and a final.

• The semi-finals will be as follows although the matches will not necessarily be played in this order:
  1st in League v 4th in League
  2nd in League v 3rd in League

The winners of these matches will play the final. The losers of these matches will play for 3rd and 4th places.

• If at the end of the regulation time of a Grand Final match the result is a draw, in order to establish an outright winner of a match for the purpose of the competition, a shoot-out competition as specified in Appendix 2 will be played to establish the winner of the match.

4.4 FIH WORLD RANKING POINTS

FIH World Ranking Points for places 5th and below will be based on the places 5th and below after the final Match of the League up until the Grand Final. FIH World Ranking Points for 1st – 4th places will be based on the rankings from the Grand Final.
MATCH SCHEDULE
VENUES & TICKET SALES

MATCHES
The complete match schedule for the FIH Pro League, along with venues and how to purchase tickets, can be found by clicking the following links:

WOMEN  MEN

VENUES
Confirmed venues for FIH Pro League matches can be found at the below links:

WOMEN  MEN
Background information about the competing women’s FIH Pro League teams, including notable achievements, key players and more can be found below. You can download a complete list of all squads by clicking here.

**FIH HERO WORLD RANKING**
(as of January 2019):

4

**NOTABLE HONOURS:**


**ABOUT THE TEAM:**

‘Las Leonas’ (The Lionesses) have long been considered as one of the world’s most fearsome attacking teams and are undisputedly a true powerhouse of the game. Since the 2014 retirement of eight times FIH Player of the Year Luciana Aymar, unquestionably one of the greatest players in the history of the sport, the Argentina team has been in something of a rebuilding process. However, that has not stopped them claiming some notable titles, including the 2016 Champions Trophy in London as well as the Pan-American Cup in 2017.

Their initial FIH Pro League squad contains some sensational players: Belen Succi is rated as one of the finest goalkeepers around, while Delfina Merino, Maria Granatto, Florencia Habif and Lucina von der Heyde – named Best Young Player at the World cup in London – are all exceptional outfield performers. It was recently confirmed that charismatic tactician Carlos Retegui, who guided Argentina’s men to Olympic gold at Rio 2016 and also Las Leonas to World Cup glory in 2010, has been reappointed to the position of Head Coach. With Retegui back at the helm, it will be fascinating to see how the team performs.

**ONE TO WATCH:**

Delfina Merino. ‘Delfi’ is Argentina’s creative mastermind. She has a reputation for scoring spectacular goals, regularly delivering when her team need it most. Named FIH Player of the Year for 2017.

**FIH Pro League Team Page**

Website: www.cafieldhockey.org.ar

Twitter: @ArgFieldHockey  Facebook: ArgFieldHockey  Instagram: arg_fieldhockey
ABOUT THE TEAM:
Australia’s Hockeyroos were in brilliant form at last year’s Vitality Hockey Women’s World Cup London 2018, topping their pool ahead of New Zealand, Belgium and Japan before knocking out Argentina in the quarter-finals via a shoot-out. They were the only team that came close to beating eventual winners the Netherlands, taking the mighty Dutch to a shoot-out in the semi-final before suffering a heart-breaking defeat. The manner of that loss certainly took its toll, with the team struggling to hit their previous heights in the bronze medal game, losing 3-1 to Spain. Despite that fairly unsatisfactory ending, Australia’s stellar performances in London earned a huge amount of admiration. Under the guidance of Head coach Paul Gaudoin, himself a former men’s international with the Kookaburras, Australia are once again a force to be reckoned with and will be looking to bring back the glory days.

The initial squad selected for the FIH Pro League contains the majority of the athletes that competed at last year’s World Cup in London and also the Champions Trophy in Changzhou (CHN), where the Hockeyroos finished in second place. Jodie Kenny and Emily Smith both having made over 200 appearances for their country, while a further six players have over 100 international caps to their respective names. One of those is Rachael Lynch – nominated for FIH Goalkeeper of the Year 2018 Award – who is likely to make her 200th international appearance in the coming months.

ONE TO WATCH:

Jodie Kenny. A defender with a staggering goal-scoring record of over 100 goals in more than 200 appearances, Kenny is a towering, talismanic figure for the Hockeyroos. She returned to the game in 2017 after the birth of her son Harrison, and was an outstanding performer at the Vitality Hockey Women’s World Cup 2018 in London.

Website: www.hockey.org.au
Twitter: @hockeyroos  Facebook: thehockeyroos  Instagram: hockeyaustraliaofficial
F I H  P R O  L E A G U E

BELGIUM
WOMEN

F I H  H E R O  W O R L D  R A N K I N G
(as of January 2019):
13

N O T A B L E  H O N O U R S:

A B O U T  T H E  T E A M:
At the time of writing, Belgium were the lowest ranked of all the teams competing in the inaugural edition of the FIH Pro League. However, do not let that fool you into thinking that all other nations will be looking at the Red Panthers as an easy opponent. Belgian hockey has been on an impressive rise in recent years and, following the men's stunning victory at the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, the talented women's team will be determined to show the world just how competitive they have become. A 10th place finish at the Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 contained some fine performances including a 6-3 thrashing of Japan as well as draws against eventual semi-finalists Australia and Spain, although the meeting against the latter ended in an agonising shoot-out defeat.
Ten members of the initial FIH Pro League squad selected by Head Coach Niels Thijssen have surpassed the 100 international appearances marker, four of which have all played over 200 times for the Red Panthers. Team captain Anouk Raes, Emilie Sinia, Barbara Nelen and Jill Boon – sister of Red Lions’ World Cup winning forward Tom Boon – having all represented their country more than 200 times. On their day, the European silver medallists from 2017 will be a match for anyone.

O N E  T O  W A T C H:
Anouk Raes. With well over 250 international appearances under her belt, the Belgium captain is one of the team’s most experienced campaigners and consistently excellent performers.

F I H  P r o  L e a g u e  T e a m  P a g e
Website: www.hockey.be
Twitter: @BELRedPanthers  Facebook: BelgianRedPanthers  Instagram: belredpanthers
FIH Hero World Rankings (as of January 2019):

10

Notable Honours:


About the Team:

Following a difficult Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup London 2018 where they failed to get out of their pool and subsequently finished last (16th) in the standings, 2002 Champions Trophy winners China produced some good performances at the Asian Games in Jakarta, claiming the bronze medal with a 2-1 victory over Korea. Gu Bingfeng – who finished as competition top scorer with 13 goals – and Song Xiaoming were on target to ensure that the tenure of Head Coach Jamilon Mülders ended on a high. The team were then lucky enough to compete at the Wanglibao Hockey Champions Trophy - at Changzhou’s Wujin Hockey Stadium, China’s home venue for the forthcoming FIH Pro League – where they finished fourth. Yi Jiao was a particularly impressive performer at that event and also throughout the year, with the 24-year-old shot-stopper earning a nomination for FIH Goalkeeper of the Year for 2018 in the process.

One to Watch:

Cui Qiuxia. Having represented her country at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games as well as the Hockey World Cups in both 2014 and 2018, defender Cui is one of the most experienced players in the China team and has a reputation for putting her body on the line.

FIH Pro League Team Page
**ABOUT THE TEAM:**

Following their wonderful Olympic bronze medal success at Rio 2016, Germany have continued to look like a team that can challenge the very best in the world. They produced some sparkling performances at the Vitality Hockey Women’s World Cup London 2018, defeating South Africa, Argentina and eventual bronze medallists Spain to top the Pool and reach the quarter-finals. Spain’s Red Sticks gained revenge against Die Danas in the quarter-final match, edging to a 1-0 win over their European rivals. Despite that surprise defeat, Germany’s outstanding displays in the pool phase provided plenty of evidence that the current Germany team, coached by former Belgium men’s international Xavier Reckinger, are a class act.

The initial squad named by Reckinger for the FIH Pro League contains plenty of quality and youthful promise, being led by hugely experienced defender, midfielder and captain Janne Müller-Wieland, who has over 250 caps to her name. Charlotte Stapenhorst is one of the best young attackers in the game, while Lena Michael, Elisa Gräve and FIH Young Player of the Year Award 2018 nominee Nike Lorenz are wonderful talents that over the coming months and years are only going to get better.

**ONE TO WATCH:**

Charlotte Stapenhorst. This lively attacker has been an impressive performer over the past three years. The 23-year-old is a constant scourge to opposition defences and plays with maturity beyond her years.

**FIH Pro League Team Page**

**Website:** [www.hockey.de](http://www.hockey.de)

**Twitter:** @diedanas   **Facebook:** diedanas   **Instagram:** diedanas

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**FIH HERO WORLD RANKING**

(as of January 2019):

5

**NOTABLE HONOURS:**

GREAT BRITAIN WOMEN

FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019):
2

NOTABLE HONOURS:

ABOUT THE TEAM:
The Olympic champions of Rio 2016 have set their sights on defending their title at Tokyo 2020, and a strong showing in the inaugural edition of the FIH Pro League would be an important step along the road towards achieving that goal. Olympic gold medal-winning Head Coach Danny Kerry has switched to the England and Great Britain men’s programme, with David Ralph stepping up from Assistant Coach to take charge of the team on an interim basis.

The initial FIH Pro League squad selected by Ralph contains six players who were on the podium at Rio 2016: defensive trio Hollie Pearne-Webb, Giselle Ansley and Laura Unsworth, midfielder Susannah Townsend and forwards Sophie Bray and Lily Owsley. While fellow Olympic gold medallists Alex Danson and ace goalkeeper Maddie Hinch are both taking a break from international hockey, there are plenty of other wonderful players on the roster, including Hannah Martin, a pacey attacker with enough skill to hurt any team in the world. While the majority of the Great Britain squad is made up of players who represent England, there is also a trio of Scots selected in the shape of Sarah Robertson, Amy Costello and goalkeeper Nicola Cochrane.

ONE TO WATCH:
Hollie Pearne-Webb. A defender of extraordinary quality, Pearne-Webb will be determined to guide her team to a podium finish. Famously scored the shoot-out winner against the Netherlands in the gold medal match at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

FIH Pro League Team Page
Website: http://www.greatbritainhockey.co.uk
Twitter: @GBHockey  Facebook: GBHockey  Instagram: gbhockey
NETHERLANDS WOMEN

FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019):
1

NOTABLE HONOURS:
3x Olympic gold medallists (1984, 2008, 2012),
2x Olympic silver medallists (2004, 2016),
3x Olympic bronze medallists (1988, 1996, 2000),
2006, 2014, 2018), 2x Hockey World League
champions (2012-14, 2016-17), 7x Champions Trophy

ABOUT THE TEAM:
The Netherlands went into last year’s Vitality Hockey Women’s World Cup London 2018 as red hot favourites
and completely justified that status, defending the title that they won in 2014 with a string of wonderful,
record-breaking performances. Head Coach Alyson Annan, the legendary former Australia international
and twice winner of the FIH Player of the Year award, created a team very much in her own image: a perfect
balance of outrageous talent, discipline and an unbreakable winning mentality. As well as being the world
champions, they also became European champions in 2017 and claimed victory at the Champions Trophy
in Changzhou at the end of 2018.

The initial squad named by Annan for the FIH Pro League contains a glittering array of gifted individuals,
including Lidewij Welten, Eva de Goede and Xan de Waard, the trio of athletes who were all shortlisted for
the FIH Player of the Year Award 2018. Welten, De Goede and De Waard are three of eight players named
in the preliminary Dutch squad to have surpassed the 100 international appearances marker, while the
group contains 16 of the 18 players who were part of the title winning World Cup squad from 2018, not to
mention numerous uncapped players who could well be future superstars. The Dutch will, as ever, be the
team to beat.

ONE TO WATCH:
Lidewij Welten. The 2015 FIH Hockey Stars Player of the Year is an exceptional attacker blessed
with speed, skill and an eye for goal. Welten has been a dazzling performer for the Netherlands over many
years and excelled at the Vitality Hockey Women’s World Cup London 2018, where she was named the
tournament’s best player as she inspired the Netherlands’ successful defence of the world title.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.knhb.nl
Twitter: @OranjeHockey  Facebook: OranjeHockey  Instagram: OranjeHockey
NEW ZEALAND WOMEN

FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019):
6

NOTABLE HONOURS:
3x Oceania Cup gold medallists (2007, 2009, 2011),
Hockey World League silver medallists (2015),
7x Oceania Cup silver medallists (1999, 2001,
Trophy bronze medallists (2011), 2x FIH Champions
Challenge gold medallists (2005, 2009),
Commonwealth Games gold medallists (2018),
Commonwealth Games silver medallists (2010),
2x Commonwealth Games bronze medallists (1998,
Olympic Games.

ABOUT THE TEAM:
The Black Sticks have been outstanding performers over the last decade, regularly putting themselves in
contention for a place on the podium at the events they have entered. Fourth place finishes at the London
2012 and Rio 2016 Olympic Games split by a fifth-place finish at the 2014 Hockey World Cup has proven
something of a frustration, but their gold medal success at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games
showed that they are more than capable of winning titles. Their 11th place finish at the Vitality Hockey
Women’s World Cup London 2018 was well below expectations and may act as a catalyst for a strong
showing in the FIH Pro League, as Mark Hager’s players set about the task of reminding everyone just
how good they really are.

The initial squad named by Hager for the FIH Pro League is very experienced, featuring nine players who
have played over 100 times for New Zealand. Stacey Michelsen, Olivia Merry and Sam Charlton all have
over 200 international matches under their respective belts, a marker that Ella Gunson – sitting on 196 caps
at the time of writing – is expected to reach in the early stages of this year’s FIH Pro League.

ONE TO WATCH:
Stacey Michelsen. Widely regarded as one of the world’s most gifted players, Stacey Michelsen has
effortlessly transitioned from a defender into a midfielder in recent years and is very much the creative
heartbeat of the Black Sticks team. The New Zealand captain was named FIH Young Player of the Year
for 2011 and was shortlisted for the FIH Hockey Stars Player of the Year for 2017.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.hockeynz.co.nz
Twitter: @BlackSticks  Facebook: nzblacksticks  Instagram: nzblacksticks
ABOUT THE TEAM:
The USA's 14th place finish at the Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup London 2018 was far below the high standards that they have set in recent years. The argument that it should be looked at in isolation is clear when you look at the impressive results this superb team had achieved leading up to that event. At the 2014 World Cup, the team claimed a stunning fourth place finish despite arriving in The Hague sitting 11th in the world rankings. In 2016, they won bronze at the champions trophy and finished a strong Olympic campaign in fifth place. They have also won gold at the past two Pan American Games (2011 and 2015), not to mention their brilliant performance at the Hockey World League Semi-Final in Johannesburg where they finished in first place ahead of Germany, England and Argentina.

The initial FIH Pro League squad selected by Head Coach Janneke Schopman – the former Netherlands international who as a player became a world and Olympic champion – is very much looking to the future. The retirement of the brilliant Melissa Gonzalez means that the captain's armband goes to Kathleen Sharkey, a world class player who has almost 150 international appearances under her belt. Jill Funk and Caitlin van Sickle are the only other players to have surpassed the 100 caps milestone, with Alyssa Manley likely to reach the marker in the coming months. The vast majority of the team are aged 23 or under, with teenager Erin Matson already being an established star while 21-year-old Margaux Paolino was an excellent performer at the World Cup in London, her debut world level tournament.

ONE TO WATCH:
Erin Matson. Despite being only 18 years of age, Erin Matson has been a member of the USA senior women's team since the middle of 2017 and has made a big name for herself with a series of outstanding performances. An attack minded midfielder blessed with speed, skill and an eye for goal, Matson is a player who looks to have a very bright future ahead of her.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.teamusa.org/usa-field-hockey
Twitter: @USAFieldHockey  Facebook: USAFieldHockey  Instagram: usafieldhockey
Background information about the competing FIH Pro League teams, including notable achievements, key players and more can be found below. You can download a complete list of all squads by clicking here.

FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019): 4

NOTABLE HONOURS:

ABOUT THE TEAM:
For many years, Argentina’s men were hidden in the long shadow cast by the remarkable achievements of their female counterparts. A bronze medal at the Rabobank Hockey World Cup in The Hague four years ago changed everything, with Los Leones (The Lions) going on to claim the gold medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, something that even Las Leonas (The Lionesses) have not achieved.

Much of the recent success came under the guidance of charismatic Head Coach Carlos ‘Chapa’ Retegui, the man who achieved a unique double by leading both the men’s and women’s teams to World Cup bronze at the 2014 joint event in The Hague. While Retegui is no longer in the hot-seat, the team very much remain one of the favourites for success in the competitions that they enter. Players such as prolific penalty corner expert Gonzalo Peillat (pictured), creative genius Lucas Vila and rising star Maico Casella are all capable of hurting any team in the world.

ONE TO WATCH:
Lucas Vila. Long considered one of the most naturally gifted attackers in world hockey, Vila has a reputation for scoring spectacular goals and always provides assists for his team-mates. The 32-year-old has been central to Argentina’s rapid rise up the FIH Hero World Rankings table and played an instrumental role in their Olympic success in 2016.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.ca.hockey.org.ar
Twitter: @ArgFieldHockey   Facebook: ArgFieldHockey   Instagram: arg_fieldhockey
ABOUT THE TEAM:
Over the past 20 years, the Kookaburras have been arguably Australia's most consistently successful international sports team and, quite remarkably, they have been ranked amongst the top four nations in the world for well over 30 years. With a staggering haul of silverware that includes a world record 15 Champions Trophy titles, six Commonwealth Games gold medals, three World Cups and an Olympic gold medal, Australia are always rated as title contenders. A bronze medal at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar was claimed in some style, recovering from an agonising shoot-out defeat at the hands of the Netherlands to storm to an 8-1 win over England to claim their tenth podium finish in fourteen World cup editions. The third-place finish in Bhubaneswar saw them lose their place at the top of the FIH Hero World rankings, a position they will be determined to claim back in 2019.

The initial FIH Pro League squad selected by Head Coach and former Kookaburra Colin Batch – who won gold as a player at the 1986 FIH Men’s World Cup in Willesden, England – is packed full of quality, with the hugely experienced attacking midfielder Eddie Ockenden being named co-captain alongside influential defender Aran Zelewski. Matthew Swann is a reliably outstanding performer in defence, while Jake Whetton, Trent Mitton, Jeremy Hayward and Blake Govers are all regular scorers for the Kookaburras.

ONE TO WATCH:
Jake Whetton. A striker who has been given a new role as attacking midfielder by Colin Batch, the versatile and incredibly energetic Jake Whetton is an explosive player who has the ability to make game-changing contributions. A terrific talent who creates as many goals as he scores, Whetton’s qualities were recognised at the end of 2018 when he was shortlisted for the FIH Player of the Year Award.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.hockey.org.au
Twitter: @kookaburras  Facebook: TheKookaburras  Instagram: hockeyaustraliaofficial
Belgium Men

FIH Hero World Ranking
(as of January 2019):

1

Notable Honours:

About the team:
Now sitting at the top of the FIH World Rankings following their stunning triumph at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, the Red Lions are the hockey success story of the decade. In the lead-up to that glorious occasion in India, the Red Lions have been on an upward trajectory that has been simply remarkable. A silver medal at EuroHockey 2013, a silver medal at the 2015 Hockey World League Final, an Olympic silver medal at Rio 2016 and a gold medal at the Hockey World League Semi-Final – won in emphatic style by beating European rivals Germany 6-1 – were all clear indicators of the progress made by the team coached by cool-headed New Zealander Shane McLeod.

The world champions are blessed with numerous truly world class individuals including Rio 2016 silver medallists Cedric Charlier, Tom Boon, Arthur Van Doren, John-John Dohmen, Thomas Briels, Simon Gougnard, Felix Denayer and Vincent Vanasch, who was named the FIH Hockey Stars Men’s Goalkeeper of the Year for 2017. With so much talent at their disposal and boosted by their incredible World Cup success at the end of 2018, Belgium should be regarded as serious contenders for the inaugural FIH Pro League title.

One to Watch:
Arthur Van Doren. A defender with composure beyond his years, Van Doren was a central figure in the Red Lions team that won silver at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and was named FIH Rising Star of the Year for 2016. Van Doren achieved a remarkable double at the start of 2018, taking both the FIH Player of the Year and Rising Star award in recognition of his stunning performances in 2017. Unsurprisingly, Van Doren was a key player for Belgium at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, being named as the Best Player in the competition as his side took home the title.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.hockey.be
Twitter: @BELRedLions Facebook: RedLions Instagram: BELRedLions
ABOUT THE TEAM:

The trophy haul achieved by Germany’s men’s team – known as Die Honamas – down the years is intimidatingly impressive. Their four Olympic gold medals, two World Cups, eight European championships and nine Champions Trophy titles provides clear evidence of their consistently excellent performances at the highest levels of international hockey. Long noted for their ability to combine flair with organisational discipline and technical brilliance, the current Germany squad has all of these elements and are sure to be a real threat in the inaugural edition of the FIH Pro League. The team produced some fine performances at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018, defeating Pakistan (1-0), eventual finalists Netherlands (4-1) and Malaysia (5-3) to finish top of Pool D and book a ticket to the quarter-finals, where they fell to a narrow 2-1 defeat at the hands of Belgium, the team that went on to win the title.

The initial FIH Pro League squad selected by Head Coach Stefan Kermas has quality in abundance. Florian Fuchs and Christopher Rühr are world class attackers, as is 21-year-old Timm Herzbruch, who bounced back from long-term injury by excelling at last year’s World cup in India and earning a nomination for the FIH Rising Star of the Year 2018 award. Mats Grambusch and Niklas Wellen have also been eye-catching performers over the past 12 months, while Tobias Walter’s nomination for the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year 2018 provides evidence that he is one of the best shot-stoppers in the business.

ONE TO WATCH:

Florian Fuchs. One of the best – and fastest – attackers on the planet, Florian Fuchs is not just a brilliant goal-scorer and creator but also a player who always seems to make the right decisions. Fuchs became an Olympic champion at the age of 20 as part of Germany’s gold medal winning team at London 2012, and was named FIH Young Player of the Year just a few months later.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.hockey.de
Twitter: @DHB_hockey   Facebook: DHBHockey   Instagram: dhb_hockey
It has been 30 years since Great Britain’s men claimed the gold medal at the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games. With the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games on the horizon and Danny Kerry, the man who guided GB’s women to Olympic gold at Rio 2016, installed as Head Coach of a very talented group of players, could another success be on the horizon? A strong showing in the FIH Pro League would certainly be a step in the right direction.

The vast majority of the England team who finished fourth at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 have been named in Danny Kerry’s initial Great Britain squad, with the notable exception of veteran attacker Barry Middleton, who is taking a break from international hockey. The captaincy triumvirate of Phil Roper, Ian Sloan and goalkeeper George Pinner - nominated for the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year Award for 2018 - have all been selected, as have Harry Martin, Mark Gleghorne and Adam Dixon, three players who have all played over 200 international matches. The team have plenty of potency in attack, with World Cup stars Liam Ansell and James Gall being joined by Sam Ward and prolific Scotland striker Alan Forsyth.

ONE TO WATCH:

Sam Ward. Top scorer at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, Sam Ward has earned a reputation as a world class striker who is prepared to put his body on the line in the quest for goals. Injury kept him out of the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 – expect him to quickly remind everyone about his goal-scoring talents.

Website: http://www.greatbritainhockey.co.uk
Twitter: @GBHockey   Facebook: GBHockey   Instagram: gbhockey
ABOUT THE TEAM:

Led by globally respected Head Coach Max Caldas, the former Argentina international who coached the Netherlands women to the World Cup title in 2014, the Netherlands are a phenomenally gifted team that are capable of beating anyone on their day, something highlighted by their sensational run to the final of the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018. Despite the reigning European champions falling to an painful shootout defeat against neighbours Belgium, their status as one of the very best nations in the game was reconfirmed.

The initial squad for the FIH Pro League contains numerous world class individuals including star midfielders Billy Bakker and Robert Kemperman, while brilliant goal-scorer Mirco Pruijser, rising star Thierry Brinkman, resurgent attacker Jeroen Hertzberger and penalty corner expert Mink van der Weerden are all capable of producing game-changing moments. They also have a fine shot-stopper in Pirmin Blaak, who was named Best Goalkeeper at the World Cup in Bhubaneswar.

ONE TO WATCH:

Billy Bakker. The creative heartbeat of the current Netherlands team, the brilliant Billy Bakker is a player capable of dominating matches from any position he plays. Although he is primarily a midfielder who regularly creates goals thanks to his driving runs into the circle, his tireless running often sees him making crucial defensive interceptions, making him a vital component in the Dutch machine assembled by Max Caldas.
NEW ZEALAND MEN

FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019):
8

NOTABLE HONOURS:
Olympic gold medallists (1976), Hockey World
League silver medallists (2012-14 edition),
Champions Challenge gold medallists (2009), 2 x
Commonwealth Games silver medallists (2002, 2018),
10x Oceania Cup silver medallists (1999, 2001, 2003,
2x Sultan Azlan Shah Cup winners (2012, 2015).

ABOUT THE TEAM:
Whilst it has been over 40 years since New Zealand shocked the world by claiming the Olympic gold medal
at the Montreal 1976 Games, the Black Sticks’ current reputation as a top-class side has been hard earned
and fully deserved. The past ten years has seen them claim two Sultan Azlan Shah Cup victories, with the
2015 success coming courtesy of a satisfying victory over Oceania rivals Australia. 2018 saw the team claim
the silver medal behind Australia at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, although defeat at the
hands of England in the cross-over play-offs at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018
resulted in a ninth-place finish in India.

The initial FIH Pro League squad unveiled by Head Coach and former Black Sticks midfielder Darren Smith
remains largely unchanged from the teams that competed both on the Gold Coast and in Bhubaneswar, with
defender / midfielder Shea McAleese – who has close to 280 caps at the time of writing – being the most
experienced player of the 25 strong group. Midfielder Arun Panchia and attacking duo Stephen Jenness and
Hugo Inglis are also members of the 200 club, a marker that team captain Blair Tarrant is likely to surpass
during this edition of the FIH Pro League.

ONE TO WATCH:
Kane Russell. A defender who regularly finds the net from penalty corner situations thanks to his powerful
drag-flick. Russell scored six times for New Zealand at the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast to finish
joint second in the scoring chart, and also scored half of New Zealand’s four goal tally at the Odisha Hockey
Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018.

FIH Pro League Team Page
Website: www.hockeynz.co.nz
Twitter: @BlackSticks Facebook: nzblacksticks Instagram: nzblacksticks
ABOUT THE TEAM:

With three Olympic gold medals and a record four World Cup titles, Pakistan are one of the most successful nations in the history of the sport. Although their last major world level title came at the 1994 World Cup, they have enjoyed considerable success in Asia and will be greatly looking forward to their participation in the FIH Pro League, where their young, developing team will be able to compete against some of the best hockey nations in the world. A cross-over play-off defeat at the hands of eventual champions Belgium at the Odisha Hockey Men’s World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 resulted in a 12th place finish in India. Whilst that result was below the expectations of their passionate fans, the Green Shirts produced some high-quality moments that may give their supporters good reason to feel optimistic about the coming years.

Pakistan’s initial squad for the FIH Pro League is one very much looking to the future, with goalkeeper Ali Haider being the oldest player at just 24 years of age. Nine of the 26 players are teenagers, with 16-year-old Ghazanfar Ali being the youngest. Twenty-three-year-old Ammad Butt is the most experienced player in the group with over 100 caps to his name, having been part of the Pakistan squads that competed at the World Cup, Champions Trophy, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games in 2018.

ONE TO WATCH:

Ali Mubashar. A defender with a fearsome penalty corner drag-flick, 21-year-old Mubashar is a player with a very bright future. He played in all of Pakistan’s major tournaments in 2018, with his five goals in seven matches at the 2018 Asian Games being arguably the highlight of his fledgling career.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: http://pakhockey.org
Twitter: @PHFOfficial Facebook: PHFOfficial Instagram: phfofficial
FIH HERO WORLD RANKING
(as of January 2019):

9

NOTABLE HONOURS:
3x Olympic silver medallists (1980, 1996, 2008),
2x FIH Men’s World Cup silver medallists (1971, 1998),

ABOUT THE TEAM:
Spain have regularly produced sides that are capable of fighting for the biggest honours in the game, a fact proven by five silver medals at Olympic or World Cup level, not to mention two European championships and a Champions Trophy title. Head Coach and former France international Frédéric Soyez has instilled a wonderful work ethic into his team without sacrificing any of the flair that has been a signature of so many Spanish sides in the past.

The initial Red Sticks’ squad named for the FIH Pro League is packed full of world level experience, with goalkeeper Quico Cortes, Sergi Enrique, Marc Salles, Miguel Delas and Pau Quemada all having played over 200 internationals. While these elder statesmen are hugely influential in the current set-up, there is plenty of exciting talent emerging, with Enrique Gonzalez widely regarded as one of the hottest young properties in the game.

ONE TO WATCH:

Enrique Gonzalez. While there are plenty of candidates amongst the Spanish team who could be considered ‘ones to watch’, the rise of the precociously talented young attacker Gonzalez has certainly caught the eye. A young player with great speed, skill and vision, Gonzalez is already an influential figure and could be around for many years to come.

FIH Pro League Team Page

Website: www.rfeh.es
Twitter: @rfe_hockey  Facebook: RFEH Hockey  Instagram: absolutamasc
The officials that will oversee FIH Pro League games will be designated on a match by match basis. The appointment sheets for each match will be available on TMS via the following links:
USEFUL INFORMATION

FIH PRO LEAGUE LOGO
You can download the event logo by clicking here.
The FIH Hero World Rankings listed below cover the Top 20 women’s and men's teams, being accurate as of January 2019. To see any updates or to view the complete men’s and women’s FIH Hero World Rankings [click here].

## TOP 20 - WOMEN

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## TOP 20 - MEN

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