

FINAL 8

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

NIZHNY NOVGOROD 2021



Official Program



#BASKETBALLCL



FINAL 8

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

NIZHNY NOVGOROD 2021



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WELCOME TO NIZHNY NOVGOROD!

...WHERE OKA MEETS VOLGA

Located at the confluence of the Oka and Volga rivers, Nizhny Novgorod is a mixture of provincial charm and a major cosmopolitan city. The region's capital, whose architecture has amazed its visitors for centuries with its Kremlin, its fabulous merchants' mansions, wooden houses and snow-white churches perfectly blending in with modern constructions, is located 420km east from Moscow.

Nizhny Novgorod is the sixth-largest city in Russia, the second-most populous city on the Volga, as well as the Volga Federal District. It is a major economic, transportation, scientific, educational and cultural center in Russia and the vast Volga-Vyatka economic region, and is the main center of river tourism in Russia.

In 2021, Nizhny Novgorod celebrates its 800th anniversary, as the rich history of the city started in 1221. The city was then founded at the confluence of the Volga and Oka rivers by Prince Yuri Vsevolodovich as a fortress for the defence of Russia's borders from the Mordvins, Cheremis and Tatars. The city was called "Nizhny" (Lower in English) as it was located in the lower lands, in relation to Veliky Novgorod. The first fortress occupied an extremely advantageous position,

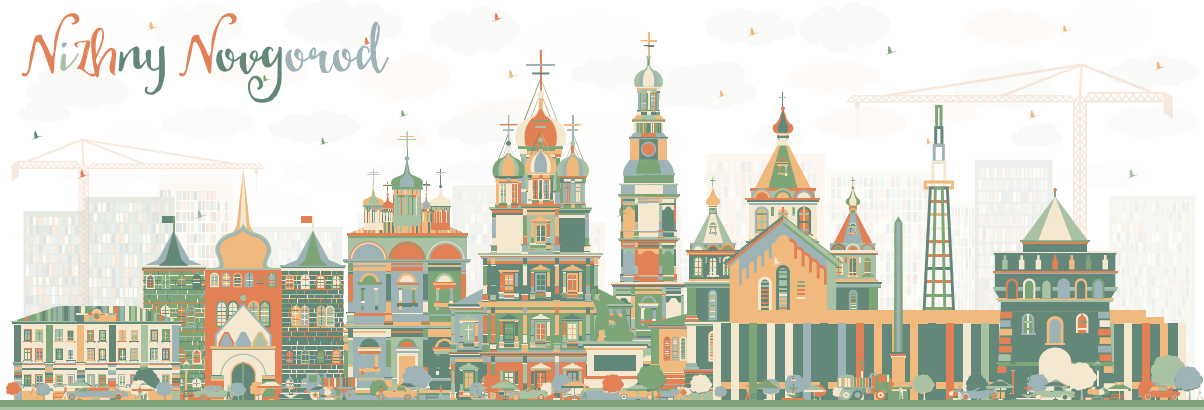
dominating the Oka and the Volga. Throughout history, the city never stopped to make great contribution to Russia's development while always offering a 100% genuine Russian experience to its visitors.

Also known as the sunset capital, Nizhny Novgorod benefits from picturesque landscapes over the Volga, but also a harmonious combination of styles and characters emerging in line with the city's historic, social and cultural development, and in line with its charming scenery.

Nizhny Novgorod is also a city of sports. Host of the last two basketball Russian Cup Final Fours, the city also welcomed the 2018 FIFA World Cup, hosting 6 matches (4 group stage and 2 knockout round matches) at the brand-new Nizhny Novgorod Stadium.

Nizhny Novgorod entered the 21st century in a modern and trendy way. The 800th anniversary is giving a new impetus to the city, developing as the city of technology & innovation, and becoming a real point of attraction where major events will take place this year, starting with the Basketball Champions League Final 8 that will offer a unique basketball moment for Nizhny Novgorod and all basketball fans.

Nizhny Novgorod





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CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX NAGORNY

The Culture and Entertainment Complex Nagorny, also known as the Trade Union Sport Palace, is the venue that will host the 2021 Final 8, pinnacle event of the Basketball Champions League season 5.

Originally opened in 1965, then fully renovated and expanded in 2007, the arena was among the first and most advanced indoor ice hockey arenas of this size to be constructed in the center of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. For the arena's 50th anniversary, in 2012, new lighting and security systems were also added and improved.

Besides the basketball club of Nizhny Novgorod, the Culture and Entertainment Complex Nagorny is also the home arena for the men's ice hockey team (Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod, evolving in Kontinental Hockey League), but also the women's team (SKIF Nizhny Novgorod, competing in the premier league for women's ice hockey in Russia) that has won the Russian Championship twelve times, as well as the European Women's Champions Cup twice.

CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX NAGORNY





ACCESS MAP

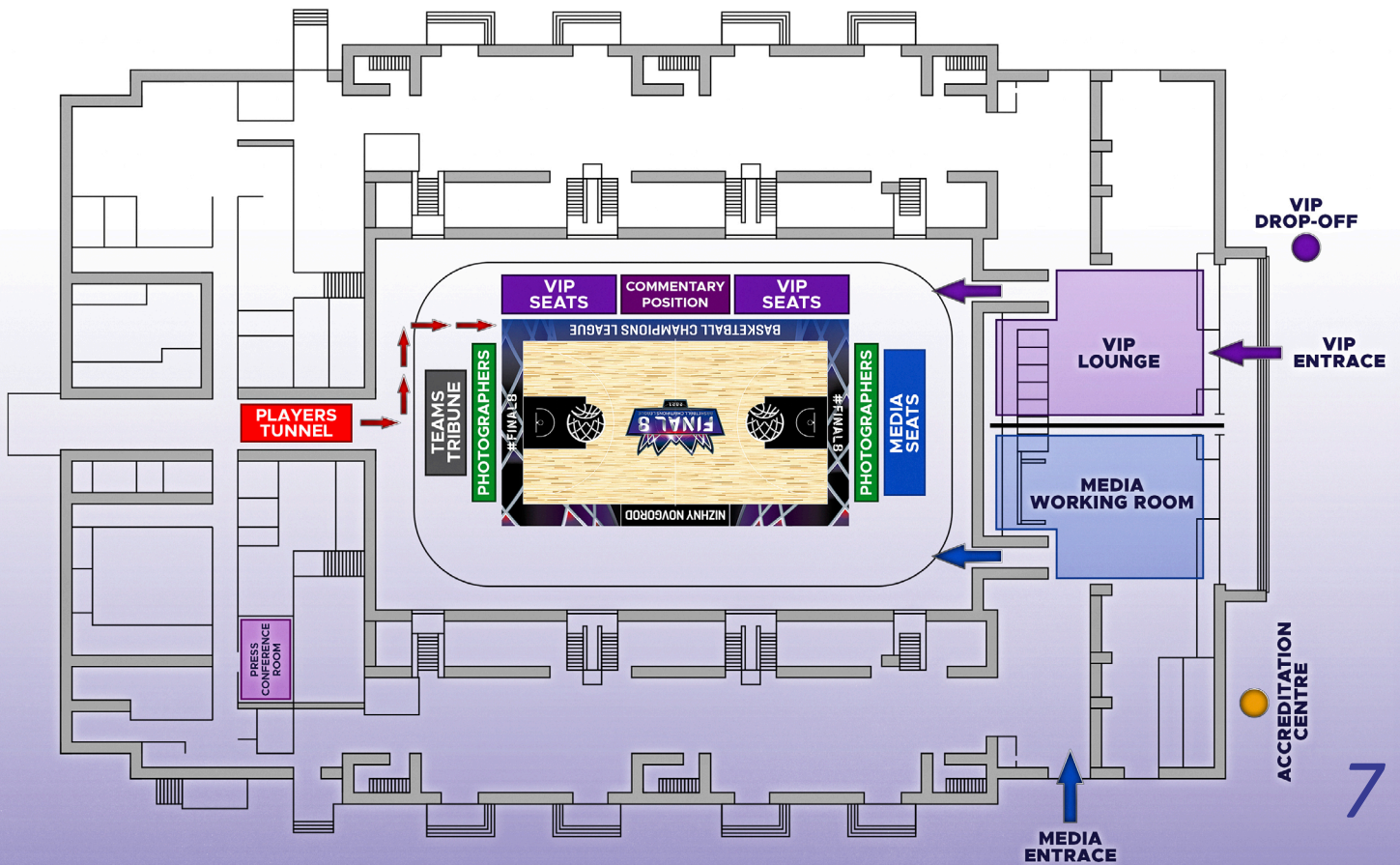
CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX NAGORNY



- 1 VIP DROP-OFF
- 2 VIP ENTRANCE
- 3 PUBLIC ENTRANCE
- 4 MEDIA ENTRANCE
- 5 VIP SEATS
- 6 ACCREDITATION CENTRE
- 7 MEDIA SEATS

ACCESS MAP

COURT LEVEL



PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE SEASON ENDING TOURNAMENT

FINAL FOUR 2017, TENERIFE (SPAIN) APRIL 28-30, 2017

Semi-Finals

Banvit (TUR) **83-75** AS Monaco (FRA)
Iberostar Tenerife (ESP) **67-58** Umana Reyer Venezia (ITA)

Third-Place Game

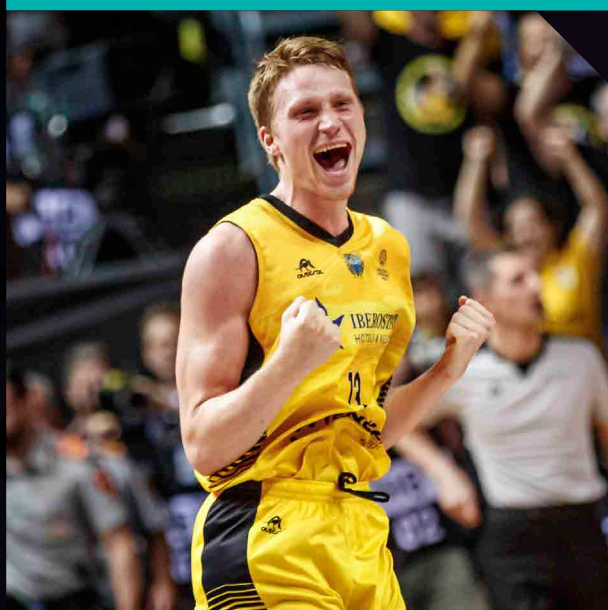
AS Monaco **97-77** Umana Reyer Venezia

Final

Iberostar Tenerife **63-59** Banvit

MVP

Marius Grigonis (LTU) | Iberostar Tenerife



FINAL FOUR 2018, ATHENS (GREECE) MAY 4-6, 2018

Semi-Finals

MHP RIESEN Ludwigsburg (GER) **65-87** AS Monaco (FRA)
AEK (GRE) **77-75** UCAM Murcia (ESP)

Third-Place Game

MHP RIESEN Ludwigsburg **74-85** UCAM Murcia

Final

AS Monaco **94-100** AEK

MVP

Mike Green (USA) | AEK



**FINAL FOUR 2019,
ANTWERP (BELGIUM)**

Semi-Finals

Segafredo Virtus Bologna (ITA) **67-50** Brose Bamberg (GER)

Iberostar Tenerife (ESP) **70-54** Telenet Giants Antwerp (BEL)

Third-Place Game

Brose Bamberg **58-72** Telenet Giants Antwerp

Final

Segafredo Virtus Bologna **73-61** Iberostar Tenerife

MVP

Kevin Punter (USA) | Segafredo Virtus Bologna



**FINAL EIGHT 2020,
ATHENS (GREECE)**

Semi-Finals

Hereda San Pablo Burgos (ESP) **81-67** JDA Dijon (FRA)

AEK (GRE) **99-75** Casademont Zaragoza (ESP)

Third-Place Game

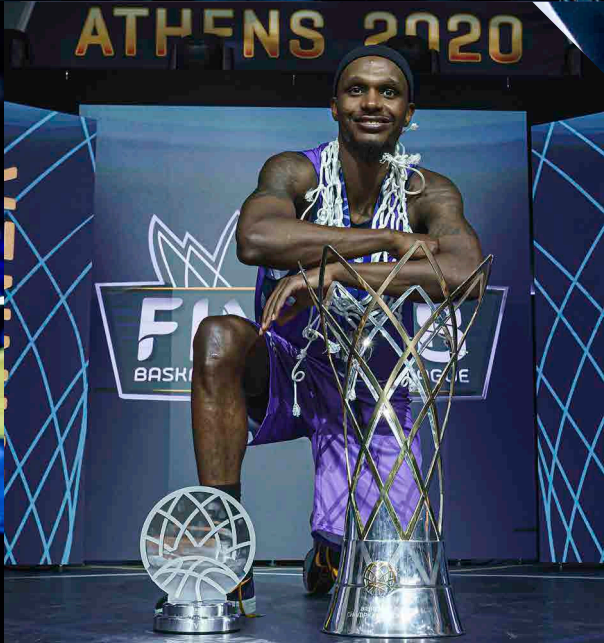
JDA Dijon **70-65** Casademont Zaragoza

Final

Hereda San Pablo Burgos **85-74** AEK

MVP

Thad McFadden (USA) | Hereda San Pablo Burgos



REGULAR SEASON STANDINGS

STANDINGS GROUP A
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	LENDOVO TENERIFE	6	4	2	67%	10
2	DINAMO SASSARI	6	4	2	67%	10
3	BAKKEN BEARS	6	3	3	50%	9
4	GALATASARAY	6	1	5	17%	7

STANDINGS GROUPE
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	SIG STRASBOURG	6	4	2	67%	10
2	VEF VEF RIGA	6	4	2	67%	10
3	PERISTERI	6	2	4	33%	8
4	RYTAS VILNIUS	6	2	4	33%	8

STANDINGS GROUP B
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	YOFAS BURSA	6	4	2	67%	10
2	ERA NYMBURK	6	4	2	67%	10
3	JDA DIJON	6	4	2	67%	10
4	KERAVNOS	6	0	6	0%	6

STANDINGS GROUPE
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	BROSE BAMBERG	6	6	0	100%	12
2	PINAR KARSIYAKA	6	4	2	67%	10
3	RETABET BILBAO	6	2	4	33%	8
4	FORTITUDO BOLOGNA	6	0	6	0%	6

STANDINGS GROUP C
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	HAPOEL UNET-CREDIT HOLON	6	4	2	67%	10
2	AEK	6	4	2	67%	10
3	CHOLET	6	2	4	33%	8
4	TSMOKI MINSK	6	2	4	33%	8

STANDINGS GROUPE
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	TURK TELEKOM	6	5	1	83%	11
2	IGOEKA	6	3	3	50%	9
3	HAPOEL JERUSALEM	6	2	4	33%	8
4	LIMOGES CSP	6	2	4	33%	8

STANDINGS GROUP D
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	CASADEMONT ZARAGOZA	6	5	1	67%	11
2	NIZHNY NOVGOROD	6	4	2	67%	10
3	FALCO SZOMBATHELY	6	3	3	33%	9
4	PSZZZOLKA START LUBLIN	6	0	6	0%	6

STANDINGS GROUPE
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	HEREDA SAN PABLO BURGOS	6	5	1	83%	11
2	HAPPY CASA BRINDISI	6	4	2	67%	10
3	FILOU OOSTENDE	6	2	4	33%	8
4	DARUSSAFKA TEKFEK	6	1	5	17%	7

PLAY-OFFS STANDINGS

STANDINGS GROUP I
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	HAPDEL UNET-CREDIT HOLON	6	4	2	67%	10
2	PINAR KARSIYAKA	6	3	3	50%	9
3	HAPPY CASA BRINDISI	6	3	3	50%	9
4	TOFAS BURSA	6	2	4	33%	8

STANDINGS GROUP K
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	NIZHNY NOVGOROD	6	4	2	67%	10
2	SIG STRASBOURG	6	3	3	50%	9
3	AEK	6	3	3	50%	9
4	TURK TELEKOM	6	2	4	33%	8

STANDINGS GROUP J
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	LENOVO TENERIFE	6	5	1	83%	11
2	HEREDA SAN PABLO BURGOS	6	4	2	67%	10
3	IROKEA	6	3	3	50%	9
4	VEF RIGA	6	0	6	0%	6

STANDINGS GROUP L
AFTER GAMEDAY 6

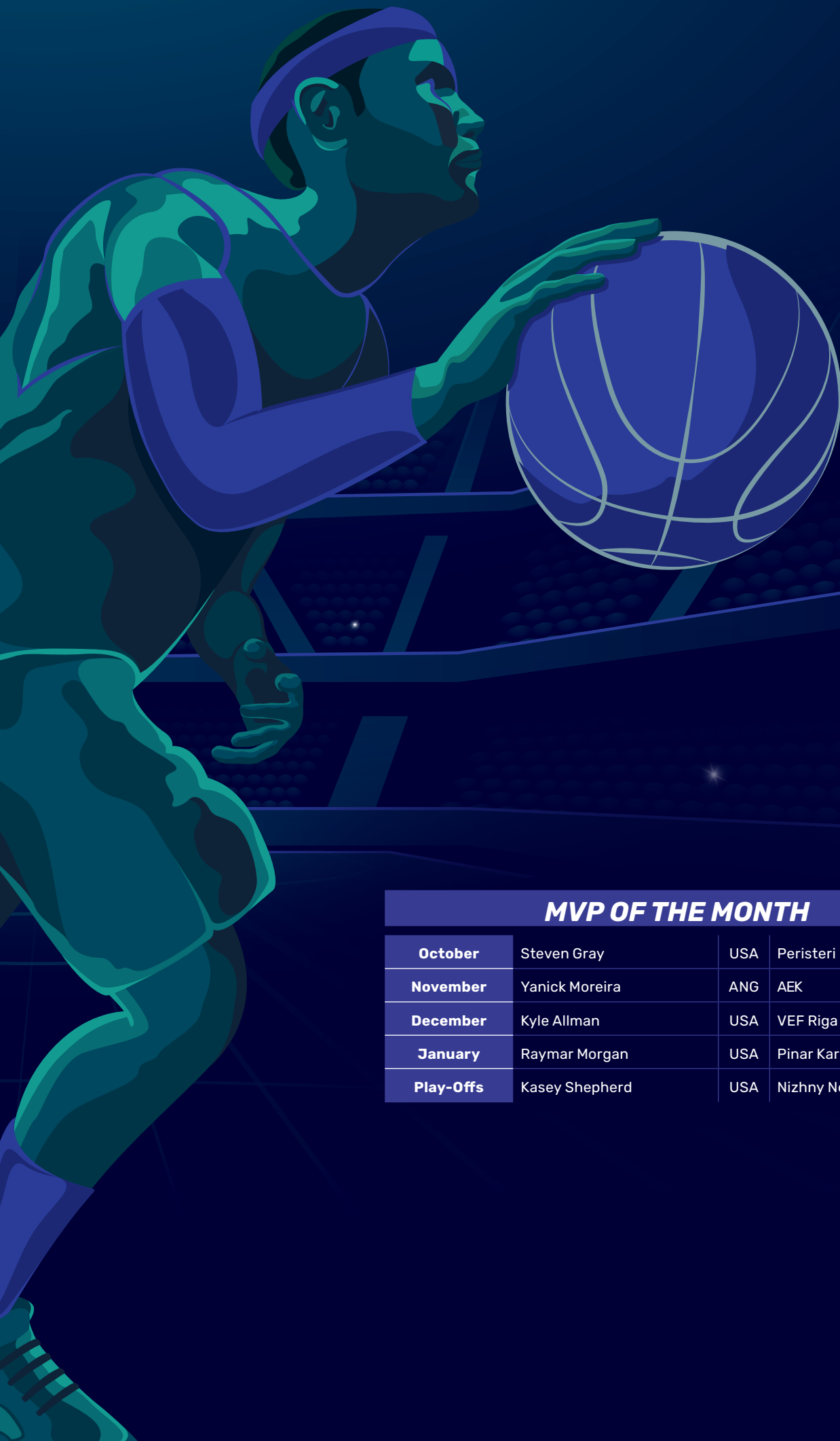
#	TEAM	P	W	L	%	PTS
1	ERA NYMBURK	6	5	1	83%	11
2	CASADEMONT ZARAGOZA	6	4	2	67%	10
3	BROSE BAMBERG	6	2	4	33%	8
4	DINAMO SASSARI	6	1	5	17%	7



SEASON AWARDS

TEAM OF THE MONTH

October	Steven Gray	USA	Peristeri
	Marco Spissu	ITA	Dinamo Sassari
	Kyle Wiltjer	USA	Türk Telekom
	Jerry Boutsiele	FRA	Limoges
	Grant Jerrett	USA	Darussafaka
November	Yanick Moreira	ANG	AEK
	Axel Julien	FRA	JDA Dijon
	Keye van de Vuurst de Vries	NED	Filou Oostende
	Miro Bilan	CRO	Dinamo Sassari
	Retin Obasohan	BEL	ERA Nymburk
December	Kyle Allman	USA	VEF Riga
	D'Angelo Harrison	USA	Happy Casa Brindisi
	Sam Dekker	USA	Türk Telekom
	Evan Bruinsma	USA	Falco Szombathely
	David Kravish	USA	Brose Bamberg
January	Raymar Morgan	USA	Pinar Karsiyaka
	Keith Langford	USA	AEK
	QJ Peterson	USA	Bakken Bears
	Tomislav Zubcic	CRO	Tofas Bursa
	Bonzie Colson	USA	SIG Strasbourg
Play-Offs	Kasey Shepherd	USA	Nizhny Novgorod
	C.J. Harris	USA	Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon
	Jasiel Rivero	CUB	Hereda San Pablo Burgos
	Bonzie Colson	USA	SIG Strasbourg
	Giorgi Shermadini	GEO	Lenovo Tenerife



MVP OF THE MONTH

October	Steven Gray	USA	Peristeri
November	Yanick Moreira	ANG	AEK
December	Kyle Allman	USA	VEF Riga
January	Raymar Morgan	USA	Pinar Karsiyaka
Play-Offs	Kasey Shepherd	USA	Nizhny Novgorod

CASADEMONT ZARAGOZA TEAM PROFILE

RUNNING REDS.

Casademont are back in the Final 8. After reaching the Semi-Final in their first season, Zaragoza are joining the champions Burgos in making the Final 8 twice in their first two seasons. This has been a season of change for Zaragoza. Early in the season a poor run of results in the ACB led to Diego Ocampo being replaced. The name of the incoming coach whipped up a lot of media interest. Argentinian legend Sergio Hernandez had long been spoken of as a candidate to forge a successful transition into European basketball. And if we are to judge his short stint to this point, there is every reason to believe that Hernandez had success in front of him with Zaragoza. His mid-season roster changes bringing in Jacob

Wiley and Elias Harris already look to be shrewd moves. Both players have settled quickly into the squad. Then after successfully navigating the second half of the Regular Season and seeing the squad sharpen into shape during the Play-Offs, the news broke that Hernandez was leaving Spain for personal reasons and Luis Casimiro was stepping in with immediate effect.

For most of the season Zaragoza have been a very dangerous transition team. The stats also reflect this, as they score 19.3 points per game after turnovers, which is the best number in the BCL. They also play at the highest pace, with an average of 78.8 possessions per game. For



overall offense they are ranked fourth amongst all F8 teams with an Offensive Ranking of 1.09 points per possession. One of the hallmarks of the progress under Hernandez was the development of their game in the half court. This team has always had shot makers in Ennis, Benzing, Brussino, and Sulaimon but they have added lob threats in Wiley and another scoring option in Harris. They now generate 65 percent of their made field goals from an assist, which is up from the start of the season and ranks them fourth for Assist Percentage amongst teams at the Final 8. On the defensive end, the likes of Hlinason and the returning Javier Justiz provide legitimate size and rim protection. Zaragoza block a higher percentage of shots than any team at the Final 8 with a Block Percentage of 8 percent. It remains to be seen if new head coach Luis Casimiro has enough time to impact the way this team plays but he has inherited a squad that is already in good shape for a run at their second Final 8 and far from needing a rebuild.

If we look at the chart below, Zaragoza's shot profile has three clear sweet spots; at the rim where they shoot 75.8 Percent (only Burgos are more efficient at the rim), from the top of the key 3-points, where they shoot 40.7 percent, and the right corner at 37.5 percent. When we look to match that up with shot ratios, we can clearly see that Zaragoza are one of the best teams at Final 8 for shots at the rim. They combine their efficiency with taking 24.4 percent of all their shots down there (only Tenerife and Karsiyaka attempt more). They also take 23 percent of their shots in the paint for a combined 47 percent of their shot attempts in the total painted area (only Karsiyaka attempt more total paint shots). On the perimeter the area that has the best combination of efficiency and attempts is the right wing, where they shoot 13.4 percent of their shots with a 35 percent efficiency.

Zaragoza's season started with all the entertainment value you could wish for. They won their first game on the road at Start Lublin thanks



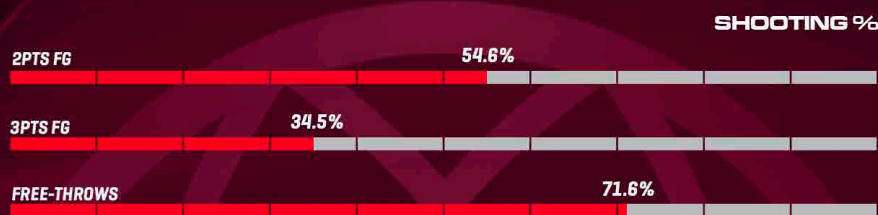
to a buzzer-beater from D.J. Seeley. Then followed that up at home against Nizhny Novgorod with a Dylan Ennis game-winner with less than a second left on the game-clock. Ennis had 17 points and 22 points respectively against Lublin and Nizhny. Only Robin Benzing with 23 points against Nizhny put a higher score on the board. These two wins set the tone and confidence for the remainder of the Regular Season for Zaragoza. They went on to top the group with only one loss when Falco shocked them 94-86 in Hungary. Even considering the heroics of the first two Gamedays, perhaps the most impressive performance of the Regular Season came on the road at Nizhny Novgorod. The length of the travel time and the Russians' well-renowned toughness, makes this one of the hardest places to pick up a win in the BCL. Another 23 points for Robin Benzing, and 20 points from Dylan Ennis steered Zaragoza to the top of Group D. Benzing and Ennis combined for 88 points in two games against the hosts of the Final 8 this year. This

could be something to keep an eye out for when the two teams meet again in the Quarter-Finals.

The Play-Offs matched Zaragoza with another team that has reached two consecutive Final 8 tournaments, ERA Nymburk. Joining them in the group were the unbeaten Brose Bamberg and Dinamo Sassari. Zaragoza started the Play-Offs hot with wins over Sassari on the road and Bamberg at home. Jonathan Barreiro's 26 points on 100 percent shooting from deep against Sassari was the highlight performance. It was also a performance that highlighted the growing depth of the squad and the belief that any individual could be the go-to-guy on any given night. Elias Harris 17 points at home against his former club Bamberg only served to further highlight this point. Zaragoza did, however, come unstuck slightly on the road in Germany where Bamberg made 21 3-pointers and scored 117 points in regular time. The combination of an off night for the Spaniards and an incredible shooting performance for the Germans resulted in a 41-point loss for Zaragoza.



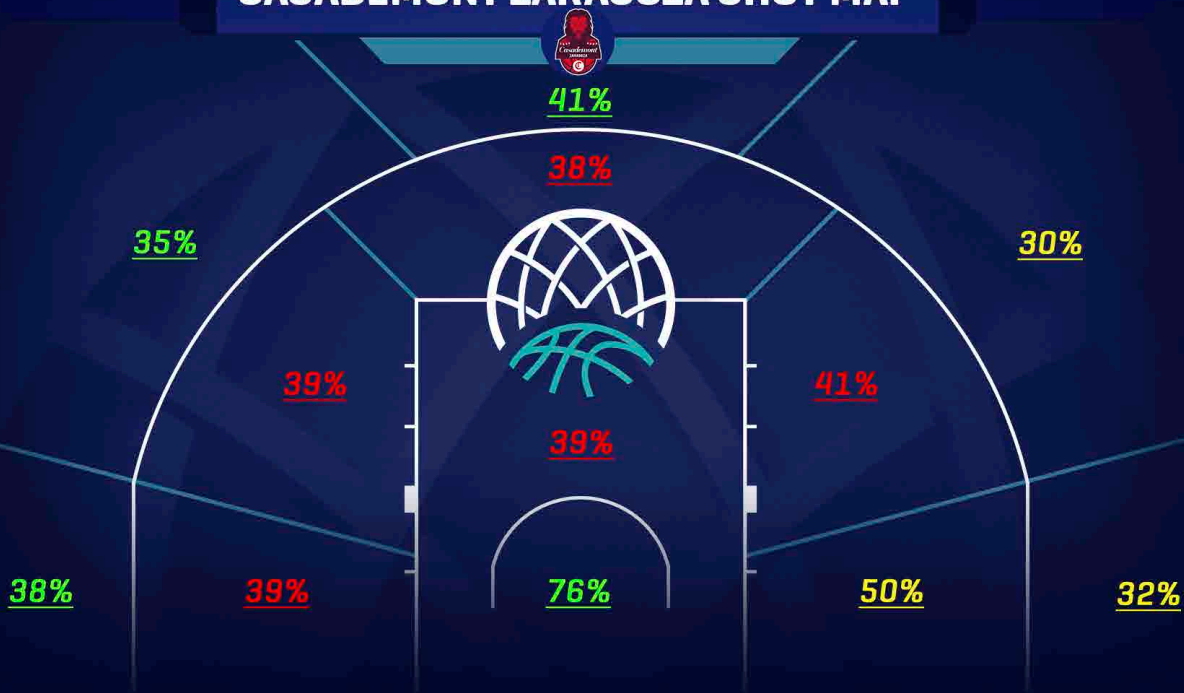
**CASADEMONT
 ZARAGOZA**



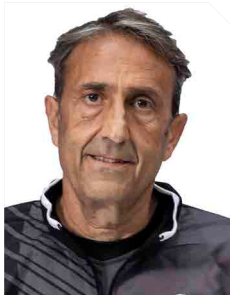


The response was a performance of almost equal dominance against Dinamo Sassari at home. They won the game 105-88, with six players scoring in double figures. Zaragoza then sealed their spot in the Quarter-Finals with a 19 point win over ERA Nymburk at home. Jacob Wiley's all-action 22 points caught the eye with several highlight plays and his trademark high motor proving too much for Nymburk. They did drop the final game on the road to the Czech squad in the return leg but not too much can be taken from that performance as they had already qualified and played the game with a depleted squad. Zaragoza find themselves matched up against a familiar foe in hosts Nizhny Novgorod at the Final 8. Despite the loss of their head coach, they will still go into the game with the confidence of already winning a game in Russia this season and having quickly acted to bring in a coach with the caliber of Luis Casimiro, they have to go down a real threat to be the first Spanish club to reach two consecutive Semi-Finals.

CASADEMONT ZARAGOZA SHOT MAP



LUIS CASIMIRO



Date of birth: 21/07/1960
Coaching career: CB Puertollano (ESP; 1989-90), Almodovar del Campo (ESP; 1990), Don Benito (ESP; 1990-92), Breogan (assistant, ESP; 1992-93), Gandia (ESP; 1993-94), Lucentum Alicante (ESP; 1994-95, 2003), Salamanca (assistant, ESP; 1995-96), Gijon Baloncesto (ESP; 1996-97), Manresa (ESP; 1997-99), Caceres (ESP; 1999-2000), Valencia Basket (ESP; 2000-02), Valladolid (ESP; 2002-03, 2011-12), Fuenlabrada (ESP; 2004-08, 2014-15), Estudiantes (ESP; 2008-11), Unicaja Malaga (ESP; 2012,

2018-21), Sevilla (ESP; 2015-16), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2016-18)

The man who knows how to create something out of nothing. Luis Casimiro is the coach who created one of the biggest upsets in Spanish basketball history, as he coached Manresa all the way from 6th seed in the Play-Offs to their only Spanish Championship title back in 1998, winning Coach of the Year in progress. He also made history with Gran Canaria, earning the club the promotion to EuroLeague in 2018, winning the Spanish Supercup in 2016, and even with early days Valencia he managed to reach the Finals of the Saporta Cup back in 2002. He's got a tough task ahead, Sergio Hernandez was a likeable character inside the locker room, and a master of playcalling on the basketball court. Maybe the coaching change creates a positive bang inside the locker room and give Casimiro another shot of making something out of nothing - winning the BCL as the team with the weakest domestic record as it stands.

JONATHAN BARREIRO



Date of birth: 16/01/1997
Position: small forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Real Madrid (ESP; 2012-15), Ourense (ESP; 2015-16)

There are so many records these days, one of them was bound to happen with somebody in Zaragoza's jersey celebrating. Jonathan Barreiro is the guilty party, he is sharing the record for most three-pointers without a miss in a single Basketball Champions League game, knocking down six-of-six from deep against Dinamo Sassari to finish with 26 points in 24 minutes. Only Michele Vitali and Paulius Valinskas were able to hit six triples in six tries, Vitali getting his mark just a few weeks after Barreiro. Barreiro is a small forward who grew up with Real Madrid, but has become a talismanic figure for Zaragoza, finishing up his fifth season with the team as we speak. His development into a high-level team player was confirmed with a call up to the Spanish national team during the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers.

DYLAN ENNIS

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 26/12/1991
Position: point guard
Height: 1.88m/6'2"
Club career: Mega (SRB; 2017), Crvena Zvezda (SRB; 2017-18), Casademont Zaragoza (ESP; 2018), Andorra (ESP; 2018-19), AS Monaco (FRA; 2019)

He can talk the talk, and he definitely walked the walk this season. Dylan Ennis has been sensational, and deserves to be in the MVP conversation after leading Casademont Zaragoza to the Final 8 and hitting big time shots, including the 30-foot game winner against none other than Nizhny Novgorod, the hosts of the elite eight tournament. Ennis averaged 14.8 points, 3.4 assists, 3.2 rebounds and 1.1 steals in the Basketball Champions League, reaching double digits in eight of his 11 games so far. Ennis will have a weird feeling at the summit in Russia, the last time around he had his brother to talk to in the hotel, as Tyler was playing for Turk Telekom, but this time Dylan is on his own. He does refer to himself as the Canadian Kid, but he represented Jamaica in international basketball. That's just a part of his worldwide charisma, he's got a Serbian passport from his time spent with Mega and Crvena Zvezda, while his wife is from Australia and his kid(s) are growing up in Spain. The fact that Zaragoza are playing against Nizhny in the Quarter-Finals is great news for this guy: the only two times he scored more than 20 in the BCL this season was against Nizhny Novgorod and against Nizhny Novgorod, once more! He hit copy and paste and finished both games with 22 points and 4 rebounds.

ROBIN BENZING



Date of birth: 25/01/1989
Position: power forward
Height: 2.10m/6'11"
Club career: TV Langen (GER; 2005-08), ratiopharm Ulm (GER; 2009-11), Bayern Munich (GER; 2011-15), Casademont Zaragoza (ESP; 2015-17), S.Oliver Wurzburg (GER; 2017-18), Besiktas (TUR; 2018-19)

Time flies. It seems like only yesterday Robin Benzing was that skinny kid who was the youngest member of the German FIBA EuroBasket 2009 team in Poland, and now he's the national team captain with 150 caps, and a complete legend in Zaragoza, as well. In a team with balanced scoring as their main forte, Benzing managed to put together eight games with 10 or more points, including a 23-point performance against the Final 8 hosts and Zaragoza's Quarter-Finals opponent Nizhny Novgorod in Russia. Benzing always felt relaxed in Zaragoza, but it seems he's more comfortable than ever now that Elias Harris is his teammate once again - they were teammates way back at the aforementioned FIBA EuroBasket 12 years ago. A perfect teammate circle is closing, why not crown it with an international trophy?

NICOLAS BRUSSINO



Date of birth: 02/03/1993
Position: small forward
Height: 2.00m/6'7"
Club career: San Martin de Marcos Juarez (ARG; 2010-12), Regatas Corrientes (ARG; 2012-15), Penarol (ARG; 2015-16), Dallas Mavericks (USA; 2016-17), Texas Legends (USA; 2017), Atlanta Hawks (USA; 2017), Erie BayHawks (USA; 2017), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2018), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2018-19)

There have been only two triple-doubles in the history of the Basketball Champions League, and Nicolas Brussino came so close to becoming the third player to achieve the feat. Argentina's national team forward knew coach Sergio Hernandez's system so well that he was the motor behind it more often than not, including a 14-point, 10-assist, 8-rebound outing against Pszczolka Start Lublin, and a 12-point, 11-rebound, 9-assist double-double against ERA Nymburk in the final game of the Play-Offs. Brussino was bounced around over the last few years, but those two games are the best evidence he's feeling at home with Zaragoza. In fact, this marks his longest stay in a single club since playing for Regatas Corrientes back in his homeland!

JOSEP FERMI CERA



Date of birth: 15/01/2003
Position: point guard
Height: 1.85m/6'1"
Club career: Anagan Olivar (ESP; 2018-19)

Fan favorite back home in Zaragoza, Josep Fermi Cera made his debut in the Liga Endesa back in February, weeks after celebrating his 17th birthday. But that's about it when it comes to the first team. The teenager wasn't able to push for more minutes since his first game last season, and he's yet to find minutes in the Basketball Champions League this season. Even though Casademont Zaragoza are well known for their work with the young players, it would be something of a miracle to see JFC making an impact during this Final 8. But there is no rush with this guy, he gets to learn all the secrets to the point guard craft from guys like Rodrigo San Miguel and Dylan Ennis - life could be worse than that, for sure.

JAIME FERNANDEZ



Date of birth: 15/07/2000
Position: center
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Casademont Zaragoza (ESP; 2017-18), FC Barcelona (ESP; 2018-20)

A bit of back and forth between Zaragoza and Barcelona, and it seems like it's finally over with Jaime Fernandez and he is ready to stay in Zaragoza for good. He was in the squad in all 12 of their games in the Basketball Champions League this season, but only saw playing time in six games, getting the season-highs of 18 minutes and 7 points against Pszczolka Start Lublin to close out the Regular Season. The situation is not any better in the Liga Endesa, either, but Fernandez is in no rush to make an impact right now. He is still at the beginning stage of his career, that FIBA U16 European Championship 2016 run feels like it happened just the other day, when Jaime joined Carlos Alocen, Usman Garuba, Joel Parra and others at the top step of the podium.

JAVIER GARCIA



Date of birth: 06/04/2001
Position: point guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Previous clubs: -

Spain were unreal at the FIBA U18 European Championship in 2019, and one of the main reasons why was because they had Javier Garcia to run the point en route to another gold in FIBA Youth Events that summer. Garcia was the fourth best passer of the entire competition with 5.9 assists per game, and he has showed glimpses of that kind of form at this level, too. The two games that stand out for Garcia: He had 6 points and 5 assists in just 14 minutes against Falco Szombathely, and scored a season-high 14 points on 4-of-4 shooting from deep against Pszczolka Start Lublin. He has played in every single Play-Offs game this season, meaning he's in the club's current plans, not just the future ones.

TRYGGVI HLINASON



Date of birth: 28/10/1997
Position: center
Height: 2.15m/7'1"
Club career: Por Akureyri (ISL; 2014-17), Valencia (ESP; 2017-18), Obradoiro (ESP; 2018-19)

Here's an idea - don't try stuff around the rim when you see the gigantic Icelandic guy over there. Tryggvi Hlinason is no longer that farmer kid who was stuck in snowstorms in Iceland and only learned about basketball in high school, he is now a legit role player center playing the strongest national championship in all of Europe, and contributing to an international event like the Basketball Champions League, too. He's had two games scoring in double digits, but there was a mid-season run of 12 blocks in four games, showing he became an elite rim protector in such a short time of playing basketball. But perhaps the biggest indicator of his growth are his national team games. Hlinason has played for Iceland in the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023 Pre-Qualifiers and averaged 18.8 points, 11.3 rebounds and 3.2 blocks in six games. He's still 23, give him a year or two more in this club's system, and numbers like those could become a reality on club level, too!

JAVIER JUSTIZ



Date of birth: 18/09/1992
Position: center
Height: 2.10m/6'11"
Club career: Santiago de Cuba (CUB; 2012-15), Bucaneros de La Guaira (VEN; 2015), Estudiantes Concordia (ARG; 2015-17), San Lorenzo (ARG; 2017-18)

And Justiz for all! It's been a horrible season for the Cuban center, and he appeared in only three games of the Basketball Champions League campaign so far. Still, he needed just 16 minutes to score 12 points against Falco Szombathely, showing he's still got what it takes to succeed at this level. Javier's easy to spot on the court with the big dreadlocked hair and a personality to match the look, so it's not a miracle that he gets along so well with his compatriot Jasiel Rivero, who will also be at the Final 8, wearing the Hereda San Pablo Burgos shirt. Justiz names three big time role models for him: his mother, Shaq O'Neal and - Bob Marley! That perhaps explains the hairstyle...

GUSTAV KNUDSEN



Date of birth: 16/04/2003
Position: guard
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: DBA Copenhagen (DEN; 2018-19)

We are still waiting for the next big Danish thing to start his Basketball Champions League career, so this Final 8 comes too soon for Gustav Knudsen. He did make his debut in the Spanish League this season, seeing action in two games, but nobody had any ideas of him dominating within the first two years when Zaragoza's front office brought him in from Denmark. Gustav is a pesky defender, using his perfect frame to chase opponents all over the court or play the passing lanes, and he had the athleticism to play above the rim way back at the U16 level. Denmark were the feel good team of the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers, with prospects like Knudsen growing up, don't be surprised to see them reach a major event in near future.

RODRIGO SAN MIGUEL



Date of birth: 21/01/1985
Position: point guard
Height: 1.82m/6'0"
Club career: Casademont Zaragoza (ESP; 2003-04), Valladolid (ESP; 2005-08), Pozuelo (ESP; 2005), Plasencia (ESP; 2005-06), Manresa (ESP; 2008-11), Valencia (ESP; 2011-13), UCAM Murcia (ESP; 2013-14), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2014-19)

It's been an on and off season for Rodrigo San Miguel, who is still looking like the boy wonder he was with Casademont Zaragoza 18 years ago when he made his debut. This version of San Miguel is peak playmaking Rodrigo, creating for others, not for himself, because he's got 37 assists to 23 shot attempts in the Basketball Champions League. Along with Tyrus McGee, Giorgios Bogris and Aaron Doornekamp, he is one of four players in this Final 8 who have played the inaugural season finale in the Basketball Champions League, with San Miguel picking up the winner's trophy in a Tenerife shirt. Rodrigo only plays 18.7 minutes per game this season, but he still has 5.3 assists per game, good for 10th in the league in the passing stats.

RASHEED SULAIMON



Date of birth: 09/03/1994
Position: guard
Height: 1.90m/6'3"
Club career: Greensboro Swarm (USA; 2016-17), JDA Dijon (FRA; 2017-18), Levallois Metropolitans (FRA; 2018-19), JDA Dijon (FRA; 2019-20)

Here's a simple clue to decipher Casademont Zaragoza's chances: If Rasheed Sulaimon plays well, so does the rest of the team. That's a rule that was also working during his days at Duke and at Maryland, and especially when he made the switch to Europe and became a part of a monster offense with JDA Dijon in France, winning the 2020 Leaders Cup MVP award. Sulaimon is a natural born leader, something which was evident back at the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup in 2013, when he was the one taking the big shots for USA, while playing with guys like Montrezl Harrell, Elfrid Payton, Marcus Smart, Justise Winslow, Aaron Gordon, Jahliil Okafor and others. This season, Sulaimon averages 10.7 points per game while shooting 39.5 percent from beyond the arc.

ALEX FONT



Date of birth: 11/03/1998
Position: guard
Height: 1.93m/6'4"
Club career: Barcelona (ESP; 2016-19), Brose Bamberg (GER; 2019), Obradoiro (ESP; 2019-20), Basquet Girona (ESP; 2020)

Alex Font was once one of Barcelona's hottest prospects, but he couldn't quite make it to the senior team and play regular rotation minutes. Instead, Font took an unlikely trip to Brose Bamberg, and quickly turned around to go back to Spain, this time finding luck with Obradoiro and appearing in 14 Liga Endesa games in 2019-20. Zaragoza made the call over the summer, and Font has been getting his shot here and there, both in the BCL and the ACB. Font is a crafty player with a nice-looking jumper, and he's crafty when he gets to the paint, with all sorts of trick shots to somehow get the ball on the backboard and through the rim. It would be a surprise if he played a major role at the Final 8, but once again, Zaragoza need him in the long run.

ELIAS HARRIS



Date of birth: 06/07/1989
Position: forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: BIS Baskets Speyer (GER; 2005-09), Los Angeles Lakers (USA; 2013), Brose Bamberg (GER; 2013-20), MHP Riesen Ludwigsburg (GER; 2020-21)

What a wonderful pickup Elias Harris has been! The German national team player has been reunited with Robin Benzing, teammates again after making their debuts at the FIBA EuroBasket 2009, and there was something divine about Harris signing with Zaragoza and a snowstorm happening on the same day in Spain. Harris scored in double figures in all six of his BCL games with Zaragoza, giving them 13.8 points while shooting 58 percent from the field and playing just over 21 minutes per game. If you need any kind of advice on healthy eating, call his number, he seems to be paying so much attention to his diet and workouts that we'll be seeing him at the BCL Final Four in 2031, too... He's always been a part of winning cultures, whether at Gonzaga or the LA Lakers or Brose Bamberg, Harris played his career out in such a way that it's hard to remember him being on the losing side. That's probably another reason why he fits in so perfectly with this Zaragoza squad.

PAVLE STOSIC



Date of birth: 18/01/2004
Position: power forward
Height: 2.02m/6'8"
Club career: Real Madrid (ESP; 2017-20)

Pavle Stosic is the youngest of all registered players for Casademont Zaragoza, still trying to find his role after making the switch from Real Madrid last year. He did play three minutes of this Basketball Champions League season, but they went by so fast he couldn't get on the scoresheet. Stosic comes from a basketball country, but not from a basketball town - he was born and raised in Nis, Serbia, becoming the second big time prospect of the place, after Stefan Jovic. He joined Real Madrid as a 13-year-old, basically staying in Madrid by himself right after the successful tryout back in 2017. He must be feeling like a grown up by now, having spent so much time away from his home at such a young age...

JACOB WILEY



Date of birth: 04/09/1994
Position: power forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Brooklyn Nets (USA; 2017-18), Long Island Nets (USA; 2017-18), MHP Riesen Ludwigsburg (GER; 2018), Adelaide 36ers (AUS; 2018-19), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2019, 2020), Panathinaikos (GRE; 2019-20)

If you watched Jacob Wiley while he was Vajli and wearing the red and yellow of North Macedonia during the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers, then you know what's going on. Wiley is all about energy, all about high flying dunk, blocks, and double-digit rebounding, which is what his stats suggest too, after playing just the Play-Offs phase of the BCL so far. Wiley has averaged 12.7 points, 6.7 rebounds and 1.2 blocks per game, giving the coaching staff a perfect option if they want to play him as a small-ball center. Being athletic doesn't begin to describe Wiley's physique - the fact that he was a 200, 400, 4x100 and 4x400 sprinter in college maybe paints a better picture of his capabilities at 2.03m/6'8"...





ERA NYMBURK TEAM PROFILE

STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

ERA Nymburk's current record for the season is 42 wins and 4 losses. Only one of those losses was in domestic competition but even still, their record in the Basketball Champions League is 9-3, the joint-best record this season with Lenovo Tenerife. This is a club that is slowly building their domestic dominance into a culture of consistently winning games in Europe as well. Oren Amiel is fresh from winning coach of the season and has managed to build a team that has even more firepower than the squad that reached their first Final 8 last season. Despite losing Jaromir

Bohacik, Nymburk managed to keep the likes of Hruban, Prewitt and Dalton, and banked their season on the development of Retin Obasohan and Jerrick Harding. It's a policy that has paid off, especially with the extra contributions from Lukas Palyza and Stephen Zimmerman. Nymburk head to Russia for Final 8 with ten players that have played more than 15 minutes per game and all ten made considerable contributions during the season so far. This roster has underrated depth and has been expertly rotated into a great rhythm by the outstanding Oren Amiel.



Last year Nymburk were powered by their defense and rebounding prowess. The same is true again this season. They rank second for Defensive Rating amongst Final 8 squads, conceding just 1.04 points per possession and first amongst Final 8 teams for Rebound Percentage, pulling down 48% of all available misses. One of the more intriguing elements to their league-best defense last season was the way it all started from the way they crashed the offensive glass. This season they have actually been less aggressive on the offensive boards, pulling down 28.7 percent of their own misses contrasted with the 34.5 percent last season. This year's squad is a much more potent offensive threat than last year. They have the third-ranked Offensive Rating, scoring 1.16 points per possession and also leading the league in points scored per game at 89.8. They scored more than 90 points in ten of their twelve games this season, no other team managed that feat more than five times.

Nymburk's shot map is one of the more distinct profiles amongst Final 8 teams. It is normal to find teams that are at their most efficient around the rim and in the paint. This is absolutely the case for Nymburk, where they shoot 70.3 percent at the rim but where they differ from most other teams at the Final 8 is in the midrange. Oren Amiel's squad have two very efficient spots on the left elbow and around the right low post, where they shoot 66.7 percent for both zones. They also have a noticeable lean to the right of the floor when it comes to efficiency. They shoot 44.7 percent and 41 percent from the right corner and right wing respectively. Where they are much more in line with other squads at Final 8 is terms of where they attempt most of their shots from. They take 22 percent from under the basket and a further 22 percent in the rest of the paint, combining for 44 percent of all their shot attempts in the painted area. The other area on the floor that sees a high ratio of their field goal attempts is the left wing where they attempt 13.9 percent of their shots.



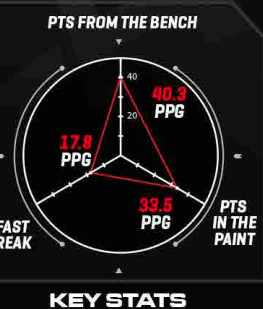
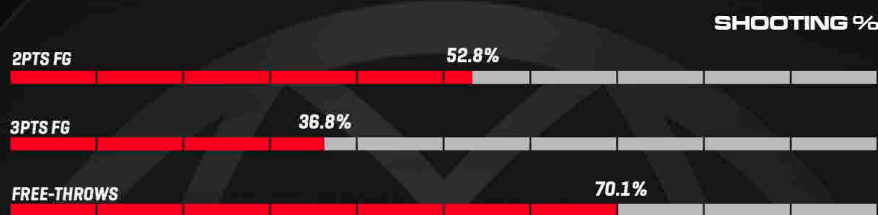
Things didn't start to plan in the Regular Season. They faced fellow Quarter-Finalists from last season JDA Dijon on opening night. They were soundly beaten 85-61 in Dijon. At that point it seemed the team chemistry needed some work. But after picking up the pieces, they were quick to right the wrongs with an impressive road win against Tofas Bursa. 19 points each for Hayden Dalton and Retin Obasohan led the scoring drive for Nymburk as they clocked the first of their 90-point games. That win marked the start of a four-game win streak for the perma-champs of Czech basketball. This was a run that culminated in one of their most dominant performances ever in the BCL. On the 6th of January JDA Dijon travelled to Prague to face a Nymburk squad they had already comfortably beaten. The team they faced back in November, was, by now, already a very different proposition. Ten players were on the scoreboard for Nymburk, led by 20 points and 6 assists for Retin Obasohan. On the defensive end, Nymburk held the French club to just 24 percent shooting overall and won the game 94-54. Whilst this win had sealed their

qualification to the Play-Offs, there was still a game left against Tofas to decide who would top the group. The outcome of that game was an uncharacteristic capitulation at home to Tofas. Even more uncharacteristically it was their defense that let them down as Tofas put a century on the board in a 97-103 win.

The start of the Play-Offs saw an unbeaten Bamberg arrive in Nymburk for Gameday 1. Omar Prewitt and Retin Obasohan did most of the damage on the offensive end with 21 points each. Then came the most dramatic game of the season for Nymburk at home to Dinamo Sassari. This was also a game that stated a firm case for Nymburk as a real threat to make a deep run in the Play-Offs this season. Early in the second quarter, the Italians took the lead. This was a lead that would stretch to 14 points and also a lead Sassari would hold for 30 minutes of the game. In fact, Nymburk trailed all the way from the second quarter until the final 2 seconds of the game, when they perfectly executed a baseline out of bounds play for Hayden Dalton to nail the dagger from the right



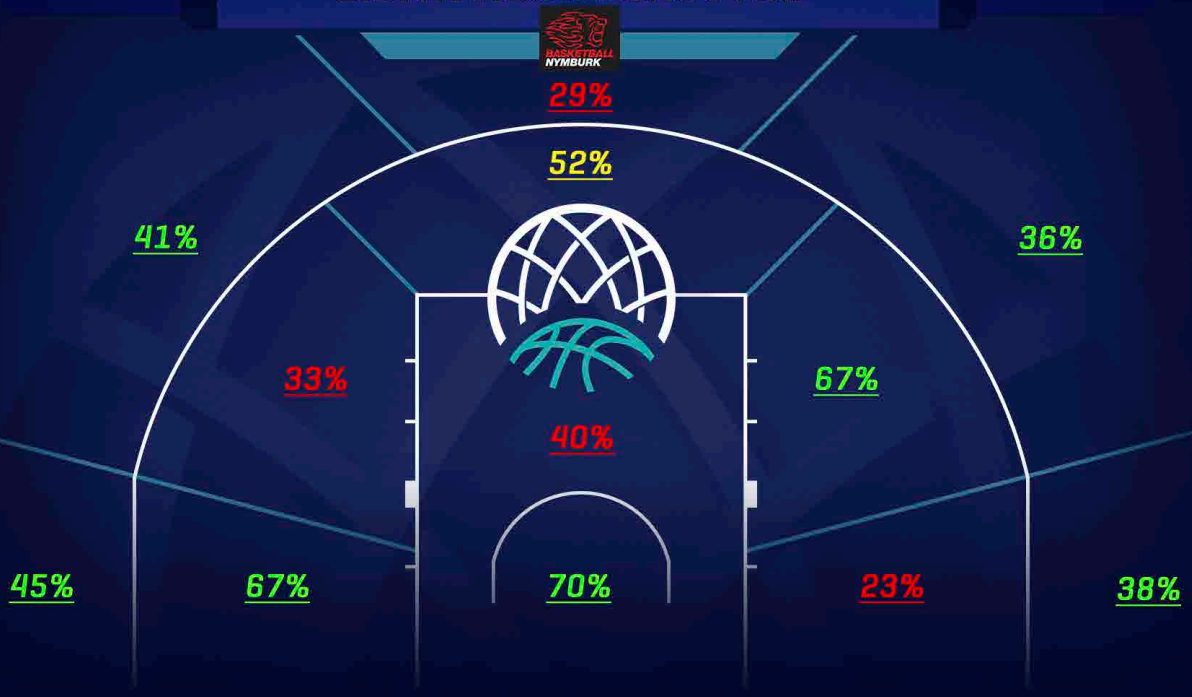
ERA
 NYMBURK





short corner and win the game on the buzzer. They went on to complete the sweep of wins against Sassari and Bamberg. The road win in Bamberg was also the game where Lukas Palyza came to life for Nymburk with 26 points, 19 of those points coming in the fourth quarter. Their only loss of the Round of 16 being a 19-point loss in Zaragoza. They were, however, able to repair that loss in the final game of the Round of 16. Another 90-point offensive performance gave Nymburk a 98-78 win at home against the Spaniards. Again, it was Omar Pre-witt coming up big for Nymburk with 25 points and Lukas Palyza continued his Play-Offs run with 18 points of his own. The next challenge for Nymburk is Pinar Karsiyaka at the Final 8. The Turkish club has previous winners of the BCL on the roster in Tony Taylor and Amath M'Baye and is also stacked with plenty of experience. They present a very strong test but one they are ready for. Two Quarter-Finals in two seasons is a clear sign of a club going from strength to strength, now it's time to test that strength again.

ERA NYMBURK SHOT MAP



OREN AMIEL



Date of birth: 19/12/1971
Playing career: Hapoel Galil Elion (ISR; 1993-99)
Coaching career: Hapoel Galil Elion (ISR; 2004-08), Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR; 2007-08), Hapoel Bank Yahav Jerusalem (ISR; 2013)

The reigning Coach of the Season is looking to win back-to-back titles in that category. Oren Amiel keeps on winning with ERA Nymburk, and their back-to-back Final 8 appearances are completely different in a way that nobody expected them to be there in 2020 and everybody expected them to make it back here in 2021. Amiel deserves a lot of credit, not only for calling the plays, but for quickly reshaping the roster and making Nymburk a contender again, despite the fact that they lost guys like Zach Hankins, Jaromir Bohacik, Deishaun Booker, Ivan Almeida... Amiel also enjoys the fact that the person next to him is somewhat of an authority, too. Assistant coach Aleksandar Sekulic is the current head coach of the Slovenian national team, making Nymburk's coaching staff a one-two punch like no other in the BCL, a tandem which has created the number one offensive team of the BCL (89.8ppg) and the number one rebounding team of the BCL (44.0rpg).

HAYDEN DALTON



Date of birth: 20/06/1996
Position: forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Bakken Bears (DEN; 2018-19)

Being one of seven children in a family gives you that survival instinct. Hayden Dalton is not just surviving, he is thriving in his second season with the Czech champs, getting 11.5 points, shooting 45.3 percent from three-point range, picking up 7.2 rebounds, with 2.4 assists and 1.4 steals in every Basketball Champions League game this season. The fact that ERA Nymburk were able to hold on to the high-flying, endless-range forward for Season Two was a huge surprise, but with his continued growth, having him stick around for Season Three seems almost impossible. Don't look elsewhere, Hayden Dalton could be the next big thing in European basketball, and even wider. The biggest shot of the season came in the game against Dinamo Sassari, Dalton's long two at the buzzer won the game for ERA Nymburk and steered their season toward the Final 8.

VOJTECH HRUBAN

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 29/08/1989
Position: forward
Height: 2.02m/6'8"
Club career: Slavia Praha (CZE; 2006-11), Benesov (CZE; 2011-12)

The real MVP of the Basketball Champions League, over the course of the first five years of the competition. Vojtech Hruban used all his minutes with ERA Nymburk in BCL to put himself on the map, and his brilliant performances last season saw him earn Star Lineup recognition, which was unheard of just a few years ago. But thanks to seeing international opponents week in, week out, Hruban became the beast he now is, a man averaging 13.4 points, 3.9 rebounds and 2.6 assists while barely breaking a sweat. Vojtech had his best game of the season against JDA Dijon when he scored 26 points in 26 minutes, and found double figures in six other games this season, slightly putting his foot up and away from the gas pedal, allowing other teammates to grow as the season progressed. But now that the Final 8 has arrived, expect coach Oren Amiel to run a bunch of plays for a person one unnamed opponent described with a masterful sentence: "That guy is the Czech Klay Thompson. Never stops moving, always ready to destroy you on the catch-and-shoot." Vojta is now a long time member of the national team, and he'll be looking forward not only to this Final 8, but also to the 2021-22 season, as it serves like a warm up for arguably the biggest of all events in Czech basketball history - they will host one of the groups of the FIBA EuroBasket 2022, a perfect way for an entire generation of Hruban, Jaromir Bohacik, Jan Vesely and of course Tomas Satoransky to go on one last dance towards the elimination rounds. Make no mistake about it, Hruban wants to arrive there as a BCL champion.

PETR BENDA



Date of birth: 25/03/1982
Position: center
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Jihlava (CZE; 2000-01), Brno (CZE; 2001-07)

Death, taxes, and Petr Benda playing for ERA Nymburk. He's 39 already, in his 14th straight season with the perennial Czech champs, and he still looks and plays the same way as in 2007, when he first joined the team. Benda averaged 21.8 minutes per game this season, enough to score 6.8 points on 41.9 percent from beyond the arc, which is about 6.8 points and 41.9 percent better than average 39 year olds put up every single week. Benda has been around for so long that he was in his fourth season as a pro when his current teammate Martin Studnický was born... Loves Barry White, comedies, pasta and water. And winning trophies, of course.

MARTIN KRIZ



Date of birth: 17/06/1993
Position: center
Height: 2.00m/6'7"
Club career: USK Praha (CZE; 2009-10), ERA Nymburk (CZE; 2010-12), Kolin (CZE; 2012-13)

Martin Kriz's knee injury is so severe he won't be able to help the team at this event. That doesn't change the fact that he deserves a whole lot of credit for Nymburk being here, with 6.4 points and 4.7 rebounds in less than 19 minutes per game, doing exactly what needs to be done in order to win the games - and the championships. Martin is still in his mid 20s, which sounds crazy when you consider that this was his TENTH season with Nymburk. A prolific rebounder, he almost has a higher figure in rebounds than in points when it comes to career-highs in the Czech League: 20 points - 17 boards... Kriz is expected to be back in six months' time, meaning he's not only missing this Final 8, but also the potential of playing the Olympic Games in Tokyo if Czech Republic book a ticket to get there.

PETR SAFARCİK



Date of birth: 13/05/1994
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.93m/6'4"
Club career: Slezska Ostrava (CZE; 2009-11), USK Praha (CZE; 2011-17), Kolin (CZE; 2017-19)

Steady growth was the plan for Petr Safarcik when ERA Nymburk brought him in from Kolin in 2019, but this hasn't been the best of all seasons for the shooting guard. He only appeared in four Basketball Champions League games this season, scoring 8 of his 11 points against Dinamo Sassari, while playing a total of 52 minutes. Safarcik has been a valuable piece for Nymburk, he's not the alpha male scoring 30+ points anymore, like he did with Kolin in 2018-19, but he is now a part of a winning culture, picking up silverware along the way. Doesn't sound like a bad lifestyle, especially not when you've got a chance to win an international trophy like this one.

STEPHEN ZIMMERMAN



Date of birth: 09/09/1996
Position: center
Height: 2.11m/6'11"
Club career: Orlando Magic (USA; 2016-17), Erie BayHawks (USA; 2016-17), South Bay Lakers (USA; 2017-18), Westchester Knicks (USA; 2018-19), Telekom Baskets Bonn (GER; 2019-20)

Just six or seven years ago, Stephen Zimmerman was the best thing happening in Las Vegas, Nevada. He excelled at high school level, played a fabulous season with the UNLV Runnin' Rebels in the NCAA before deciding to do what's most popular in Las Vegas and gamble, on himself. He was drafted by the Orlando Magic, but could not find a regular spot on the roster, which forced him to move around the NBA G League, and ultimately got him to this side of the pond. Zimmerman is a big body down low, and ERA Nymburk were quick to call his number when they found out Zach Hankins wasn't returning for the 2020-21 season. Stephen has looked good all season long, with the game against JDA Dijon showcasing his talents: 12 points on 5-of-6 shooting, with 5 blocks in just 22 minutes of action.

JERRICK HARDING



Date of birth: 13/04/1998
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.85m/6'1"
Club career: Weber State (USA; 2016-20)

There are some players who just feel like a constant highlight reel. Jerrick Harding can score in so many ways, it's no wonder he broke Damian Lillard's and Jeremy Senglin's records at Weber State, and his 28-point outing against Dinamo Sassari caught the attention of the entire continent, because lefty guards who can create their own shot like that don't come around very often. It seemed that Harding's transition to the next level with ERA Nymburk would be a slow one, especially after his scoreless game against Tofas Bursa, but the Play-Offs proved he belongs here. And don't underestimate his all-round effect, either. Brose Bamberg learned that the hard way, he destroyed them with 19 points, 6 assists and 5 rebounds to put the finishing touches on the painting called Nymburk To Final 8.

ROSTISLAV JIRAK



Date of birth: 28/03/2000
Position: point guard
Height: 1.80m/5'11"
Club career: Lokomotiva Plzen (CZE; 2016), Kralovsti Sokoli (CZE; 2019-20), Basketbal Polabi (CZE; 2019-20)

It's been a season of learning for the youngster. Rostislav Jirak is still somewhat of a mystery to a wider audience, he is yet to play against teams not named Keravnos in the Basketball Champions League - and even in those two matchups, he only got four minutes of playing time. Jirak is a relatively new guy in Nymburk, just enjoying the ride at the moment, daydreaming about the future when he could become the man with the ball in his hands, and the next in line of Czech players who raised their game once they joined the domestic champs.

LUBOS KOVAR



Date of birth: 10/11/2000
Position: center
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Lokomotiva Plzen (CZE; 2016), Dekstone Turi Svitavy (CZE; 2017-20), Basketbal Polabi (CZE; 2019-20)

Compared to other younger guys in the locker room, Lubos Kovar has seen regular action in all competitions. But his mark is not as significant yet, scoring a total of 16 points in 10 games played. He is hoping he'll get even more attention soon in Nymburk, if for no other reason, just to avoid taking the two-hour long train ride between Svitavy and Nymburk every day, which was the game plan for him while trying to play two leagues at the same time. Kovar could be the next big thing in Czech basketball, a modern type big guy who can shoot, a player who averaged 20.9 points and 14.2 rebounds in the U19 Czech League last season. Cut those averages in half and maintain it for a couple of seasons, and we can call this a complete success story.

OMAR PREWITT



Date of birth: 24/09/1994
Position: small forward
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: Šiauliai (LTU; 2017), Aris (GRE; 2017-18), Legia Warszawa (POL; 2018-19), Teksut Bandirma (TUR; 2019-20)

Look no further, this is the most fun player on the ERA Nymburk roster. Omar Prewitt was known as a guy who has a hard time staying in one place for longer than a season, and this could be the scenario with Nymburk, too - but only because he became so dominant and needs a new challenge. Prewitt went north of 20 points four times in this BCL season, Prewitt grabbed 5 or more rebounds in eight BCL games, Prewitt dished out 3 or more assists in eight BCL games, including the 25-point, 9-assist outburst against Casademont Zaragoza to end the Play-Offs. The only thing missing to make this the most memorable season ever is his moustache and/or the long hair. Those two went so well with his motto: "Life's good."

FRANTISEK RYLICH



Date of birth: 31/03/2002
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.90m/6'3"
Club career: -

Being a dominant force in the domestic championship allows Nymburk to plan long term and test out new players at a young age. That's where Frantisek Rylich comes in, another guard, another youngster, another player who has seen action in eight Basketball Champions League games this season, albeit with a minimal role and never playing for more than five minutes. Rylich is seeing more action in the Czech League, which allowed him to get his first double digit game of his career, scoring 11 points against Decin in December. He got to 11 points once more in late January, this time against Ostrava. You can already sense where Nymburk are going with him in four stages: Minutes in the Czech League will lead to a bigger role in the Czech League will lead to more minutes in the BCL will lead to a bigger role in the BCL. Sounds perfect when you've got a talented 19-year-old on your hands.

JAKUB TUMA



Date of birth: 09/09/1998
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.92m/6'4"
Club career: USK Praha (CZE; 2014-19)

Don't look now, but Jakub Tuma's transition from a leader of USK Praha to a fine role player in this ERA Nymburk squad seems to be going by perfectly. Tuma is a shooting guard who got 16.5 minutes per game in the Basketball Champions League this season, and he's easy to spot on the court with his jersey number 98 and a sweet looking stroke which allowed him to set his season-high at 13 points against Dinamo Sassari. He's been even more active in the Czech League, where he's shooting 23-of-59 from beyond the arc for the season. Not too bad for a 22-year-old role player who will only get better.

MARTIN STUDNICKY



Date of birth: 06/04/2004
Position: guard
Height: 2.04m/6'8"
Club career: -

The youngest of all the players in ERA Nymburk's preliminary roster, Martin Studnický is a 17-year-old who is a token guy for Nymburk's systematic work. Studnický started with the U12 team, and made it all the way to the first team, enjoying his quest towards professional basketball from the front row. His profile remains a mystery for now, especially on the international stage, but if Nymburk want him on their list for the second straight Final Eight, there is no doubt this will be a steppingstone for a long and successful career with the perennial Czech champs.

RETIN OBASOHAN



Date of birth: 06/07/1993
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Club career: Sidigas Avellino (ITA; 2016-17), Rockets Gotha (GER; 2017-18), Northern Arizona Suns (USA; 2018-19), Brose Bamberg (GER; 2019-20)

Born in Belgium, family from Nigeria, played college basketball in the United States, played professionally in Italy, Germany, USA and the Czech Republic. Retin Obasohan has been around, but he has never been as dominant as nowadays, averaging 14.4 points, 5.4 assists, 4.1 rebounds and 1.8 steals - oh, and probably somewhere around 10 highlight plays every single time steps on the basketball court. Obasohan is a bolt of energy, something we have known since we saw him playing the inaugural Basketball Champions League season with Sidigas Avellino, and he's had his moments with Brose Bamberg, too. But this Nymburk version of Obasohan is elite. He also managed to translate his impressive form to the national team, taking Belgium to the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 while averaging 19.7 points per game for coach Dario Gjergja - fifth best mark in all of FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers.

LUKAS PALYZA



Date of birth: 10/11/1989
Position: small forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: NH Ostrava (CZE; 2010-11), Nymburk (CZE; 2011-14), Bayreuth (GER; 2014-15), Prostějov (CZE; 2015-16), Decin (CZE; 2016-17), GTK Gliwice (POL; 2017-18), Olomoucko (CZE; 2018-20)

So, Vojtech Hruban was having a slower Play-Offs. How come ERA Nymburk managed to survive it so easily? Well, because this guy was unconscious. Lukas Palyza scored a total of 32 points in his first five Basketball Champions League games, but then started hitting everything and put up 26 points in 25 minutes against Brose Bamberg in the Play-Offs. He never looked back, reaching double digits in the remaining three games, becoming another huge weapon in an already loaded arsenal for coach Oren Amiel. The only thing he needs to pay more attention to: turnovers. He had 16 of them in the BCL so far, 1.8 per game, way too much for someone playing less than 20 minutes per game. Then again, if he's hitting all the shots he hit in the last four games, he can afford to lose three balls per game - it would still be less turnovers than three-pointers for Lukas in that stanza.

HAPOEL UNET-CREDIT HOLON TEAM PROFILE

MAKE SOME SPACE AT THE TOP.

The floodgates are opening for Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon in the Basketball Champions League. After failing to make it out of the Regular Season in their previous seasons - twice due to heartbreak on the final game of the group stages - they have not only made it to the Play-Offs but also romped all the way to the Final 8. Although reaching the Semi-Final of the FIBA Europe Cup in 2018 must be considered, the fact that Holon topped their group in the Regular Season and the Round of 16, means this season already has to go down as the club's best in European competition.

Founded in 1947 and one of the original founders of the top division in Israel, Holon originally started out playing in red and white. It was only after a fan of the Lakers donated some purple and gold kit that Holon became the Lakers of Israel. In 2008, P.J. Tucker won the MVP award whilst guiding the club to their only league championship to date. They are twice winners of the Israeli State Cup in 2009 and 2018. And also twice winners of the League Cup in 2011 and 2020.



Head Coach Stefanos Dedas is now in his second season at the club and has been responsible for this dramatic change in fortunes but also for a dramatic change in playing style. This season's Holon squad earns the moniker of the Lakers of Israel perhaps more than any in the club's recent history. The 5-Out spacing of the offense and determination to create their shots from relentless drive-and-kick basketball would look very much at home on an NBA team. The outcome is that only Bamberg (11.2) made more than Holon's 10.8 3-pointers per game in the Play-Offs. The lasting images of Holon basketball in these last two seasons under Dedas would be sharp ball movement created by dribble penetration and multiple extra passes round the perimeter. Their excellent spacing is so good at punishing rotating defenders. Yet despite the eye-catching ball movement, Holon have generated only 61.2 percent of their made field goals from an assist

this season, a number that ranks them seventh out of eight at this year's Final 8. That doesn't, however, mean they haven't created efficient shots. They score a joint-highest 1.4 points per shot overall, largely thanks to the ability of C.J. Harris, Tyrus McGee, and Guy Pnini to create their own shots off the bounce.

Holon's most efficient scoring areas are directly under the basket where they score 63.2 percent of their shots, from the right corner where they make 50 percent, and in the total painted area where they shoot 55%. Their most used scoring areas are in the paint, where 23.9 percent of all their shots are attempted, and the corners where they attempt 15.9 percent and 15.1 percent of their shots respectively. Perhaps the most telling stat in terms of Holon's unique offensive style is that 51 percent of all their field goal attempts are from behind the 3-point line, this is considerably more than any other Final 8 team. Their best area for a



combination of volume and efficiency is the right corner 3-ball which generates 1.5 points per shot for Stefanos Dedas' Holon team.

The journey of this extraordinary season for Holon, started with what seemed like a very ordinary result, as AEK proved too strong in Athens with a 100-96 win. The lone bright spot - and a strong hint to the season ahead - was the 27 points from C.J Harris. The American Shooting Guard then followed that up with 25 points in a win over Cholet in Israel but when Minsk rolled out of Holon with 10-point win on the next BCL gameday, things weren't looking optimistic for Dedas and Holon. What followed was undoubtedly the turning point in their season. Holon travelled to Minsk and thanks to 22 points from Chris Johnson and 18 from C.J. Harris, they managed to win on the road in Belarus. They then found a way to win against AEK at home and did so without their top-scorer Harris. 18 points from McGee, 16 from Chris Johnson, and 12 points each for Max De Zeeuw and Isaiah Miles were the highlights in a complete team effort.

Although they did complete the double over Cholet in the final game of the Regular Season and topped the group, those back-to-back wins on the road in Minsk and at home to AEK, really started to build the expectation that this Holon squad could do something special this season.

The Play-Offs have been all about late-game drama and clutch plays thus far. Three of their six games in the Round of 16 were decided by under 3 points. The first game of the Play-Offs was a 2-point win in Brindisi, with Chris Johnson and C.J. Harris contributing 17 points each. A trademark Guy Pnini dagger from deep gave Holon a 1-point lead with 18 seconds left in the game. That was a lead they wouldn't relinquish. The next 3-point game was the return leg of a doubleheader against Pinar Karsiyaka in Turkey. It was a shock in more ways than one. With 6 seconds to go Frederic Bourdillon looked to have sealed the game for Holon, by making both free throws to give Holon a 3-point lead. What followed was a sequence you may see only once in a lifetime of watching professional basketball.



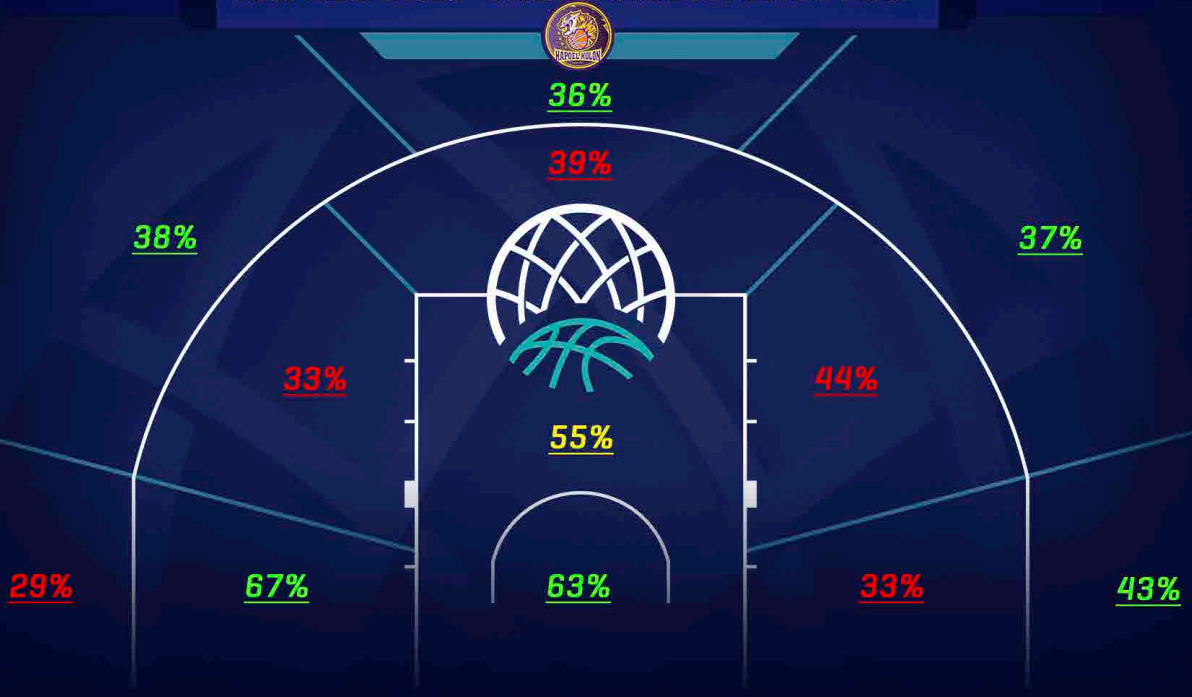
**HAPOEL
 UNET-CREDIT
 HOLON**





Sek Henry was fouled and sent to the line with 4 seconds left in the game and after missing the first, he intentionally missed the second, pulled his own rebound, retreated to the 3-point line and knocked down a game-tying shot. That in itself is enough drama for one game but the shot fell with under a second left on the clock and a timeout left for Holon to plan a winner. Instead, a whistle for a violation before the ball was even inbounded offered McGee a chance to win the game from the line. It was a chance that he was never going to miss. At this point, Holon already had enough incredible images to create one of those emotional montages that we often see at the end of a tournament. But they weren't done. In the next game, those crazy fans in Holon were given the kind of drama they had been waiting so long to get back in the arena to witness. With 1.5 seconds on the clock and the game on the line, Guy Pnini inbounded the ball to Max De Zeeuw and the big Belgian permanently wrote his name into the story of Holon Basketball Club.

HAPOEL UNET-CREDIT HOLON SHOT MAP



STEFANOS DEDAS



Date of birth: 10/05/1982
Coaching career: PAOK (assistant, GRE; 2001-04), MENT (assistant, GRE; 2004), MENT (GRE; 2004-05), Iraklis (assistant, GRE; 2005-06), Rethymno (assistant, GRE; 2006-07), OFI Crete (GRE; 2007-09), Slovenia (assistant, national team; 2009), Aris (assistant, GRE; 2009-11), Spartak Saint Petersburg (assistant, RUS; 2011-13), Gaziantep (assistant, TUR; 2013-15), Slovenia (assistant, national team; 2014-16), Gaziantep (TUR; 2015-17), Bahcesehir Koleji (TUR; 2017-19)

Coach of the Season frontrunner? Could be. Stefanos Dedas has been nothing but amazing for Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon, all done while playing amusing basketball, keeping the fans happy in purple and gold. Dedas will turn 39 the day after the Final in Nizhny Novgorod, so it's amazing that his coaching career is 20 years long. He started as a teenager with PAOK, became a head coach for the first time when he was 22, and followed Jure Zdovc all over Europe, including the Slovenian national team. His breaking point came in 2015, as Zdovc joined AEK and Dedas remained in Gaziantep, but got a promotion from an assistant to the head coaching role. It started a highly successful career, evident by two year stays in both Gaziantep and Bahcesehir, and he's in year two at Holon, too. It's a match made in heaven, as Dedas said it himself: "Holon covers my weaknesses and points out my strengths."

WILLY WORKMAN

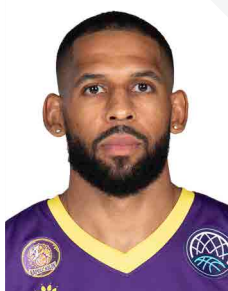


Date of birth: 14/03/1990
Position: small forward
Height: 1.98m/6'6"
Club career: Hapoel Galil Elyon (ISR; 2013-14), Hapoel Tel Aviv (ISR; 2014-15), Maccabi Ashdod (ISR; 2015-16), Maccabi Haifa (ISR; 2016-20)

It's only fitting that the hardest working player on the team is called Workman. Willy is all about energy and timing on the floor, not a stranger to collecting more rebounds than points in a game, while also being able to distribute the ball. Workman does shoot with his left, but his finishing around the rim is impressive with both hands, and his athleticism can lead to multiple blocks in a game - just ask Tsmoki-Minsk, he had 3 blocks in 22 minutes against the Belarus champs. Workman holds dual American-Israeli citizenship. He grew up in Massachusetts, USA, before moving to Israel to start his professional career eight years ago. Making a living while playing basketball was a dream for Workman, who rejected a career in law to make it in sports. He tried some legal internships, but claims he had no passion for it. At least not the kind of passion which made him a fan favorite in Israel.

C.J. HARRIS

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 19/02/1991
Position: guard
Height: 1.91m/6'3"
Club career: MHP Riesen Ludwigsburg (GER; 2013-14), ratiopharm Ulm (GER; 2014-15), VEF Riga (LAT; 2015), Rosa Radom (POL; 2015-16), Sakarya BB (TUR; 2016-18), EB Pau-Lacq-Orthez (FRA; 2018-19), Turk Telekom (TUR; 2020)

It's hard to imagine a more dominant start to the season than the one C.J. Harris had with Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon. The guard from Winston-Salem, North Carolina put up 52 points in his first two games in the Basketball Champions League this season, and the trend continued throughout - Harris finished in double digit scoring in all 11 of games in this competition, with a 27-point mark against AEK being his season-high. C.J. also averages 4.3 assists per game, so it's easy to see why he was the leader of the MVP Race heading into the Final 8. Harris was one of the most influential players in the history of Wake Forest program, and his professional career saw him dominate in Germany, Latvia, Poland, Turkey and France. But the connection with Holon seems to be the one he was waiting for. The reward came in a contract renewal for the guard, who will stay in Holon at least until 2022. Harris can destroy you in a number of ways, but his ability to create his own shot off the dribble is what pleases the eye the most. Even if you are not a Holon fan, Harris' stepbacks and split-the-double moves will keep you on the edge of your seat. Fun fact about him: His real name is Calvin Harris, just like the world-famous DJ. So if he's Outside, even if defenses Feel So Close, C.J. will just say "This Is What You Came For" to us, and "We Found Love" to all the Holon fans.

CHRIS JOHNSON



Date of birth: 29/04/1990
Position: forward
Height: 1.98m/6'6"
Club career: Rio Grande Valley Vipers (USA; 2012-14, 2014-15, 2016-17), Memphis Grizzlies (USA; 2013), Boston Celtics (USA; 2014), Philadelphia 76ers (USA; 2014), Utah Jazz (USA; 2015, 2015-16), Milwaukee Bucks (USA; 2015), BCM Gravelines-Dunkerque (FRA; 2017-18), Hapoel Jerusalem (ISR; 2018-19), JL Bourg (FRA; 2019-20)

Leading the team in minutes played while being available for all 12 games of the season so far makes Chris Johnson a reliable leader for coach Dedas. Johnson played 147 NBA games before making the trip overseas to start a new chapter in his career in France and Israel, and his book seems to be heading in the right direction. Chris is one of the better cutters in the business, a perfect fit for Holon's 5-out offense, and his left hand is a bit more reliable from the outside in the Israeli League than in BCL - he's up to 35 percent from deep in Israel, compared to 29 percent in the Basketball Champions League. Johnson does his part on the defensive end too. He is in the Top 3 in steals per game in the Israeli League, and had multiple steals in four BCL games this season.

TAL ZACH



Date of birth: 07/11/1997
Position: power forward
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon (ISR; 2016-18), Elitzur Ironi Ashkelon (ISR; 2018-19), Hapoel Ramat Gan Givataim (ISR; 2019-20)

Another one with the name to describe him best. Tal Zach is the tallest player on this roster, flirting with seven feet in height and wingspan. Zach was brought up through Holon's system and saw his first minutes with the senior team five years ago, but he is yet to book a regular spot in coach Dedas' rotation system. Zach loves the corner three, with guys like Guy Pnini as his teammates and a safe environment as Holon to grow up in, Tal is given a wonderful opportunity of making a name for himself. Maybe not at this Final 8 or in this season, but he's still only 23. Time is on his side, for sure.

FREDERIC BOURDILLON



Date of birth: 16/03/1991
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.93m/6'4"
Club career: Antibes (FRA; 2009-10, 2014-17), Elan Chalon (FRA; 2010-11), Etoile Charleville-Mezieres (FRA; 2011-13), Rueil (FRA; 2013-14), Maccabi Haifa (ISR; 2017-18), Hapoel Eilat (ISR; 2018-19), Maccabi Rishon LeZion (ISR; 2019-20), Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR; 2020)

Perhaps the most important part of Fred's career is not listed up here. Bourdillon grew up playing with INSEP, a French academy which brought up so many NBA players and a number of French national team members, as well. Bourdillon was a fine prospect in his youth days, sharing the locker room in the U16 and U18 teams with Evan Fournier, Leo Westermann, Joffrey Lauvergne and others, and he found home in Israel for the past four years. His outside shot has been surprisingly off in the Basketball Champions League, holding him to 5-of-29 shooting from beyond the arc, but this is a guy you don't want to leave open. Bourdillon has been shooting between 34 and 40 percent from deep over the course of last three seasons in the Israeli League, which is what got him a chance to sign with Maccabi Tel Aviv before joining Holon.

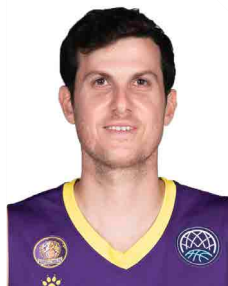
ODED BRANDWEIN



Date of birth: 15/02/1988
Position: point guard
Height: 1.79m/5'10"
Club career: Bnei Hasharon (ISR; 2006-07), Elitzur Ramla (ISR; 2007-08, 2009-10), Maccabi Hod HaSharon (ISR; 2008-09), Hapoel Afula (ISR; 2010), Elitzur Yavne (ISR; 2010-11), Kotwica Kolobrzeg (POL; 2011-12), Czarni Slupsk (POL; 2012-13), AZS Koszalin (POL; 2013-14), Hapoel Gilboa Galil (ISR; 2014-15), Ironi Nahariya (ISR; 2015-16), Hapoel Tel Aviv (ISR; 2016-17), Maccabi Rishon LeZion (ISR; 2017-18), Maccabi Haifa (ISR; 2018), Ironi Nes Ziona (ISR; 2018-19), Maccabi Ashdod (ISR; 2019-20)

Dual citizenships are a thing for Holon. Enter stage, Oded Brandwein. The experienced point guard holds Israeli and Polish passports, and if you look at his career path it's easy to see how that happened. Brandwein has bounced around various teams in both his Israeli and Polish parts of career, never sticking to the same team for longer than a season, with the exception of Elitzur Ramla early on in his basketball journey. Brandwein has seen limited minutes in the Basketball Champions League this season, picking up 18 of them in five games, scoring all six of his points against Tofas Bursa in the Play-Offs. Don't expect him to be the closer for Holon, but expect him to be ready if and when he needs to give Tyrus McGee, C.J. Harris and others a few minutes to rest.

GUY PNINI



Date of birth: 04/09/1983
Position: small forward
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: Maccabi Ra'anana (ISR; 2001-02), Bnei Hasharon (ISR; 2002-06), Hapoel Jerusalem (ISR; 2006-08), FMP (SRB; 2008-09), Keravnos (CYP; 2009), Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR; 2009-17)

An everlasting character, Guy Pnini has captained his first team way back in 2004, and was chosen to the All Israeli League Team 15 years ago. His rise was obvious to other Israeli teams, he signed with Hapoel Jerusalem, before being picked up by Maccabi Tel Aviv, causing a dispute between the two rivals, forcing him to spend a year outside of Israel. He won the EuroLeague with Maccabi in 2014, claimed three domestic league titles, and been one of the most decorated Cup winners worldwide, becoming the first player to win the Israeli Cup with three different teams. Pnini won a total of 11 Cups. His clutch gene helped Holon too, a pair of triples were good enough to win the games on the road against Brindisi and Karsiyaka, and it was his assist to Maxime De Zeeuw that sent Holon to the Final 8, too.

MAXIME DE ZEEUW



Date of birth: 26/04/1987
Position: power forward
Height: 2.04m/6'8"
Club career: Brussels (BEL; 2004-05), Verviers-Pepinster (BEL; 2005-10, 2011-12), Optima Gent (BEL; 2010-11), Antwerp Giants (BEL; 2012-14), Virtus Roma (ITA; 2014-15), CEZ Nymburk (CZE; 2015-16), EWE Baskets Oldenburg (GER; 2016-18), Obradoiro (ESP; 2018-20)

You don't usually find amazing players in November, and even if you do, they aren't always the safest of bets to be a great fit with the rest of the team. But somehow, the combination of Maxime De Zeeuw and Holon became a reality in November 2020 and turned out to be a perfect one. De Zeeuw can spread the floor with his shooting and has enough power to join the fight on the inside, as well, which is why he managed to put together a 21-point game against Cholet. However, De Zeeuw is still finding his range in the Basketball Champions League, shooting just 9-of-40 from deep and an abysmal 7-of-20 from the free throw line this season. But don't think about hack-a-Max yet, he's shooting 43.5 percent from 3PTS and 83.3 percent from the charity stripe in Israel. In case basketball is not a good topic, try talking to Maxime about Call of Duty or Leo Messi and Barcelona - he's a big fan.

AVIEL NEEMAN ZEDEK



Date of birth: 17/12/1998
Position: guard
Height: 1.80m/5'11"
Club career: Maccabi Sderot (ISR; 2019-20)

Being patriotic is an understatement when it comes to Aviel Neeman Zedek. Just check his social media profiles, full of beautiful writing about his colleagues from army or his role models, such as late Gal Besson, a former Hapoel Holon player himself. Aviel is just starting his professional career and rarely seeing minutes in a highly ambitious Holon side, but every time he's on the floor, his teammates become his biggest fans, cheering him on no matter what the score or situation is. Playing at the Final 8 would mean he's setting season-highs no matter what - he only played a single minute so far this season, against Tofas in the Play-Offs, missing his only shot attempt.

OFEK FOGLEMAN



Date of birth: 13/07/2002
Position: guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Club career: Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon (ISR; 2020)

The future looks bright, both for Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon and Ofek Fogleman, their youngest team member, who will turn 19 in July. Fogleman is a guard, but this Final 8 comes a bit too soon to make him an impactful member of the team on the court, since he has seen only a single minute of BCL action and four minutes of Israeli League all season long. But learning from guys like Tyrus McGee, C.J. Harris, Guy Pnini is an opportunity that not a lot of players get to experience. Fogleman will try and make it count as soon as he cracks rotation minutes in Holon's long-term plans.

TYRUS MCGEE



Date of birth: 14/03/1991
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.88m/6'2"
Club career: Breogan (ESP; 2013-14), Eisbaren Bremerhaven (GER; 2014-15), Orlandina (ITA; 2015), Vanoli Cremona (ITA; 2015-16), Umana Reyer Venezia (ITA; 2016-17), Pistoia 2000 (ITA; 2017-18), Afyon Belediye (TUR; 2018), Dinamo Sassari (ITA; 2019), EB Pau-Lacq-Orthez (FRA; 2019-20)

C.J. Harris may be the most valuable player of the entire league, but Tyrus McGee is arguably the most important player on this roster. McGee brings so much energy to the floor that it becomes contagious, no matter which team he's on, and he does have BCL Final Four experience to talk about in the locker room. McGee is one of four players in this Final 8 who were a part of the first ever Basketball Champions League Final Four, back in 2017, when he finished fourth with Umana Reyer Venezia. He won the FIBA Europe Cup with Dinamo Sassari in 2019, and has been on a tear after his Opt game against Tsmoki-Minsk early on in the Regular Season. Since then, McGee is averaging 14.9 points per game for Holon in BCL. It still remains a mystery how he managed to get lower case letters in his last name on the back of jersey, he's the only player to do it on this team.

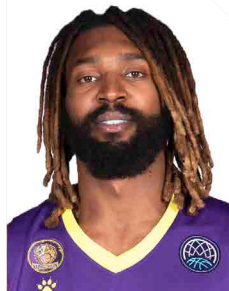
ISAIAH MILES



Date of birth: 09/06/1994
Position: small forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: JDA Dijon (FRA; 2016-17), Usak Sportif (TUR; 2017-18), Limoges CSP (FRA; 2018-19), Delaware Blue Coats (USA; 2019-20), Cholet (FRA; 2020)

The biggest nerd among basketball players, and the biggest basketball player among nerds, probably. It's not derogatory, Miles said it himself, his joy for comics was often times seen as unusual among his basketball peers, but he doesn't care - his entire body is covered with tattoos of comic book heroes, and he said he watches the Dark Knight 20 times a year. It's an easy transition to just go and write that he plays a role of a superhero for Holon too, averaging 14.4 points per game, while shooting 52.1 percent from beyond the arc - on six attempts per game, too! His best game of the season came in the Israeli League, as he sent Nahariya packing with 31 points in 31 minutes. Don't expect him to dish out a lot of assists, but expect a lot of assists to be completed by his hot shooting.

RICHARD HOWELL



Date of birth: 26/09/1990
Position: center
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Idaho Stampede (USA; 2013-14), Talk 'N Text Tropang Texters (PHI; 2014, 2015), Juvecaserta Basket (ITA; 2014), Austin Spurs (USA; 2015), Ironi Nahariya (ISR; 2015-16), Hapoel Tel Aviv (ISR; 2016-17, 2018-19), Hapoel Jerusalem (ISR; 2017-18), Phoenix Pulse Fuel Masters (PHI; 2019)

Rich Howell is a legend in Israel thanks to his "big guard" mentality on the court, and the fact that he represented Israel at the FIBA EuroBasket 2017. Howell averaged 17.8 points, 5.8 rebounds and 3.3 steals per game at the summit, and he was even more productive in 2019 when he put up 22.7 points, 16.6 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game for the Fuel Masters, making Hapoel Holon interested and signing a deal with the third Hapoel of his career. Howell played in two BCL games and four Israeli League games this season, but his experience and charisma certainly helped shape this team.

YOGEV OHAYON



Date of birth: 24/04/1987
Position: guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Club career: Hapoel Galil Elyon (ISR; 2004-08), Ironi Nahariya (ISR; 2008-09), Hapoel Jerusalem (ISR; 2009-11), Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR; 2011-17), Hapoel Jerusalem (ISR; 2017-19)

Hard to find a more influential point guard over the course of late 2000s and early 2010s than Yogev Ohayon. He won the EuroLeague with Maccabi Tel Aviv, was the MVP of the Israeli League Finals in 2012, claimed seven Israeli Cups and led the league in steals, proving over and over how his basketball IQ helped him stay relevant for almost 20 years in Israeli basketball. Ohayon only played a single game in the BCL this season, but his 3000+ career points in Israeli League deserve all the respect in the world. With the way he approached the autumn of his career, it wouldn't be a surprise to see Ohayon become a basketball coach once he decides to end his playing days.

MICHAEL JENKINS



Date of birth: 06/09/1986
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.91m/6'3"
Club career: Albany Patroons (USA; 2008), Buducnost Podgorica (MNE; 2009), Tigers Tubingen (GER; 2009-10), Liege (BEL; 2010-11), Optima Gent (BEL; 2011-12), Brescia Leonessa (ITA; 2012-13), Cantu (ITA; 2013-14), Oklahoma City Blue (USA; 2014), Istanbul BB (TUR; 2015), Turk Telekom (TUR; 2015-16), Aris Thessaloniki (GRE; 2016-17), Pistoia (ITA; 2017), Umana Reyer Venezia (ITA; 2017-18), BC Astana (KAZ; 2018-19), Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2019-20)

Michael Jenkins is yet to make a debut for Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon, after signing a peculiar deal with the Israeli squad. The experienced 34-year-old serves as a backup option in case of an injury or a disease, having been signed ahead of the Play-Offs, but the medical chart of Holon looked so good in the second phase of the Basketball Champions League that they had no need of calling Jenkins up and flying him to Israel. Jenkins was a prominent player back in Season One of the BCL, torturing both defenses and offenses with his well-known aggression in the backcourt while wearing the yellow and black stripes of Aris. Jenkins also picked up a major international trophy, winning the FIBA Europe Cup with Venezia in 2018.

HEREDA SAN PABLO BURGOS TEAM PROFILE

THE DEFENDING CHAMPS.

Two seasons in Europe and now two trips to the Final 8 for Hereda San Pablo Burgos. Last year we wrote this about Burgos in the official program:

"It would be a hard push to find a club rising faster through the ranks of European basketball than Hereda San Pablo Burgos. Although CB Miraflores was founded in Burgos in 1994, the club we know as San Pablo Burgos was only established in 2015. Since then, the only way has been up."

The same is still true today, to the word. A season later and there still isn't a club in Europe with a steeper trajectory on the way up to the top of the basketball landscape. The only difference is that last year we wrote about them as a dark

horse contender. This year they are the defending champs and a strong favorite. At last year's Final 8 Burgos came in as the customary team that makes it from the Qualifiers. They return this year with almost an identical squad. Only Maksim Salash has joined the party from Tsmoki Minsk. As the old saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." We shouldn't forget that this club was only just promoted to the ACB in 2017. In that context, this group of players are already enshrined as legends of the club's short history. They have all very much earned their shot at defending the crown. It's also worth remembering that before Burgos, no club that started in the qualifiers had made it to the Final before and up until this point none of our previous winners have made it to the Final in the following season.



Joan Penarroya is, of course, back to steer the good ship, Burgos, in Nizhny Novgorod and it seems he has taken the title of defending champions very literally. Burgos wasn't even a top ten defensive team when they won the BCL last year. This season they travel to Russia as the best defensive team in the league. They have allowed just 1.02 points per possession all season and also kept opponents to a league-lowest 41.4 percent shooting from the field. If we look a little closer at the stats, there have clearly been tweaks to the way Burgos are approaching the game on the defensive end. They lead all teams at the Final 8 for Steal Percentage, picking pockets and jumping passing lanes on 12.4 percent of their opponents' possessions. Last season that number was just 9.6 percent. This is very much the same Burgos team in the offensive end with McFadden and Benite running around screens, Renfroe and Cook setting the play, and Rivero and Kravic as the inside threats sucking defenders in to create space on the perimeter. The outcome is similar statistically. They are top ten in the BCL for Offensive Rating, scoring at a rate of 1.15 points per possession. They create more

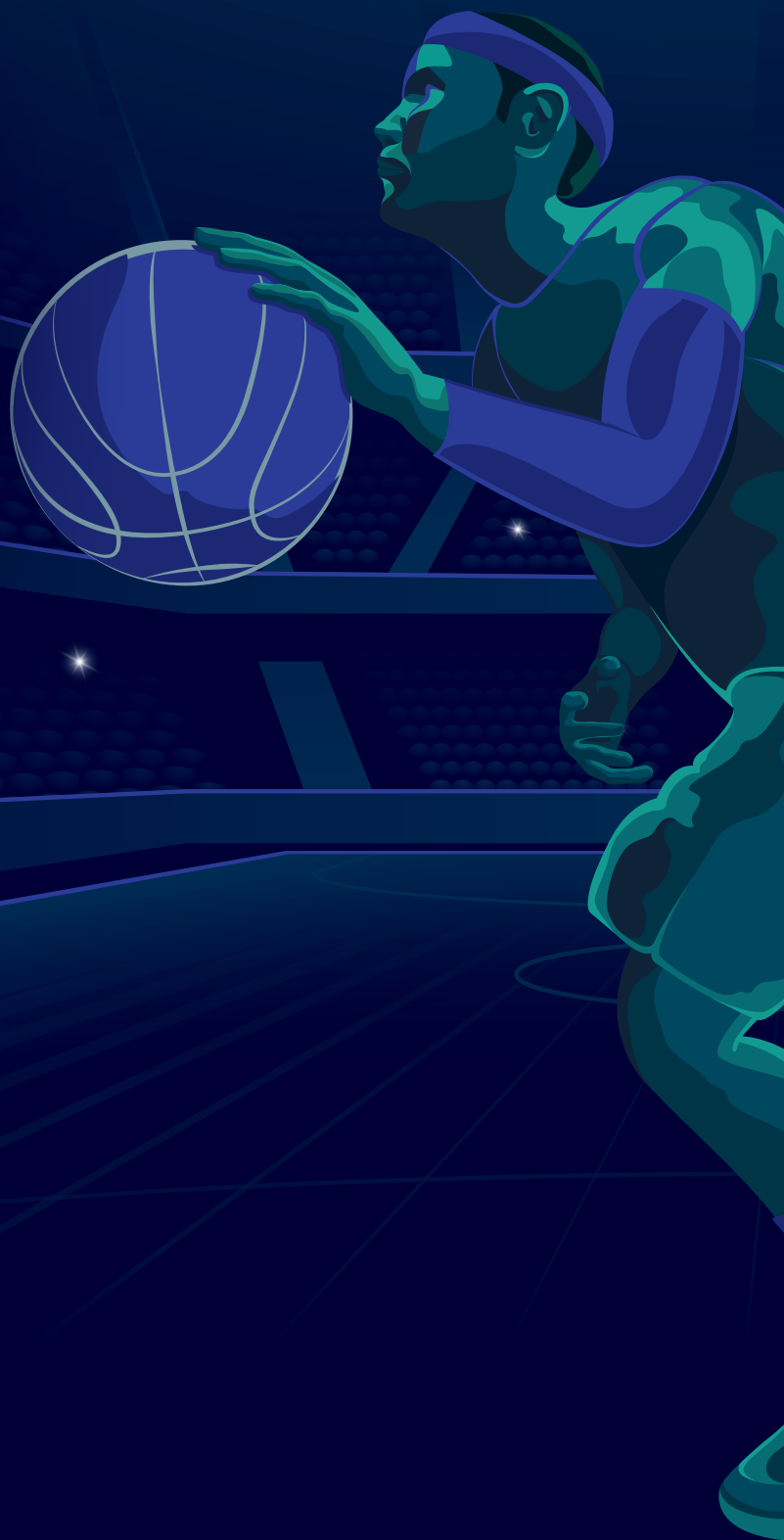
of their shots from an assist than any other team in Russia with an Assist Percentage of 71.9 percent. Those assisted shots are also efficient shots. Penarroya's Burgos have scored 1.3 points per shot this season which is good for joint-second amongst Final 8 teams.

Burgos's are at their most efficient directly under the basket. They score on a league-best 79.6% of their shots at the rim, which is good for 1.6 points per shot. This sets them up perfectly to play the inside-out game with their next two most efficient scoring zones, which are the right corner, where they shoot 41.7 percent, and the top of the key 3, where they shoot 40.2 percent. By far the area where they attempt their highest ratio of shots is in the paint. They get their feet wet on 28 percent of all their shot attempts. This season's Burgos have the archetypal 3 or key shot profile. In fact, if you combine the percentage of shots that Burgos attempt at the rim (15.9 percent), in the rest of the paint (28 percent), from left wing (16.2 percent), and right wing (14.9 percent), you account for over 75 percent of all the shots they attempt.



The season started with a sharp reminder for the new champs. There are no easy games in the BCL and a Gameday 1 loss in Oostende quickly served to highlight that winning the title affords you no favors once the new season starts. The alarm bell worked and Burgos refused to hit the snooze button. The champs were awake with a jolt and went unbeaten for the remainder of the Regular Season - an impressive feat when you consider their group had the likes of Darussafaka, 2021 Brindisi, and the perma-champs of Belgium, Oostende. The 30-point win over Darussafaka stood out in particular. Not just for the 100 points they put on the board but also for the 26 points scored by Jasiel Rivero. The Cuban is enjoying a breakout season and is a strong MVP candidate.

After the international break, Penarroya's squad were again sluggish to start the Play-Offs. This time it didn't cost them a loss against VEF Riga but it was pretty close. The Latvians held the league as late as 3:33 in the fourth quarter and Burgos needed an overtime period to get the job done. 7 points in OT from Rivero helped the Spaniards to duck over the finish line. The next two performances put the rest of the league on notice and sent out a message loud and clear. First, Lenovo Tenerife came to Burgos and were resoundingly dispatched 101-79. Very few teams score a century on Tenerife but the way Burgos were clicking that night, if the game had been an NBA length of 48 minutes, they could have probably put a score on the board that Brian Lara would have been proud of. Then came the trip to Latvia. The defending champs were more like the defending clamps, as they held VEF Riga to just 45 points on 18.8 percent shooting. Things got a little nervy after dropping the first of a doubleheader against Igokea, but 19 points from Vitor Benite and 16 from Dejan Kravic in the second game secured a comfy 83-71 win and Burgos were back at the big dance. They did lose to Tenerife in the Canary Islands on the last game of the Round of 16 and there is still a chance that the rivalry will get a chance to continue in Nizhny Novgorod. If both teams were to make it through the Quarter-Finals they would be set to meet again in the Semi-Final. To do that they will need to get Holon, one of the hottest teams in Europe this season.





GRUPO HEREDA

**HEREDA
SAN PABLO
BURGOS**



SHOOTING %

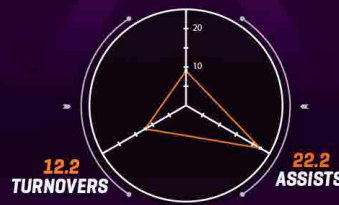


OFFENSIVE / DEFENSIVE



REBOUNDS

9.0 STEALS



BALL HANDLING

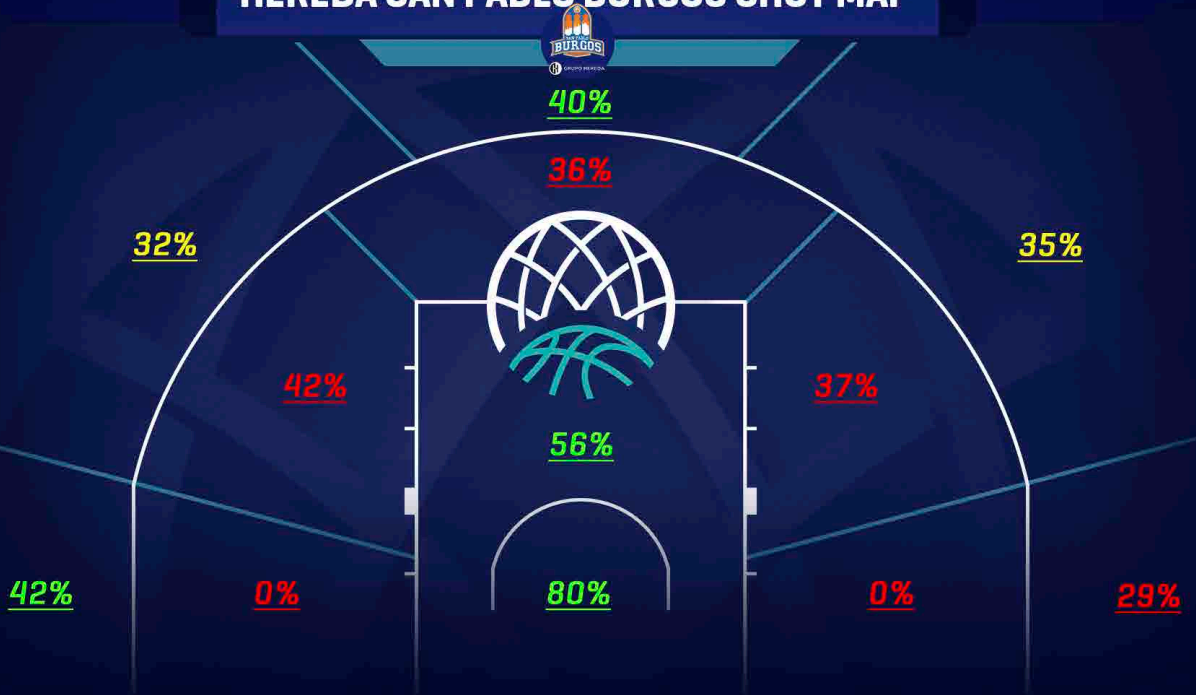
PTS FROM THE BENCH



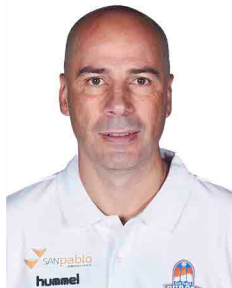
KEY STATS



HEREDA SAN PABLO BURGOS SHOT MAP



JOAN PENARROYA



Date of birth: 20/04/1969
Playing career: Manresa (ESP; 1987-1990, 1991-97, 2001-03), Tenerife (ESP; 1990-91), Leon (ESP; 1997-99), Ourense (ESP; 1999-2001)
Coaching career: CB Olesa i Navas (ESP; 2006-10), Andorra (ESP; 2010-18), Manresa (ESP; 2018-19)

The man who is a victim of his good work. Joan Penarroya should most definitely be in the Coach of the Season conversation, but since he's coaching the defending champs, his success comes for granted. Joan Penarroya has the authority, the smarts, the Xs and Os, the right attitude and the charisma to make him a likeable character for all of those who tune in to Burgos' games. He spent 11 years of his playing career with Manresa, he spent eight coaching years with Andorra, but his tenure with Burgos seems to be the crowning moment of his entire career. The fact that he came up with a win on the road at VEF Riga while having only seven available first team players should be considered a coaching masterpiece, just like his Final 8 run back in Athens to conclude the 2020 season. Penarroya's teams are all about balance between muscles and power inside, and panache and flair outside. Win or lose, Joan's teams are playing basketball the right way.

THADDUS MCFADDEN

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 29/05/1987
Position: point guard
Height: 1.88m/6'2"
Club career: Usti nad Labem (CZE; 2009-12, 2013), Phantoms Braunschweig (GER; 2012-13), APOEL (CYP; 2013-14), AEK Larnaca (CYP; 2014-16), PAOK (GRE; 2016-17), Karpos Sokoli (MKD; 2017), Kymis (GRE; 2017-18), Chongqing Sanhai Lanling (CHN; 2018), Tenerife (ESP; 2018-19), Joventut (ESP; 2019)

The reigning MVP of the Final 8, Thad McFadden exploded in Athens to lead Burgos to their maiden international title, and he hasn't slowed down in the 2020-21 season. When he is in the game, it changes the gravity of the defense, allowing others to do their part because the defensive players know McFadden is more than capable of making off balance shots in a row to destroy opponents in a hurry. You will always hear players saying how much they appreciate the fans, but for McFadden and the Burgos faithful, this took a whole new dimension - Thad admitted he talked to his then-teammates about the crowd in Burgos the first time he played against San Pablo in Burgos, talking about it so much that they responded: "Why don't you go and sign with them when you like the fans so much?" So he did it. This also marks the first time in five years that McFadden's luggage stays put. The last time he played two seasons for the same club was back with AEK Larnaca, from 2014 to 2016. McFadden is that classic unlikely superhero who made it out of Division II college through lower Czech Leagues all the way to continental glory. Just a kid from Flint, Michigan, leaving a gigantic mark in the history of European basketball.

ALBERTO ALONSO



Date of birth: 01/04/2001
Position: small forward
Height: 2.00m/6'7"
Club career: Grupo de Santiago Automocion (ESP; 2017-18), Nissan Grupo de Santiago (ESP; 2018-19)

The youngest player on the roster of the defending champions, Alberto Alonso is still waiting for his first points in the Basketball Champions League in 2020-21. He was on the roster in three games, played four minutes against VEF Riga, but didn't get to shoot during his run on the floor. Alonso is also at the start of his ACB career, so not a lot is known about his strengths and weaknesses. He was born in Burgos, and his first taste of real basketball came with the Nissan Grupo de Santiago club from the same town, so he may be the hometown hero for the thousands of fans surrounding the club. The fact that he is on the roster of such a loaded team is a big deal already.

VITOR BENITE



Date of birth: 20/02/1990
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.90m/6'3"
Club career: Pinheiros (BRA; 2008-09), Franca (BRA; 2009-11), Limeira (BRA; 2011-12), Flamengo (BRA; 2012-15), UCAM Murcia (ESP; 2015-18), Cedevita (CRO; 2018)

Thad McFadden may be the star player, Jasiel Rivero may be the heart of the team, Omar Cook may be the brain of the team, but Vitor Benite is the true captain of this Hereda San Pablo Burgos squad. The Brazilian sniper scored in double digits in all nine of his BCL appearances, with his season-high 19 points coming in the crucial game against Igokea to send the defending champs to the Final 8. Benite's only short stay of his career was in Zagreb, Croatia, but every other part of his career has been about loyalty. He spent three years with Flamengo, three more with UCAM Murcia and is now in his third year with Hereda San Pablo Burgos. One could say he's the vocal leader of the team, especially because he's not afraid to grab the guitar and sing a song or two to showcase his talents for things outside of basketball. On the court, Benite is one of the purest shooters, but can create off the dribble, and he is flirting with a 50-40-90 shooting split, both in the BCL and the Spanish League.

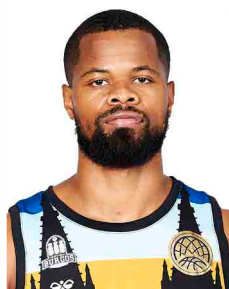
ALEX BARRERA



Date of birth: 01/04/1992
Position: forward
Height: 1.96m/6'5"
Club career: Joventut (ESP; 2011-15), Manresa (ESP; 2015-16)

Being a successful basketball player is just a temporary thing for Alex Barrera. The forward comes off the bench to provide help for Miquel Salvo and Xavi Rabaseda, and he has played 13.4 minutes per game in the Basketball Champions League this season, setting his season-high at 12 points back on Gameday 1 against Filou Oostende. He is already in his fifth season with Burgos, making it his longest tenure at the professional level, but even if he's done at the end of the season, Barrera will keep on living the adrenaline life - he considers himself a stock investor, he's the right person to ask all about the Bitcoin developments.

OMAR COOK



Date of birth: 28/01/1982
Position: point guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Club career: Fayetteville Patriots (USA; 2001-04, 2004-05), Portland Trail Blazers (USA; 2004), Toronto Raptors (CAN; 2005), Mons-Hainaut (BEL; 2005-06), Samara (RUS; 2006-07), SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2007), Crvena Zvezda (SRB; 2007-08), Unicaja Malaga (ESP; 2008-10), Valencia Basket (ESP; 2010-11), Olimpia Milano (ITA; 2011-12), Baskonia (ESP; 2012-13), Rytas (LTU; 2013-14), Buducnost Podgorica (MNE; 2014-16), Estudiantes (ESP; 2016-19), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2019-20)

Montenegrin's point guard is 39, he was already the oldest player in last season's Final 8, and he's just taking the bar a foot higher with each passing year. Cook doesn't talk a lot on the basketball court, but you can expect him to deliver ball pressure on the defensive end, to distribute the ball on the offensive end, and if you go under the screens against him, he can make you pay with multiple three-pointers, just like he did against AEK in the Final in 2020. Cook is a true professional, and with 7.0 assists per game, he's currently the best passer of the Basketball Champions League. He dishes out two assists per one field goal attempt, the definition of the pass first mentality.

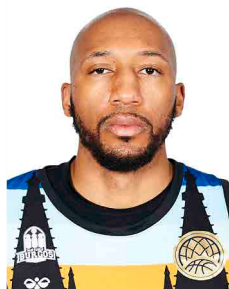
JORDAN SAKHO



Date of birth: 04/04/1997
Position: center
Height: 2.07m/6'9"
Club career: Manresa (ESP; 2016-20)

In case the one-two punch of Rivero and Kravic doesn't work, coach Joan Penarroya can always turn to a different kind of center in Jordan Sakho. He's no stranger to the Basketball Champions League, having first played it with BAXI Manresa, where he also met his future coach Penarroya. The fact that Kravic and Rivero are first options for the center position means Sakho only gets 11.5 minutes per game, but his averages of 4.6 points and 3.4 rebounds show he can be productive even in limited time. Sakho is a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, his last trip to the country in February paid off, as he led the nation to qualification to the FIBA AfroBasket 2021.

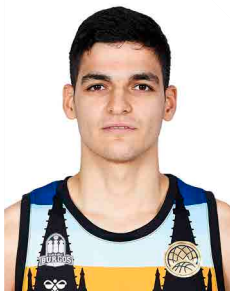
KEN HORTON



Date of birth: 25/07/1989
Position: power forward
Height: 1.99m/6'6"
Club career: SOMB (FRA; 2012-13), Apollon Limassol (CYP; 2013), Huracanes de Tampico (MEX; 2013-14), Kataja (FIN; 2014-15), Bayreuth (GER; 2015-16), Bonn (GER; 2016-17), EB Pau-Lacq-Orthez (FRA; 2017-18), Astana (KAZ; 2018-19), Germani Basket Brescia (ITA; 2019-20)

Being out of Ossining, New York does sound scary, with the infamous Sing Sing Correctional Facility being the most famous landmark. But Ken Horton is a feel-good character, whether it comes to his Kiss The Trey brand, the social media videos or showing up to practice in an Elsa/Frozen costume as part of his girl dad duties. Horton will make you pay if you gravitate towards McFadden and Benite or help out too much against Kravic and Rivero, he's a catch-and-shoot specialist who's knocking down 39.5 percent of his attempts from deep. His season best game came against Darussafaka Tekfen, he knocked down 5-of-7 from beyond the arc to gather 20 points on the night and lead the defending champs to a win which sent them to the Play-Offs. Horton has been a game winner wherever he played, from France to Cyprus, Mexico, Finland, Kazakhstan, Italy and Spain.

ANGEL INFANTE GUTIERREZ



Date of birth: 06/11/1998
Position: point guard
Height: 1.80m/5'11"
Club career: Ciudad de Ponferrada (ESP; 2016-19)

Another hometown kid on the team, Angel Infante made his Basketball Champions League debut against Happy Casa Brindisi on the road, hitting a three-pointer to leave a mark, too. Infante's impact on this Final 8 will hardly be a massive one, but it's a good learning opportunity for him, especially as he gets to witness Omar Cook and Alex Renfroe orchestrate the marching band known as the 2020 Basketball Champions League winners. Maybe he doesn't play at all, but just being a part of the team which keeps on winning builds character. That could be crucial for Burgos' long-term future, the right mentality could keep the kid from Burgos in the team from Burgos for a long time.

DEJAN KRAVIC



Date of birth: 09/09/1990
Position: center
Height: 2.13m/7'0"
Club career: Rethymno Cretan Kings (GRE; 2014-15, 2016-17), Den Bosch (NED; 2015-16), Brussels (BEL; 2017), Panionios (GRE; 2017-18), Virtus Bologna (ITA; 2018-19), Obradoiro (ESP; 2019-20)

Back-to-back...to back? Dejan Kravic won the 2019 Basketball Champions League title as a vital part of the Segafredo Virtus Bologna squad, and backed it up by winning the 2020 Basketball Champions League title as a starter for Hereda San Pablo Burgos. The big guy has an endless wingspan, and his hands are so big the basketball sometimes looks like a grapefruit when he's grasping it. Kravic is a master of the short-roll, and his finishes with both his left and his right make him a menace under the rim. And it's not just the offensive skill that he brings - he blocked four shots against VEF Riga in the Play-Offs, 3 against Ig-okea, being the rim protector Burgos desperately need. Only Kevin Punter managed to win back-to-back titles in the BCL before him; Kravic has a chance to become the first three-time winner of this competition.

KAREEM QUEELEY



Date of birth: 30/03/2001
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.92m/6'4"
Club career: Real Madrid (ESP; 2017-19), Nissan Grupo de Santiago (ESP; 2019-20)

Kareem Queeley has been around for so long now that it seems incredible that he's only just celebrated his 20th birthday. Queeley excelled in his Real Madrid youth days, winning individual awards left and right, making the scouts pay attention not only to Real Madrid, but also to Great Britain's U18 and U20 teams. Queeley is a powerful guard who will only get stronger as the years move on, but needs to add a steady dose of outside shooting to make his penetrations even more dangerous. In 2021, he became the first player born in Saint Kitts and Nevis to score in the Basketball Champions League.

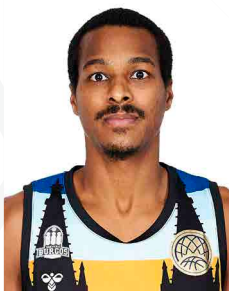
XAVI RABASEDA



Date of birth: 24/02/1989
Position: small forward
Height: 1.96m/6'5"
Club career: CB Cornellà (ESP; 2007-09), Barcelona (ESP; 2009-10, 2011-13), Fuenlabrada (ESP; 2010-11), Estudiantes (ESP; 2013-15), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2015-20)

We don't want you to start betting, but if you have to, putting money on Xavi Rabaseda winning a trophy would be considered a safe bet. Rabaseda won a pair of youth medals with the Spanish U18 and U20 team, has three Spanish Supercups to his name, two Spanish Cups, one Spanish League, one EuroLeague and one Basketball Champions League in his silverware collection. Oh, let's not forget the biggest one - Xavi Rabaseda was a part of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 gold medal winning Spanish squad. Rabaseda is a starter for Burgos, but he has struggled with his outside shooting this season in the BCL, hitting just 4-of-25 shots from three-point range. This comes as a massive surprise because he made over 35 percent of his three-point attempts in three of the last four ACB seasons.

ALEX RENFROE



Date of birth: 24/05/1986

Position: point guard

Height: 1.95m/6'5"

Club career: VEF Riga (LAT; 2009-10), Zagreb (CRO; 2010-11), Brindisi (ITA; 2011-12), Valladolid (ESP; 2012-13), Brose Bamberg (GER; 2013), Enisey Krasnoyarsk (RUS; 2013-14), Baskonia (ESP; 2014), Alba Berlin (GER; 2014-15), Bayern Munich (GER; 2015-16), Barcelona (ESP; 2016-17), Galatasaray (TUR; 2017-18), Manresa (ESP; 2018), Partizan (SRB; 2018-19), Zenit Saint Petersburg (RUS; 2019-20)

Players shouldn't be peaking at 35, but here we are. Alex Renfroe is averaging 11.1 points and 5.8 assists per game in the BCL, featuring 10.4 points and 5.1 assists per game in the ACB this season, while shooting 48.4 percent from beyond the arc in the BCL, and 42.5 percent in the Liga Endesa. Renfroe even went over 30 in the Spanish League, scoring 31 points against Monbus Obradoiro in just 22 minutes of work! The best part about his offensive production is that he was never highly regarded because of his offense, but because of his pesky defensive style. The hands are still fast, he had multiple steals in three BCL games this season, and with him and Omar Cook doing their part in applying ball pressure, Burgos found a lethal combination. Renfroe always said he enjoyed nutrition classes in college, maybe that's the secret behind his longevity.

JASIEL RIVERO



Date of birth: 31/10/1993

Position: center

Height: 2.04m/6'8"

Club career: Club Atletico Tabare (URU; 2015-16), Estudiantes (ARG; 2016-18), Boca Juniors (ESP; 2018-19)

If there were a most improved player award, Jasiel Rivero would win it, every single time. The emotional leader of the team makes up for the lack of size with elite footwork and pure strength to move people out of the way, and average 13.0 points and 5.6 rebounds on 67.6 percent shooting from two point range in the Spanish League, 13.0 points and 7.0 rebounds on 75.4 percent shooting from two point range in the BCL. Rivero brings the Cuban style to the court, his hair is always a topic of conversation, but it probably doesn't get any better than the actual Cuban flag he had on his hair in the game against Igokea in the Play-Offs. His season best game came against Darussafaka, scoring 26 points on 10-of-14 from the field, but a 25-point, 11-rebound double-double against VEF Riga also deserves a mention.

MAKSIM SALASH



Date of birth: 06/05/1996

Position: power forward

Height: 2.06m/6'9"

Club career: CB Sevilla (ESP; 2012-13), Penas Huesca (ESP; 2014-15), CB Sevilla (ESP; 2015), Ourense (ESP; 2015-16), AZS Polfarmex Kutno (POL; 2016-17), Tsmoki-Minsk (BLR; 2017-18, 2019-20), Kalev/Cramo (EST; 2018-19)

If at first you don't succeed... Maksim Salash made the mid-season move from Tsmoki-Minsk back to Spain, where he was once a part of the highly touted Sevilla academy, alongside players like Kristaps Porzingis. His initial departure to Spain did not prove to be a successful one, but Salash had the future planned out with a pair of runs with Tsmoki-Minsk. His pure talent to play the stretch four made people take notes while watching the Belarus national team, and his strong start to the BCL season made the Burgos front office call his number. The best part about Salash is that he's turning 25 during the Final 8 - he's got a whole decade of productive basketball in front of him, why not do it as a Burgos legend and a trophy winner?

MIQUEL SALVO



Date of birth: 03/11/1994

Position: small forward

Height: 2.05m/6'9"

Club career: Proximus Spirou (BEL; 2013-14), Tarragona 2017 (ESP; 2015-16), Oviedo (ESP; 2016-17), San Sebastian Gipuzkoa (ESP; 2017-19)

Up until 2020, winning the MVP of the Copa Princesa LEB Oro 2017 was the finest moment of Miquel Salvo's career. To make the connection deeper, he won that trophy by helping Oviedo overcome the challenge called San Pablo Burgos in the Final... Salvo then gained a couple of years of ACB experience with San Sebastian Gipuzkoa, before Burgos called him over and made him a lefty threat both inside and outside the three-point arc. Salvo doesn't mind doing the dirty work for the team, he's playing 17.4 minutes per game in the BCL, getting into double digits twice this season. Salvo made his national team debut for Spain, the perfect reward for all the hard work he put in year in, year out.

LENOVO TENERIFE TEAM PROFILE

ODDS ON FAVORITES?

Things tend to go pretty well for Lenovo Tenerife when the year ends in an odd number. If we go back to 2017, Txus and the Aurinegros claimed their first title. They also set a record with 22 wins in the ACB Regular Season that year. In 2019 they were back in the Final of the Basketball Champions League. Fast forward to this season and Tenerife have already broken their record of wins in the ACB Regular Season (24 at the time of writing) and are - as usual - back in the Quarter-Finals of the BCL. This is, in fact, Tenerife's fourth trip to the Quarter-Finals, a number that is unmatched amongst all BCL clubs. They have done it this year with an

advantage that is usually a big factor for every Tenerife squad but also an advantage they were missing last year: continuity. High roster turnover is normal in most European basketball clubs. Not at Lenovo Tenerife. When they switched out an entire roster of 12 players at the start of last season, it was always likely to take some time for the squad to adjust to the culture and expectations. Even a squad led by high IQ veterans like Marcelinho Huertas, Giorgi Shermadini, and Sasu Salin. This year, only Spencer Butterfield has been added to the mix. The team has clearly adjusted and is now clicking up into a higher gear.



Txus Vidorreta has now won more games in the BCL than any other coach and is a genuine giant of coaching in this league. Building one great team is the sign of a very good coach, being able to completely start from scratch and build a second one, is the sign of a great coach. This season's iteration may be the best yet. If the stats so far are anything to go by, they are very much on that track. An Offensive Rating of 1.22 points per possession is better than any club at this stage of the season has managed in the short 5-year history of this competition. They have achieved this primarily through a very selective shot profile and an offense expertly designed to create the shots that fit with this set of players. As a result, they lead the league in Points Per Shot at 1.4 and also Effective Field Goal Percentage at 59.9 percent. As is almost always the case with Tenerife, their offensive firepower is driven by their depth. 12 players on this squad have averaged over 10 minutes per game when healthy. How that will look in a Final 8 knockout

tournament remains to be seen but none-the-less, those kind playing time numbers are unheard of. It should also come as no surprise that Tenerife lead the league in points scored from the bench at over 40 points per game.

There are four very clear hot spots when it comes to the shots this Tenerife team takes; they shoot 73.6 percent at the rim, 50 percent from the right corner, 46.7 percent from the right wing, and 42.8 percent from the left corner. From those numbers, only Burgos shoot a higher percentage at the rim, and Nizhny Novgorod and Pinar Karsiyaka are the only teams more efficient from the right corner. In terms of volume, the spread is very even. They take 25 percent of all their shots directly at the rim and 19.8 percent in the rest of the painted area. After that, the left and right wing are the priority areas, with 13.5 percent and 12.7 percent respectively.



After an initial scan of the draw for the Regular Season, Group A instantly stood out as one of the most competitive. With incoming giants Galatasaray, a tough Bakken Bears team, and the previous FIBA Europe Cup winners Dinamo Sassari, it seemed the Canarians had been drawn in the toughest group of all. In the end, Tenerife came out of the group relatively unscathed and topped the group comfortably. They were given an early reminder of the increased level of this competition by Dinamo Sassari on Gameday 2, as the first battle of the Islanders went the way of the Italians 92-72. They would later avenge that 20-point loss with a 30-point win of their own against Sassari on home soil. Giorgi Shermadini was the driving force behind that win with 19 points in 19 minutes but they also further highlighted their depth with seven players scoring more than 10 points. That performance was also the second time in two BCL gamedays that the Aurinegros had scored over 100 points in

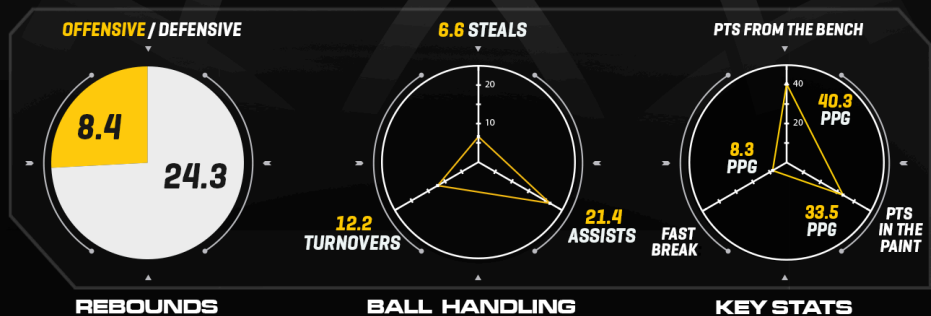
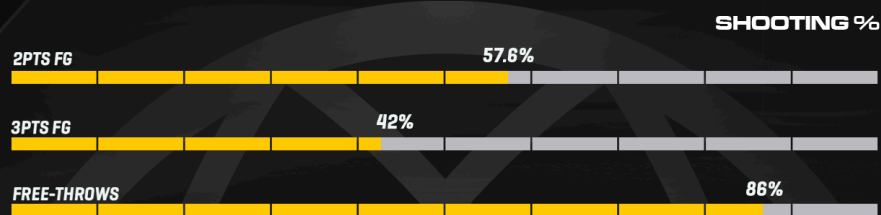
regular time. The first was against Galatasaray, in Istanbul. Sasu Salin and Spencer Butterfield were the human torches on that occasion, with 34 points and 17 points respectively. They made 13 shots from behind the arc between them and Butterfield's 5 came from a perfect 100 percent from the field. Bruno Fitipaldo's performance with 13 assists was also outstanding.

The Play-Offs were almost perfect for Tenerife. The loss to Burgos being the only blip for Txus' squad as they topped their group again in the Round of 16. And again, they were able to turn around that 22-point loss in Burgos with a 29-point win at home in the Santiago Martin. The other standout performances in the Round of 16 were the 20-point win at Igokea and the curious case of the identical 77-64 scorelines in both games against VEF Riga. In truth, Tenerife have been cruising for most of the Play-Offs so far. They finished with a 5-1



Lenovo Tenerife

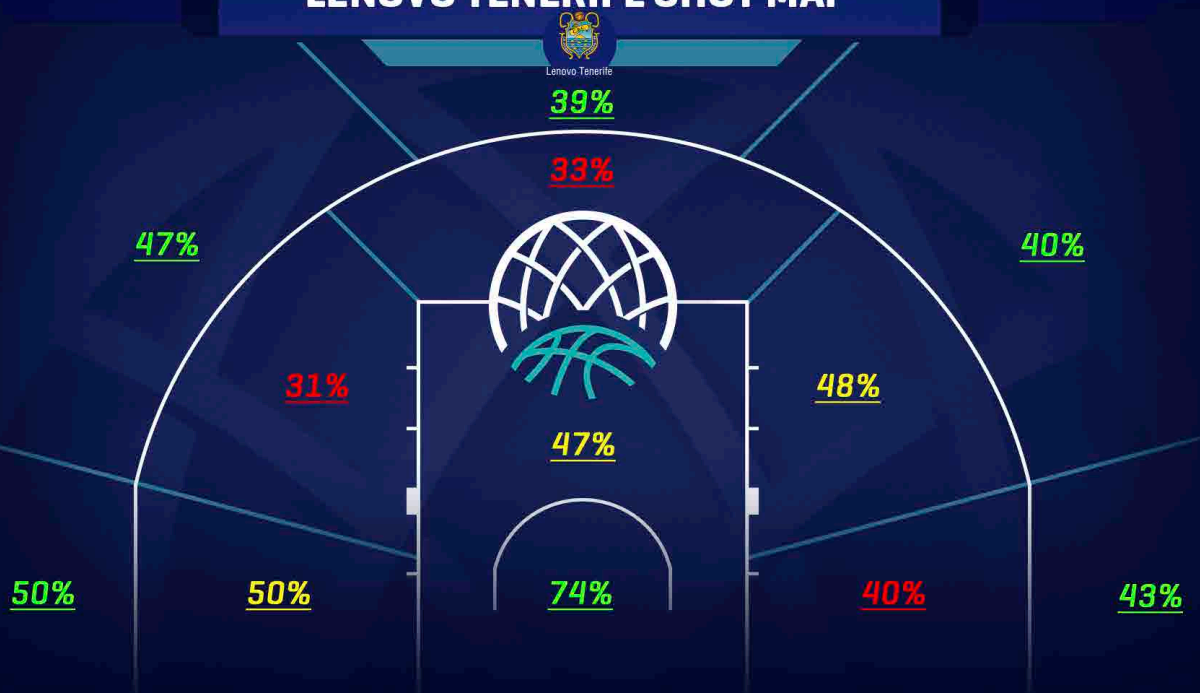
**LENOVO
TENERIFE**





record, only matched by ERA Nymburk and an overall points differential of +58 points in 6 games - the best record in all groups. Moving onto the Final 8 and SIG Strasbourg are next in line. The French club have been the surprise package this season and are capable of beating anyone in a single game knockout. But this is Lenovo Tenerife under Txus Vidorreta, with a squad of players in their second year of the program and the year ending in an odd number. We are yet to have a double champion in the BCL, it would be hard to look past Tenerife as an odds-on favorite.

LENOVO TENERIFE SHOT MAP



TXUS VIDORRETA



Date of birth: 20/06/1966

Coaching career: Cajabilbao (assistant, ESP; 1992-93), Cajabilbao (ESP; 1993-95), Askartza (ESP; 1995-96, 1997-98), Bilbao Patronato (ESP; 1996-97), La Palma (ESP; 1998-2001), Bilbao Basket (ESP; 2001-10), Lucentum Alicante (ESP; 2010-12), Estudiantes (ESP; 2012-15), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2015-17), Valencia Basket (ESP; 2017-18)

He already was the coach with the most wins in the history of the Basketball Champions League, but this season Txus Vidorreta set a new milestone by becoming the first coach to win 50 games in this competition - nobody else is in the 40s, so his lead will stay solid for another season or two. Vidorreta is a tactical genius, with plays after the timeouts being his favorite time to shine, and the amount of movement on each possession makes the defense dizzy just trying to keep up with the Tenerife offense. Vidorreta was born and raised in Bilbao, he always says it is the most beautiful city in the world, but it seems he found another beautiful home for himself in Tenerife. Exactly a year ago, Vidorreta signed a new two-year contract to add to what already was a three-year contract when he returned from Valencia.

GEORGIOS BOGRIS



Date of birth: 19/02/1989

Position: center

Height: 2.10m/6'11"

Club career: Ilysiakos (GRE; 2006-09), Panathinaikos (GRE; 2009-11), Peristeri (GRE; 2011-12), Aris (GRE; 2012), Panionios (GRE; 2012-13), PAOK (GRE; 2013-14), Andorra (ESP; 2014-15), Bilbao Basket (ESP; 2015-16), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2016-17), Olympiacos (GRE; 2017-19), Promitheas Patras (GRE; 2019)

One of two original members of the Iberostar Tenerife side, as they were called back in 2017 when they won the inaugural Basketball Champions League season. Georgios Bogris is a valuable piece of the puzzle in the history of Tenerife, but he has seen action in only one game this season, against Bakken Bears in the Regular Season, when he played 14 minutes and scored four points. Bogris was far more dominant four years ago, his performances leading up to the Final Four saw him being named to the Star Lineup First Team, and booked a transfer back home to Olympiacos. Promitheas Patras was just another stop on the way back to his adopted home in San Cristobal de La Laguna.

GIORGI SHERMADINI

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 03/04/1989

Position: center

Height: 2.16m/7'1"

Club career: Maccabi Tbilisi (GEO; 2005-08), Panathinaikos (GRE; 2008-10), Union Olimpija (SLO; 2010-11), Cantu (ITA; 2011-12, 2014-15), Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR; 2012), Olympiacos (GRE; 2012-13, 2014), Zaragoza (ESP; 2013, 2014), Andorra (ESP; 2015-17), Unicaja Malaga (ESP; 2017-19)

Up until 2015, Giorgi Shermadini was known as a player that cannot stay in one place for a long time. But something changed from that point on, and the Georgian center became such a marvelous asset on the basketball court that he is now flirting with history. Shermadini has picked up not one, not two, but three Player of the Month awards in the Spanish League this season, giving him a total of eight such awards, just two short of the all-time record held by Tanoka Beard. Shermadini's form has been brilliant this season, and his 16.6 points and 5.8 rebounds are much more impressive when you consider he only plays 22.5 minutes per game in the Basketball Champions League. He was held to single digits only once in the BCL this season, back on Gameday 2, in a blowout defeat to Dinamo Sassari. Even with that six-point game on 1-of-7 shooting, Shermadini is still on 60-of-93 shooting from the field for the season! And don't think about fouling him intentionally to stop him scoring, because he's shooting 46-of-51 from the charity stripe. Long story short, Shermadini's efficiency in Txus Vidorreta's offensive system makes Tenerife the team with the best record in the BCL all season long. Days of him scoring 89 points in a game, which he did at youth level, aren't happening again, but at 32 years old, we are witnessing peak Shermadini. He's got a whole lot of motivation to keep on going this way for at least another year and a half, since the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 is set to take place in his backyard, in Georgia. And a motivated Shermadini is something nobody wants to see on the other side of the court.

DANILO BRNOVIC



Date of birth: 10/08/2000
Position: power forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Real Club Nautico (ESP; 2018-19)

Danilo Brnovic is a Montenegrin project for Lenovo Tenerife, a man who was brought in to be a part of the long-term plans for CB Canarias. He first gained international attention when he showed up in a Buducnost shirt at the ANGT tournament in 2015-16, playing a tournament at U18 level while still being only 15 years old. He is still the youngest player on this squad, and has a chance to experience everyday life with guys like Aaron Doornekamp, Dani Diez and other, which could be a huge plus for Tenerife in the coming years. This time around, he played six minutes across three games in the BCL, scoring 8 points while shooting 3-of-3 from the field. Small sample, but a respectable one when it comes from the youngest team member for Txus Vidorreta.

SPENCER BUTTERFIELD



Date of birth: 11/10/1992
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.91m/6'3"
Club career: Melilla (ESP; 2014-15), Juventus Utena (LTU; 2015-16), Nanterre 92 (FRA; 2016-17, 2019-20), Alba Berlin (GER; 2017-18), Pallacanestro Reggiana (ITA; 2018-19)

At one point of the season, Txus Vidorreta realized he needs a backup for his catch-and-shoot, 1.91m/6'3" tall sniper who never stops running around screens, called Sasu Salin, so he brought in a catch-and-shoot, 1.91m/6'3" tall sniper who never stops running around screens, called Spencer Butterfield. The American was a perfect fit instantly, and his 17-point, 6-of-6 shooting game against Galatasaray showed the rest of the continent how deadly Tenerife could be with a one-two shooting punch of Salin and Butterfield. Injuries slowed his progress, he has only played one game in the Play-Offs, and the fact that Charles Jenkins was added to the team for the final stages of the Spanish League suggests that Butterfield won't be a factor any time soon.

ALBERTO CABRERA



Date of birth: 05/10/1998
Position: point guard
Height: 1.78m/5'10"
Club career: Zornotza ST (ESP; 2020-21)

Alberto Cabrera only played two minutes of this Basketball Champions League season, but those were two historic minutes, as he shared the court with three other players from the Canary Islands, showing a part of the plan by Tenerife to not only challenge for the top of the Liga Endesa and the Basketball Champions League, but also to give their domestic talents a chance to play at an elite level. Cabrera scored a pair of free throws in that one, but this season has offered him the opportunity to play for Zornotza ST and earn meaningful minutes in a lower tier league. The fact that he made his move to the mainland also speaks volumes about his willingness to improve, as this marks his first season outside the safety of the Canary Islands.

TYLER CAVANAUGH



Date of birth: 09/02/1994
Position: power forward
Height: 2.06m/6'9"
Club career: Atlanta Hawks (USA; 2017-18), Erie BayHawks (USA; 2017-18), Utah Jazz (USA; 2018-19), Salt Lake City Stars (USA; 2018-19), Alba Berlin (GER; 2019-20)

A power forward with NBA experience who can spread the floor with his shooting sounds like a perfect player for Txus Vidorreta's offensive system. Tyler Cavanaugh is on the receiving end of a lot of Vidorreta's drawings during the timeouts, as the playcaller loves getting him involved in the first plays out of the team huddle. Cavanaugh's production has been impressive during the Regular Season, but he has struggled to find consistency during the Play-Offs, scoring a total of six points over the first three games. But the last two games he played showed a much more serious Tyler, putting up a season-high 18 points against VEF Riga on 3-of-4 shooting from beyond the arc. Cavanaugh is now 11-of-21 from deep this season. His father John also played basketball overseas, he is now Tyler's number one fan, following every single game from afar.

DANI DIEZ



Date of birth: 07/04/1993
Position: power forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Real Madrid (ESP; 2010-12, 2013-14), Gipuzkoa (ESP; 2012-13, 2014-15), Unicaja Malaga (ESP; 2015-19)

It wasn't the best of all seasons for Dani Diez. The forward has played a total of 35 minutes in the Basketball Champions League, 27 of those being against the Bakken Bears in the Regular Season, and only scored nine points in the BCL, and even his ACB numbers are way below his standards - by the end of the season, he will have played the least number of games since his rookie year back in 2011-12, when he appeared in three games for Real Madrid. Diez is one of the most decorated players in the history of FIBA Youth Events, picking up two gold medals and two bronze medals in his four years from U16 to U20. He won the ACB Best Young Player Award in 2015, and made his presence felt in nine games with the Spanish national team, but in a troublesome year like this one, those seem like a distant memory. Maybe holding a trophy in May gets Diez back on the right track with Tenerife and the national team, too.

AARON DOORNEKAMP



Date of birth: 05/12/1985
Position: forward
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: Pepsi Caserta (ITA; 2009-12), Braunschweig (GER; 2013-14), Skyliners Frankfurt (GER; 2014-16), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2016-17), Valencia Basket (ESP; 2017-20)

Here's a guy who knows how to win the Basketball Champions League. He did it back in 2017, at the very first BCL Final Four in Tenerife, and after a three-year long stay at Valencia, Aaron Doornekamp is back at Lenovo Tenerife, doing his part to bring the prestigious trophy back to the island. Doornekamp averaged 6.5 points per game this season, and he has taken 46 three-pointers, compared to just 16 two-pointers, which describes his role better than we ever could. Although he has the power to play the "four" position, Doornekamp has been useful in a tall-ball lineup as the small forward next to Cavanaugh or Sulejmanovic and Shermadini or Guerra. Being the outdoorsy type, enjoying both the hike and the powerful waves around the island, Doornekamp looks exactly like the kind of person who could move permanently to Tenerife once his playing days are over.

BRUNO FITIPALDO



Date of birth: 02/08/1991
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.85m/6'1"
Club career: Club Malvin (URU; 2006-14), Obras Sanitarias (ARG; 2014-16), Orlandina (ITA; 2016), Galatasaray (TUR; 2016-17), Sidigas Avellino (ITA; 2017-18), San Pablo Burgos (ESP; 2018-20)

People really shouldn't be able to improve drastically between the ages of 27 and 29, but here we are. Bruno Fitipaldo has been the ying to Marcelinho Huertas' yang, giving the entire team the balance needed to stay attached to Real Madrid and Barcelona domestically, while challenging for the title in the BCL, as well. Fitipaldo is an annoying guard when you're playing against him, always pressuring you both on the offensive and the defensive end, drawing contact, getting to the line where he's shooting 21-of-23 for the season, hitting 40 percent of triples and still being able to dish out 13 assists in a single game, like he did against Galatasaray in the Regular Season. The Uruguayan national team player has been a vital part of Burgos' run to the title last season, but he didn't get to celebrate it as he was already a Tenerife player at the Final 8 in Athens.

FRAN GUERRA



Date of birth: 23/12/1992
Position: center
Height: 2.14m/7'0"
Club career: Estudiantes (ESP; 2012-14), Forca Lleida (ESP; 2014-15), Estudiantes (ESP; 2015-16), Ourense (ESP; 2016-17), Melilla (ESP; 2017-18), Iberojet Palma (ESP; 2018-19)

In a bizarre twist of fate, Fran Guerra made his debut in the Spanish League nine years ago - against Tenerife! And as if that wasn't enough, the coach who gave him his first minutes as a professional basketball player was none other than Txus Vidorreta, who was at the helm of Estudiantes during the first round of the 2012-13 season... Fran Guerra was not afraid to take a couple of steps backwards in order to move up the ranks in the future, and only landed a permanent first division gig back in 2019 when Tenerife brought him back to the Canary Islands. Originally from Las Palmas, Fran Guerra's unlikely path to greatness has led him to a childhood dream already, as the big guy made his Spanish national team debut during the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers. Playing as a backup for arguably the best center of the league is not an easy task, but Guerra had days where he reached Shermadini-like production: 12pts in 16min against Burgos, 15pts in 24min against Bakken Bears, 16pts in 20min against Sassari...

ALEX LOPEZ



Date of birth: 08/05/1991
Position: guard
Height: 1.89m/6'2"
Club career: La Caja de Canarias (ESP; 2008-09), La Palma (ESP; 2010-11), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2010-11), Caceres Patrimonio de la Humanidad (ESP; 2012), Breogan Lugo (ESP; 2013-15), San Pablo Burgos (ESP; 2016-19)

It's always a nice thing to see a local hero making it in the world of sports. For Lenovo Tenerife, local heroes are usually the players coming from any of the Canary Islands. But with Alex Lopez, it gets as local as possible - the point guard was born and raised in San Cristobal de La Laguna, the same place where Lenovo Tenerife play their home games. Lopez has changed his address numerous times, but found home in San Pablo Burgos for three seasons, before getting the call to go back home in 2019. In a backcourt with Marcelinho Huertas and Bruno Fitipaldo, getting regular minutes is an uphill battle, but Lopez averaged 10 of them per game during the BCL season. His best game came against his former team, scoring 8 points while being +22 in a Play-Off game versus Burgos.

SERGIO RODRIGUEZ



Date of birth: 18/10/1993
Position: forward
Height: 2.04m/6'8"
Club career: San Isidro (ESP; 2011-13), Real Club Nautico (ESP; 2013-14), Iberostar Tenerife (ESP; 2014, 2015), Obiba Club de Basket (ESP; 2014-15), Basket Navarra Club (ESP; 2015-16), Amics del Basquet Castello (ESP; 2016-17), CB Penas Huesca (ESP; 2017-18), Ourense (ESP; 2018-19), Bilbao Basket (ESP; 2019-20)

A Spaniard named Sergio Rodriguez, from the island of Tenerife, playing professional basketball, while wearing jersey number 13 - there must have been some confusion along the way. Just like his namesake Sergio Rodriguez, the legendary point guard, this Sergio Rodriguez also excels at basketball, albeit on a lower level than the former NBA player. This Sergio Rodriguez comes from the northern part of Tenerife, and covers the forward position. Rodriguez has found his role with Tenerife this season, playing 20.5 minutes per game, channeling his inner Aaron Doornekamp by attempting 34 three-pointers and 11 two-pointers for the season, missing only one of the 12 games Tenerife played so far. Mr Reliable, as a starter or coming off the bench.

SASU SALIN



Date of birth: 11/06/1991
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.91m/6'3"
Club career: Espoon Honka (FIN; 2007-10), Union Olimpija (SLO; 2010-15), Gran Canaria (ESP; 2015-17), Unicaja Malaga (ESP; 2017-19)

Up until the last three Gamedays of the Play-Offs, Sasu Salin was a runaway candidate for the MVP award when it comes to Lenovo Tenerife's roster. The Finnish sniper reached a whole new level of being a lethal weapon in 2020-21, torching Galatasaray with 34 points, the most he had in a single game since 2009, when he scored 35 points for Espoon Honka against Lappeenranta NMKY in the Finnish League. Despite scoring a total of 15 points in his last three games, Salin is still averaging 13.7 points per game in the BCL, and is knocking down 48.6 percent of his shots from deep - on more than six attempts per game. The last game against Burgos saw one of his records end. He missed his first free throw of the season, meaning he is now shooting 27-of-28 from the charity stripe in the BCL.

EMIR SULEJMANOVIC



Date of birth: 13/07/1995
Position: power forward
Height: 2.04m/6'8"
Club career: Union Olimpija (SLO; 2011-13), Barcelona (ESP; 2013-15), Orlandina (ITA; 2015), Cibona (CRO; 2016-17), Fuenlabrada (ESP; 2017-19), Breogan (ESP; 2017-19), Bilbao Basket (ESP; 2019-20)

You have to be happy about this guy playing so well. Emir Sulejmanovic is now a 25-year-old mountain of a man, which is a miracle in itself since he was born in the woods while his family was trying to escape the war in Srebrenica, BiH in 1995. Sulejmanovic grew up in Finland and holds a Finnish passport, but he always made it clear he would represent Bosnia and Herzegovina in international events, and he has been doing it perfectly during the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers. Sulejmanovic is primarily used as a power forward with Tenerife, shooting 53.3 percent from the three-point line on two attempts per game this season, being especially efficient from the corners. Emir has averaged 6.4 points in 16.3 minutes per game this season in the BCL, playing his part off the bench. With him on board, Tenerife have a low risk-high reward guy who could end up winning a game or two for them when it matters the most.

MARCELINHO HUERTAS



Date of birth: 25/05/1983

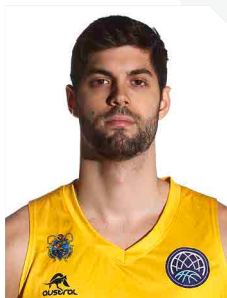
Position: point guard

Height: 1.90m/6'3"

Club career: FMU Sao Paulo (BRA; 2001-02, 2003-04), Pinheiros (BRA; 2002-03), Joventut (ESP; 2004-07), Bilbao Basket (ESP; 2007-08), Fortitudo Bologna (ITA; 2008-09), Baskonia (ESP; 2009-11, 2017-19), Barcelona (ESP; 2011-15), Los Angeles Lakers (USA; 2015-17)

There are absolutely no signs of slowing down. Marcelinho Huertas is still the same kid who hit his one-legged shots back in 2001, still the same man who served the final assist for a Kobe Bryant field goal, still the same man who was selected as the MVP of the FIBA Intercontinental Cup in 2020 and the member of the Star Lineup First Team in BCL in 2020. Huertas holds the record for most assists in a single game in the Basketball Champions League (17), and he has been fourth in assists per game with 5.8 of them this season, while being the only player playing less than 20 minutes per game in the top 10 in that department. Huertas has enjoyed a stellar career, and the world of basketball can only hope this swansong with Tenerife goes on for another season or two. Tenerife being a contender and having an MVP of the season frontrunner in Giorgi Shermadini would not be possible without Huertas' playmaking skills.

SANTI YUSTA



Date of birth: 28/04/1997

Position: forward

Height: 1.98m/6'6"

Club career: Real Madrid (ESP; 2015, 2017-19), Obradoiro (ESP; 2015-17)

This is one player whose numbers could fool you easily. Because when you check his season stats, you won't be impressed by 12.8 minutes nor by 5.1 points per game, and especially not by 25 percent shooting from beyond the arc. But those are all numbers mounting up a huge comeback from a long injury. Santi Yusta was so explosive before getting hurt that he made the Spanish national team, and his first games back saw him dunking in traffic with no fear shown. Growing up, there was only one topic in the Yusta family - Real Madrid. They are from Madrid, both Santi and his brother Daniel played for Real Madrid, and even when he was playing for Obradoiro his family members said it felt weird celebrating a triple made against their favorite club. Perhaps Santi could've explained this part better. After all, he studied journalism, and could have a future in it once his playing days are done.





NIZHNY NOVGOROD TEAM PROFILE

WRITTEN IN BLACK AND WHITE.

What a season so far for Nizhny Novgorod. The last time they had a team functioning this well in Nizhny was 2013-14 when they reached the VTB Final and the Semi-Finals of the EuroCup. Zoran Lukic was in charge of the club for that run as well and in fact, that season was the last of his first six-year stint as head coach. Now in his fourth year of his second spell at this club, the relationship is clicking again. This competition has already got previous when it comes to hosts celebrating anniversaries. In 2018 it was AEK that were celebrating the 50-year anniversary of their first European title.

This time it is the city of Nizhny Novgorod celebrating its 800-year anniversary and hoping to do it in style. This isn't the first time Nizhny have reached the Quarter-Finals of the BCL, they also got this far in 2019, but it is the best season they have had in the competition so far. Finishing top of a Round of 16 group that included AEK, Strasbourg and Turk Telekom is a clear signal that this team has the ability to go to the next step.



We have grown to expect fearsome defensive effort from all of Lukic's Nizhny teams, so the Defensive Rating of 105.9 (6th in the BCL) is well within character. The difference this year is on the offensive end. This squad is a black and white blur when they are in full-flow - which is pretty much 38 minutes per game - the ball and player movement is bewildering. They boast an Offensive Rating of 1.15 points per possession which is good for fifth in the BCL and fourth amongst teams at the Final 8. They can also claim to be the best 3-point shooting team in the league this year when it comes to the combination of volume and efficiency. They have drained 11.3 shots per game from behind the arc, which is tied for the most with Tenerife, and also made those shots at 43.5 percent which is second only to Pinar Karşıyaka at 45 percent. This elite level 3-point shooting is also the main driver behind their second-ranked Effective Field Goal Percentage of 58 percent.

The right corner 3-pointer is the hottest of hotspots for Nizhny. They shoot 58.8 percent from there. After that, the sweet spots are at the rim (61 percent), the left wing (43 percent), the right wing (41.7 percent), and the left corner (41 percent). The painted area is their highest volume shooting zone. They take 30.3 percent of all their shots in that area. They also attempt a further 14 percent of their shots at the rim.

The season started with a near miss on the road against Casademont Zaragoza. Despite 21 points from Alex Gavrilovic, Nizhny's short-handed eight-man squad just didn't have the legs and fell to a 3-point loss. Nonetheless, the performance was already flashing signs of what was to come. They followed that loss with a 3-game winning streak, taking the spoils on the road at Falco, then doubling up home and away against Start Lublin. Seven players scored in double figures against Fal-



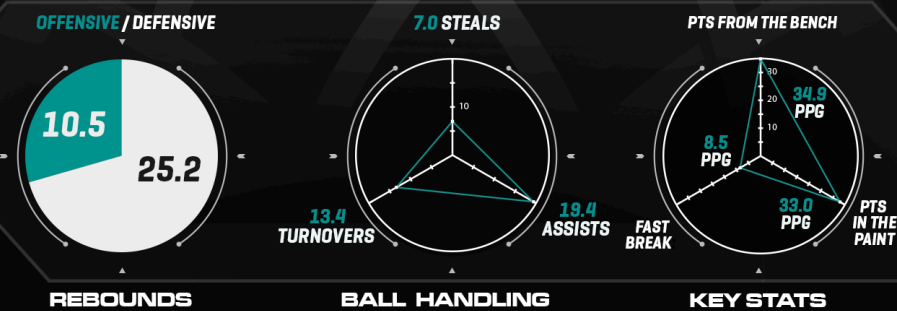
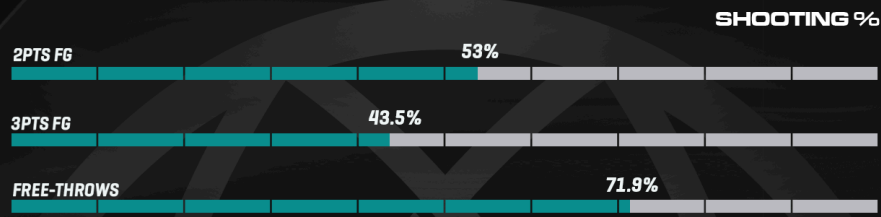
co, then Kasey Shepherd started to show his MVP credentials against Lublin. The American scored 19 points on the road in Poland, then 22 points in the home leg. After another close game against Zaragoza in Nizhny, the Spaniards became the only team to beat Nizhny twice this season. There was still time for Artem Komolov to show the player he is developing into with 21 points against Falco in the final game of the Regular Season. Nizhny ran out comfortable winners 73-68 and finished second in the group.

The Play-Offs drew Nizhny in what many considered to be the toughest group of the Round of 16. Previous champions AEK, perennial challengers Strasbourg, and Turk Telekom, fresh from last year's Final 8 with one of the league's most impressive rosters. Nizhny's reaction to this draw was eye-opening to say the least. They won their first four games straight and became the first team to reach this year's Final 8. They also secured the top spot in their group

to put themselves in the best position possible for the F8 draw. The first of those wins was on the road in France against Strasbourg. Kasey Shepherd stamped his authority on the Play-Offs with 26 points and 7 rebounds. He would go on to win Play-Offs MVP. If winning against Strasbourg was a result many would have considered a 50/50 chance, going to Ankara and comfortably handling Turk Telekom was surely more of an eyebrow raiser. Nizhny were paced by four players; Kasey Shepherd and Anton Astapkovich with 19 points apiece, 16 from Ivan Strebkov and new signing Andrey Vorontsevich instantly making his mark with 15 points. Shepherd was in an even more ruthless mood for the return leg against Turk Telekom in Russia. He scored 32 points - including 8/9 from behind the arc - in what was one of the best individual displays of the Play-Offs. When AEK came to Nizhny for Gameday 4 of the Play-Offs it was Komolov again making his case to be considered the most improved



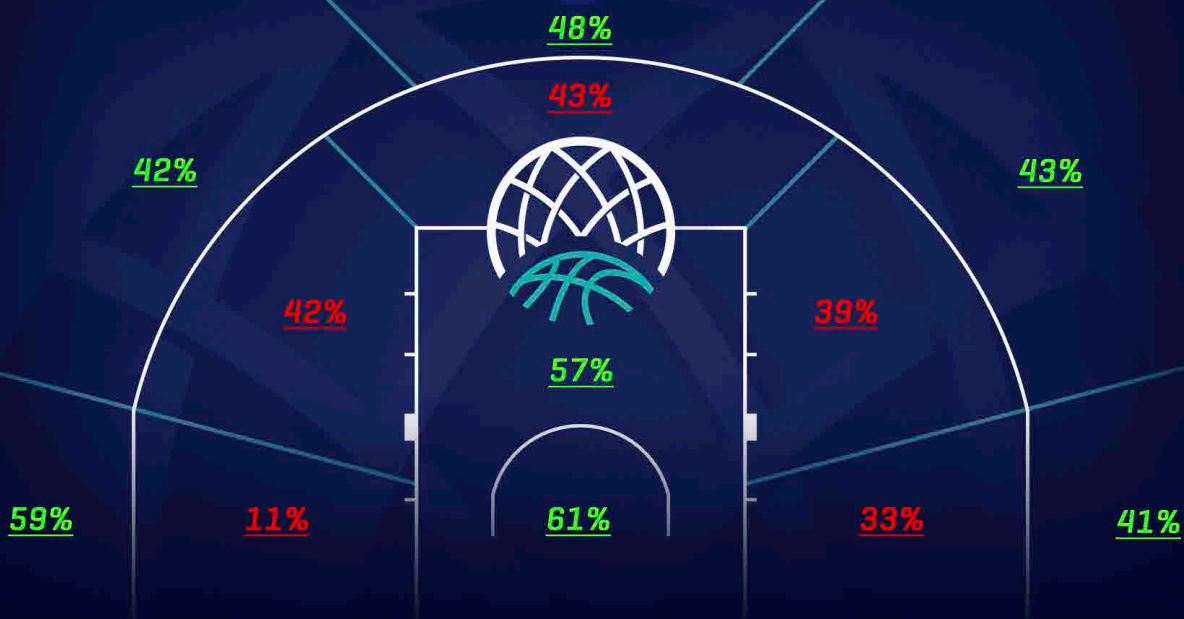
**NIZHNY
 NOVGOROD**





player in the BCL. His 21 points on 88.9 percent shooting overall and 83.3 percent from deep was as clinical as it was ruthless. Nizhny won the game 88-60 and sent a clear message to the rest of the league. They did drop their final two games of the season but by this point the damage was done and top spot had been secured. Up next at the Final 8 is a rematch with Casademont Zaragoza. The Spaniards may have beaten Nizhny twice already this season but it was close on both occasions. The Russians will be buoyed by their fans behind them and the celebration of an entire city to serve as motivation.

NIZHNY NOVGOROD SHOT MAP



ZORAN LUKIC



Date of birth: 07/09/1971

Coaching career: Beopetrol (assistant, SRB; 1995-2004), India (national team; 2006), CSKA Moscow 2 (RUS; 2006-08), Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2008-2014), Banvit (TUR; 2014-15)

The biggest star of the team, make no mistake about it. When somebody mentions Nizhny Novgorod, your first thought must be Zoran Lukic, who has now spent a decade at the helm of the team, leading it to the biggest successes in club history. Lukic's charisma is easy to fall in love with, he is 100 percent focused on the game, and his passion translates to the players, as well. Serbian coach is now fluent in Russian, which certainly helps the players buy into his system, one that remains the same at all times: a majority of domestic players with foreign players as upgrades to the whole squad. Lukic's timeouts are must watch TV, not only because of the way he talks to his players, but also because of what the team does after the timeout. With Nizhny playing above everybody's expectations this season, Lukic will be in the Coach of the Season conversation, and probably the favorite to win the award after sending juggernauts AEK and Turk Telekom home in the Play-Offs.

ANTON ASTAPKOVICH



Date of birth: 29/01/1994

Position: small forward

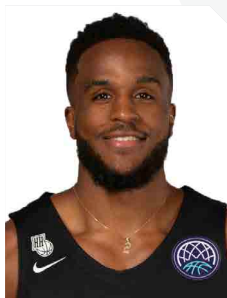
Height: 2.02m/6'8"

Club career: CSKA Moscow (RUS; 2014-16), Avtodor Saratov (RUS; 2016-17)

With Shepherd being the star player of the team, the fact that Anton Astapovich has the season-high in points flies under the radar. Astapovich was unstoppable in the season opener in VTB United League, destroying Khimki with 34 points, setting his new career-high. He was born in Belarus, but spent his entire basketball career in Russia, playing in CSKA before turning pro, and waiting for his chance with the senior team for two seasons before moving to Avtodor Saratov in search of a bigger role on the floor. Saratov gave Astapovich the first taste of BCL action, but he was much more impressive when he made the switch to Nizhny Novgorod. Season best game came against Turk Telekom, a 19-point, 10-rebound double-double.

KASEY SHEPHERD

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 05/06/1994

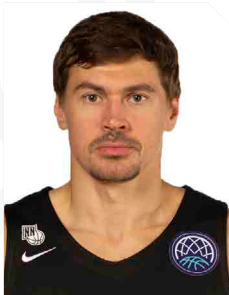
Position: guard

Height: 1.90m/6'3"

Club career: Ulcinjska Rivijera (MNE; 2017-18), Kaposvari KK (HUN; 2018-19), Batumi RSU (GEO; 2019), Kiev Basket (UKR; 2019-20)

The MVP of the Play-Offs! Of course, Kasey Shepherd took over for Nizhny Novgorod when the going got tough, because nobility obligates, meaning: Whoever claims to be noble must conduct himself nobly; one must act in a fashion that conforms to one's position, and with the reputation that one has earned. These sentences are a part of the motto of the National Honor Society in USA. There is a connection, Kasey Shepherd was a member of the NHS in high school, graduating cum laude as a distinguished service graduate. Long story short - Shepherd is a great human being. And an elite basketball player, so you have to be happy for him that he got a chance to prove his worth on a higher level, after playing in Montenegro, Hungary, Georgia and Ukraine. Shepherd averaged 18.1 points, 4.9 assists, 3.8 rebounds and 1.4 steals per game in 12 BCL games this season, all while hitting 31-of-60 shots from beyond the arc. His best game of the season was against Turk Telekom - 32 points in 32 minutes, shooting 8-of-9 from three-point area. That's also the main reason why his three-point shooting went up to 19-of-29 in the six games of the Play-Offs - a deadly shot makes his dribble drives and crafty finishes almost impossible to stop. If he keeps on doing his thing for Nizhny Novgorod, it will be almost impossible to keep him in black and white for another season. Sky is the limit for the 26-year-old.

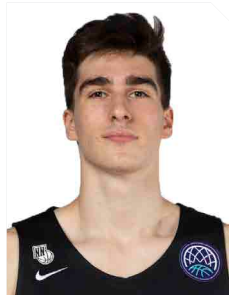
EVGENII BABURIN



Date of birth: 04/07/1987
Position: point guard
Height: 1.90m/6'3"
Club career: Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2005-08), Temp-SUMZ (RUS; 2008-10), Spartak Primorye (RUS; 2010-12), Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2012-16), Lokomotiv Kuban (RUS; 2016-18)

Started from the bottom, now he's here. Evgenii Baburin was part of Nizhny Novgorod's roster way back when they were playing in the Third Division, and he has been coming back to the team on regular basis. His form even got him a place with the Russian national team at major events such as FIBA EuroBasket 2015, FIBA EuroBasket 2017 and FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019. Baburin has only played two games for Nizhny Novgorod since the end of the Regular Season, so it is somewhat impressive that he's still managed to take 40 shots from beyond the arc in the BCL, hitting 42.5 percent on five attempts per game. Baburin is a smart player who knows when to opt for an extra pass, and his aggression on the defensive end usually gets him in foul trouble - he's averaging 3.5 fouls in 27.8 minutes per game.

MIKHAIL BELENITSKII



Date of birth: 12/09/2002
Position: shooting guard
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2019)

The future looks bright for the 18-year-old. Mikhail Belenitskii has been a part of the Russian national team in youth events such as the FIBA U16 European Championship in 2018 and the FIBA U18 European Championship in 2019, playing against a year older competition. Belenitskii had his role with the U18 team, playing 15 minutes per game as Russia reached the Quarter-Finals in Volos, Greece, but he is still struggling to break into coach Zoran Lukic's regular rotation. Mikhail only played seven minutes in two BCL games this season, he is yet to take a shot from any kind of distance to the rim. But his performances in last season's VTB United Youth League, where he averaged 12.3 points, 3.7 rebounds, 2.9 steals and 2.7 assists suggest he could be a future gem in Lukic's system.

ALEKSANDR CHADOV



Date of birth: 20/11/2001
Position: power forward
Height: 2.01m/6'7"
Club career: Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2019)

One of the reasons why Zoran Lukic is such a popular character in Russia is because he's not hesitant to give important minutes to young Russian players. This is where Aleksandr Chadov fits in with Nizhny Novgorod. He's still a teenager, but he saw minutes in 11 of 12 BCL games this season, including all six in the Play-Offs. Chadov is a big and strong forward who can space the floor with his shooting, and he is knocking down 41.2 percent of triples in the BCL and 41.7 percent in the VTB United League. His best game of the season came back on Gameday 1, when Falco Szombathely did not read the scouting report and allowed Chadov to shoot 4-of-4 from deep, finishing with 14 points in 22 minutes of work.

ALEXANDER GANKEVICH



Date of birth: 05/08/1995
Position: small forward
Height: 1.97m/6'6"
Club career: CSKA Moscow (RUS; 2012-18), Temp-SUMZ (RUS; 2018-19)

A product of CSKA Moscow's academy, Alexander Gankevich decided to search for happiness elsewhere after spending six years around the first team of CSKA. The decision to come to Nizhny Novgorod was a good one, you can feel Alex reaching his prime. Even though he's listed as small forward, he spends way more time under the rims and has only attempted a single triple in 225 minutes of action in the BCL this season. But Gankevich is there to set the screens, read the cuts, finish around the rim, which is why his season stats have him at 63.6 percent field goal shooting. Gankevich could be a starter, he could come off the bench, but it's unlikely he will close out a game, since he is vulnerable from the free throw line - only 45.2 percent in the BCL, and a bit better but still at 62.9 percent in the VTB United League.

ALEX GAVRILOVIC



Date of birth: 25/11/1991
Position: center
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Chorale Roanne (FRA; 2015-17), Hermine Nantes Atlantique (FRA; 2017-18), ALM Evreux Basket (FRA; 2017-18), BC Balkan (BUL; 2018-19), Tsmoki-Minsk (BLR; 2019-20)

Mr Worldwide Alex Gavrilovic is a player born in Strasbourg, France. You would say that Gavrilovic is not a typical French last name, and you would be right since the Gavrilovic family has their roots in Serbia, and Alex has a Serbian passport, as well. It doesn't end there, either, because Gavrilovic went through the US basketball system, from the IMG Academy to universities of Dayton and Towson, and had a successful run with the French youth national team during his days in the States. Gavrilovic is a strong center, but he has been getting much more minutes in the VTB United League than in the BCL. Still, his BCL production is at a very high rate - he's averaging 7.3 points in 11.8 minutes per game, compared to 6.3 points in 15.5 minutes per game in the VTB United League.

TIMOFEI GERASIMOV



Date of birth: 15/05/1997
Position: point guard
Height: 1.95m/6'5"
Club career: Lokomotiv Kuban (RUS; 2018-19), Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2018-19), Lokomotiv Kuban (RUS; 2019-20)

Even though Gerasimov is far from being the most dangerous player on this roster, it is somewhat significant that he has seen playing time in 11 of the 12 games played so far in the Basketball Champions League. This time around, it is seven minutes per game. This time next year, it could be 15. In a couple of years he could be the team leader, as evident by one of the last games Nizhny Novgorod played in the build up towards the Final 8. Gerasimov played more than 16 minutes for the first time this season, torching Kalev with 17 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists and 2 steals in the VTB United League. All of those were career highs for Gerasimov, who is still trying to translate his youth basketball form to this level. And his youth basketball once meant 15.3 points, 6.3 rebounds, 5.1 assists and 3.0 steals per game for Lokomotiv Kuban in the VTB United Youth League.

STEPAN GONTAR



Date of birth: 02/04/2002
Position: center
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Nutrisport Ilirija (SLO; 2018-19), Zlatorog Lasko (SLO; 2019-20)

Believe it or not, there is a connection with Stepan Gontar, a talented center playing in Nizhny Novgorod, and Luka Doncic, the global superstar. Gontar spent a part of his young career in Slovenia, playing for Ilirija who were coached by Sasa Doncic, Luka's father. We are yet to see Gontar's stepback three-pointers or Euro step, but with the way he's learning, he'll get there sooner rather than later. Gontar gives Zoran Lukic a huge body inside the arc, someone to set the screens and destroy the defender in the process. He has only played seven minutes this season, but stay tuned, he could be making headlines in the future with his size, talent and the opportunity to showcase them at this level.

ARTEM KOMOLOV



Date of birth: 01/06/1993
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.93m/6'4"
Club career: CSKA Moscow (RUS; 2013-14), Zenit Saint Petersburg (RUS; 2014-15), Ural Ekaterinburg (RUS; 2015-16), PSK Sakhalin (RUS; 2016-17)

Just by watching from afar, you can see that Artem Komolov and Zoran Lukic have a special connection. Lukic will give him the toughest assignments on the defensive end, and make him feel valuable offensively by putting the ball in his hands a lot of times straight after the team huddles in timeouts. Komolov is a catch-and-shoot specialist, hitting 47.2 percent of his attempts from deep in the Basketball Champions League and 45.0 percent in the VTB United League - and he shoots a lot, five attempts per game in BCL, six in VTB. No wonder he was the three-point challenge winner at the last All-Star Game in Russia. Best stat of the season for Komolov is the fact he only has eight turnovers, don't expect him to travel with the ball, unless he actually travels, which is what he loves doing, all over the world.

LUKE PETRASEK



Date of birth: 17/08/1995
Position: power forward
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Greensboro Swarm (USA; 2017-19), Giessen 46ers (GER; 2019-20)

It was a sublime start to the season for Luke Petrasek, as he scored in double digits in his first four games in the Basketball Champions League, including a 12-point, 10-rebound double-double against Casademont Zaragoza. The craziest part about that start was that the almost-seven-footer knocked down 10-of-14 three-pointers! He has cooled off as the season progressed, and only had four double digit games in all competitions in 2021. Petrasek comes from a basketball family, his grandfather is none other than Connie Simmons, who played for the New York Knicks from 1949 to 1954, and won a BAA title with the Boston Celtics in 1948. Petrasek brings a piece of Ivy League prestige to Russia, he attended Columbia University from 2013 to 2017.

ILYA PLATONOV



Date of birth: 31/07/1998
Position: small forward
Height: 2.00m/6'7"
Club career: Lokomotiv Kuban (RUS; 2017-19)

He fits the script perfectly. Instead of waiting forever for his chance to arrive with Lokomotiv Kuban, Ilya Platonov decided to take a chance with Nizhny Novgorod while in his early 20s. The move is paying off with time, he's already appeared in double the amount of VTB United League games with Nizhny Novgorod than with Lokomotiv Kuban - in a single season, too. He will have to wait for his chance in the Basketball Champions League, though. Platonov only played five minutes and made his only attempt from beyond the arc in the game against Pszczolka Start Lublin. In theory, he's the best three-point shooting player of the BCL, he's shooting 100 percent from that distance...

ILIA SOROKIN



Date of birth: 29/07/2001
Position: center
Height: 2.07m/6'9"
Club career: Nizhny Novgorod (RUS; 2019)

One of the youngest players on the team, Ilia Sorokin went through all the youth categories of Nizhny Novgorod. When you add the fact that he was a member of the Russian U19 national team at the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup, it does sound like Sorokin is a long-term project for the black and white. This Final 8 comes too soon for him to make an impact, but just being a part of the hosts will give him a chance to witness some of the best big men in European basketball from the front row. It could be a great learning opportunity for Sorokin.

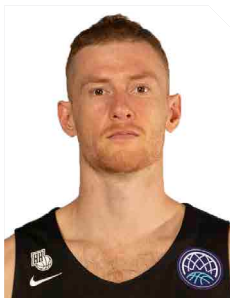
IVAN STREBKOV



Date of birth: 27/07/1991
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.92m/6'4"
Club career: CSKA Moscow (RUS; 2012-15), Avtodor Saratov (RUS; 2013-14)

The safest bet in all of basketball - Ivan Strebkov's pull up jumper, a long two, probably. Strebkov is an amazing passer as well, and not a lot of European guards can say they've had a 30/10 game in their life. He did it on December 28, wishing Kalev a happy new year with a 31-point, 10-assist performance! Strebkov has averaged 4.8 assists per game in the Basketball Champions League, getting a 12-point, 11-assist double-double against Falco Szombathely early on in the season and dishing out six or more assists in six of the 12 games this season in this competition. Along with Baburin, Strebkov has been the talismanic figure for Nizhny Novgorod, having joined the club back in 2015 and reaching such heights that he has been a regular for the Russian national team in all six games of the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers.

SERGEY TOROPOV



Date of birth: 15/10/1989

Position: power forward

Height: 2.06m/6'9"

Club career: Avtodor Saratov (RUS; 2006-14), Severstal Cherepovets (RUS; 2011-12), Temp-SUMZ (RUS; 2014-15), Samara (RUS; 2015-16), MBA Moscow (RUS; 2016-17)

The big guy had a slow start to his career, but after a long time with Avtodor Saratov and short-term stops with Severstal, Temp-SUMZ, Samara and MBA Moscow, he's now playing his fourth straight season with Nizhny Novgorod. He's been a regular for coach Zoran Lukic, averaging a career-high 16 minutes per game in the VTB United League, contributing with 5.5 points and 2.8 rebounds per game. His production is even better in the Basketball Champions League, playing 20 minutes night in, night out, scoring 7.0 points with 4.4 rebounds. Four of his games have been in double digits this season, with a season-high at 14 points against Falco Szombathely.

ANDREY VORONTSEVICH



Date of birth: 17/07/1987

Position: power forward

Height: 2.07m/6'9"

Club career: Lokomotiv Novosibirsk (RUS; 2004-06), CSKA Moscow (RUS; 2006-20)

Three-time EuroLeague champion. Eight-time VTB United League champion. VTB United League Finals Most Valuable Player in 2015. Seven-time Russian League champion. Bronze medalist at FIBA EuroBasket 2011. Fourteen straight seasons with CSKA Moscow. Andrey Vorontsevich is a walking legend of Russian basketball, and the fact that Nizhny Novgorod managed to land such a big name speaks volume of their growth as a club, too. Vorontsevich started hitting shots left and right straight away, scoring 20 points in his second game with the club in the VTB United League and reaching double digits in every single game after that; and doing the same in the Basketball Champions League, too. In the four games of the Play-Offs, Andrey averaged 14.0 points on 40 percent shooting from deep, while grabbing 7.3 rebounds and dishing out 2.8 assists per game. A huge pick-up for Nizhny, bringing championship winning mentality and know-how to a highly motivated club.



PINAR KARSIYAKA TEAM PROFILE

THIRD TIME LUCKY?

Pinar Karsiyaka currently sit third in the Turkish Basketball Super League and have spent most of the season so far in second place. They have also just reached the Quarter-Finals of the Basketball Champions League. Neither of these statements should come as a huge surprise. Whilst it's true that a rough season meant that Karsiyaka didn't qualify for the 2019-20 BCL season, this is still a club that is accustomed to challenging for domestic honours every season. Their most recent Turkish league title was in 2015. This is also their third

Quarter-Final in their third BCL season. Had the FIBA Europe Cup season been able to conclude last year, we could have very easily been talking about Pinar Karsiyaka as the Europe Cup title holders. This year's BCL roster has many of the same players that have stayed with the club since last year and also some very familiar faces. Tony Taylor and Amath M'Baye are previous BCL winners with Virtus Bologna and D.J. Kennedy was a member of the Team of the Season in 2018, also with Pinar Karsiyaka.



Coach Ufuk Sarica has been at the controls for Pinar Karsiyaka since the start of the 2019 season but also had a previous stint between 2012 and 2016. There is a strong relationship between coach and club, and for good reason. He was coaching this club when they won that last Turkish BSL title in 2015. Sarica has a great track record for winning with Karsiyaka but also winning whilst playing entertaining basketball and developing Turkish players. That entertaining basketball is certainly a feature of this season's team. They boast an Offensive Rating of 1.16 points per possession, which ranks them second amongst Final 8 teams. Raymar Morgan is one of the main benefactors of this offensive style, he leads the league in scoring with 219 points scored so far. This team also knows how to take care of the ball. They have the best Turnover Percentage at the Final 8 with only 12.9 percent of their possessions ending in a turnover. They are also the

best team at the Final 8 when it comes to controlling the defensive glass, rebounding 67.4 percent of all misses. This stat alone should be a point to watch as their Quarter-Final opponents ERA Nymburk have been one of the most aggressive teams on the offensive glass in recent seasons.

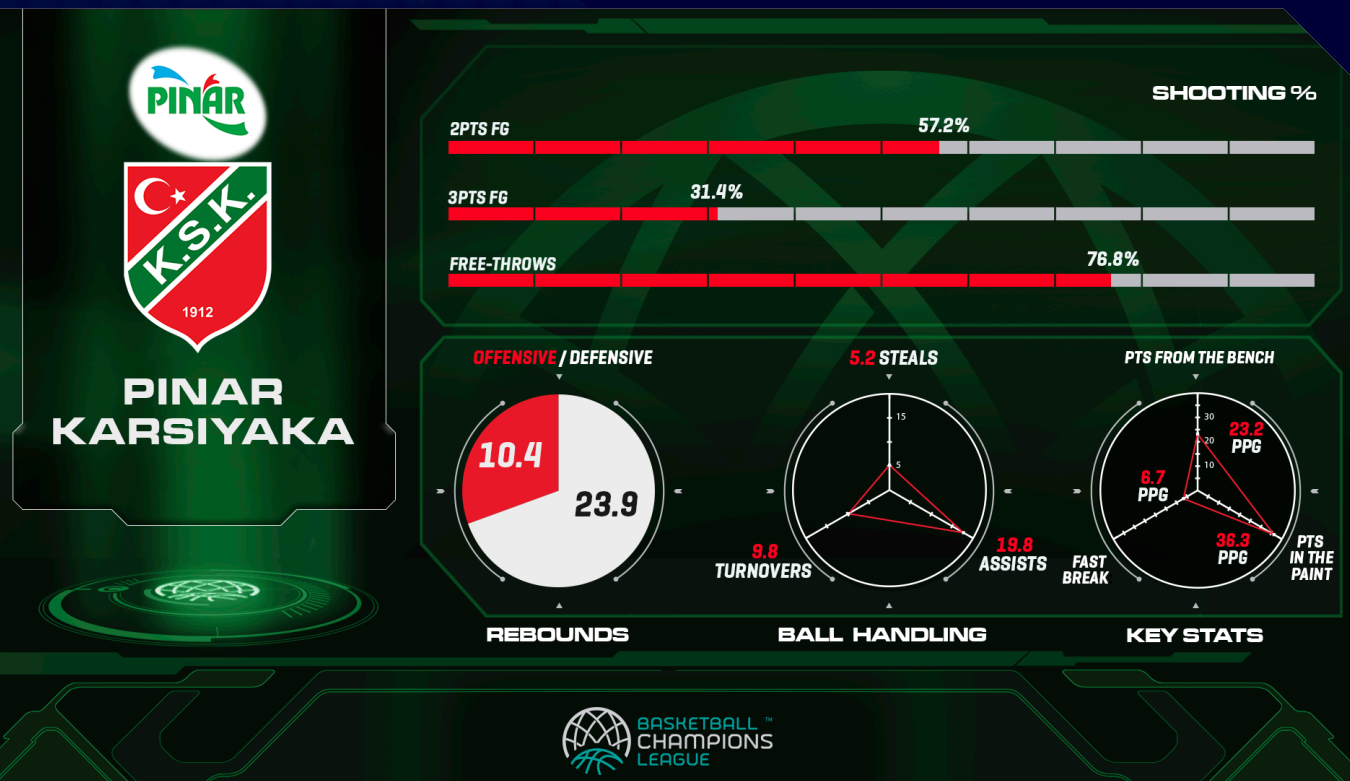
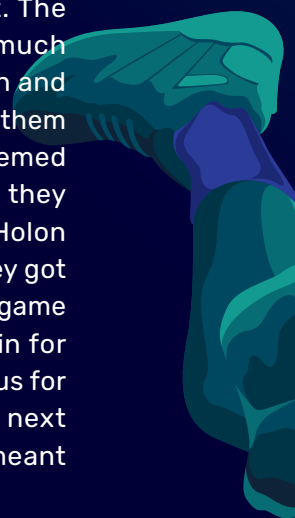
Pinar Karsiyaka have two zones on the floor that stand out as their most efficient areas to shoot from; under the basket where they shoot 69.7 percent, and the right corner where they shoot 52.4 percent. The right corner alone generates 1.6 points per shot for Karsiyaka, only Nizhny Novgorod have been more efficient from that area of the court. When we look at the areas that they attempt the highest ratio of their shots from, we can see that this is a very interior focused team. They attempt 26.5 percent of all their shots at the rim and



22 percent in the rest of the key. In total 48.5 percent of all their field goals are attempted in the paint, which is more than any other team at the Final 8.

Pinar Karsiyaka's season started with a road win at ACB newcomers Bilbao. Amath M'Baye scored 17 points to lead the scoring. Then came a worrying two game slide. The first of the two losses was by just a single digit at Bamberg. Raymar Morgan made a pair of free throws with 33 seconds left to bring the game within a point but they just couldn't find a way over the hump. Then two weeks later Bamberg travelled to Izmir and despite 19 points from M'Baye, the Germans were able to complete the season sweep. Bamberg were, however, the only team to beat Karsiyaka in the Regular Season. 20 points and 22 points from Raymar Morgan in both games against Fortitudo Bologna helped steer them past a doubleheader against the Italians. Then M'Baye and Morgan dropped 23 points and 20 points respectively to seal the sweep against Bilbao on the Final gameday of the Regular Season.

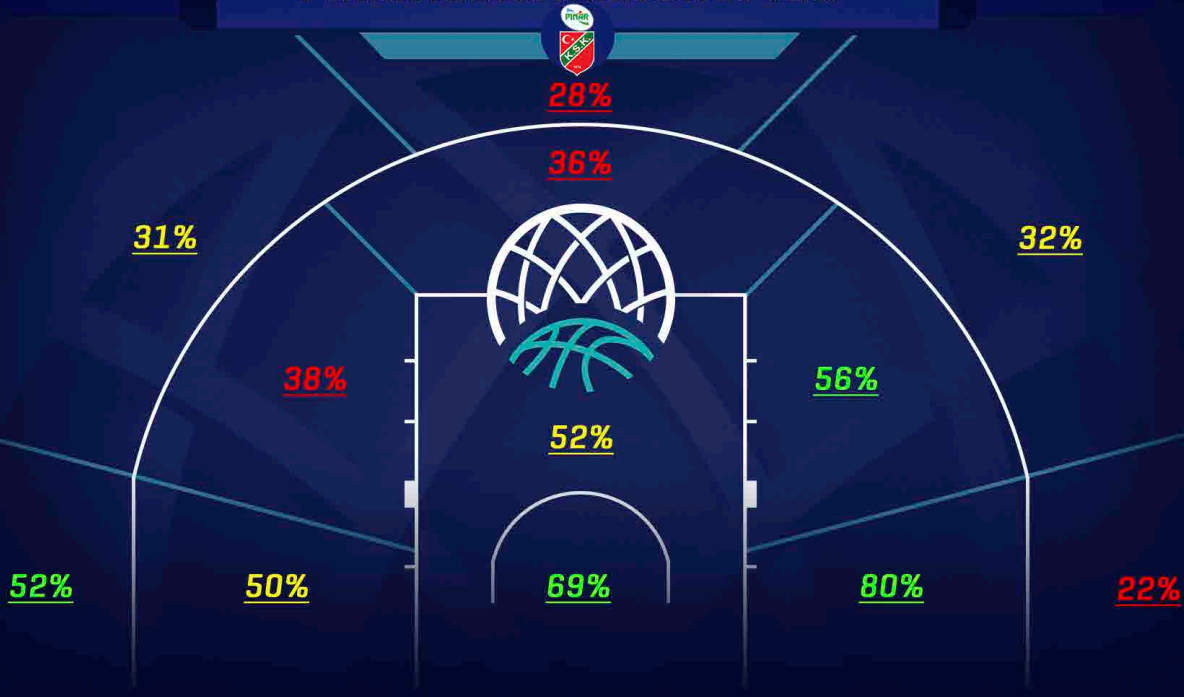
If qualifying for the Play-Offs was relatively plain sailing, then the Play-Offs themselves were more like a trip around Cape Horn. Gameday 1 started to plan with a 78-70 home win against Turkish rivals Tofas Bursa. Amath M'Baye was a matchup problem that Tofas just couldn't solve as he dropped 25 points on 71.4 percent shooting. That is when things started to get a little complicated. They lost the next game to Brindisi in Italy, which was far from ideal preparation for the two games in two weeks against Holon they had next. The away leg in Holon couldn't have gone much better, as 24 points from Raymar Morgan and 18 points from Sek Henry helped to guide them to a 63-72 win in the road. Everything seemed back on track for Pinar Karsiyaka and all they needed to do was win at home against Holon and they were qualified. Instead, what they got was one of the rarest sequences to end a game that you could ever see and a 1-point win for Holon. The situation got especially nervous for Pinar Karsiyaka when they dropped the next game on the road to Tofas Bursa. This meant





they needed to win against Brindisi in the final game of the Round of 16. But winning is exactly what they did. In truth, the game never looked in doubt. Tony Taylor came out from the opening tip with the kind of energy you need from a leader. His 30 points were well supported by D.J. Kennedy with 21 points and Raymar Morgan with 20 of his own. The relief was palpable but even more visible was the elation of Karsiyaka's on-court celebrations after the game. Up next for Sarica and Pinar Karsiyaka is a trip to Russia and a draw against ERA Nymburk. The two clubs have never met in the BCL and they are also both yet to go further than the Quarter-Finals. They say the first time for anything is never good or bad, just memorable. The outcome of this game will surely be more memorable for one club than the other.

PINAR KARSIYAKA SHOT MAP



UFUK SARICA



Date of birth: 17/06/1972

Playing career: Efes Pilsen (TUR; 1989-99), Ulkerspor (TUR; 1999-2001), Bnei Herzliya (ISR; 2001), Montepaschi Siena (ITA; 2001), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2001-02), Darussafaka (TUR; 2002-03), Besiktas (TUR; 2003-04)

Coaching career: Besiktas (assistant, TUR; 2006-07, 2007-08), Besiktas (TUR; 2007, 2016-18), Anadolu Efes (assistant, TUR; 2008-11), Anadolu Efes (TUR; 2011-12), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2012-16), Turkey (assistant, national team; 2014-17), Turkey (national team; 2017-20)

There were so many iconic moments in Ufuk Sarica's basketball days, but two stand out. Sarica was a part of the Efes Pilsen squad that claimed the 1996 Korac Cup, playing all 40 minutes of the return fixture of the Final against Milano, helping his team win the aggregate score by just a single point. The other moment was the unbelievable run by Sarica's Pinar Karsiyaka squad in 2015. Karsiyaka defeated Fenerbahce and Efes in the Semi-Finals and Finals, respectively, to win the Turkish League in 2015. Sarica and Karsiyaka are looking to add international glory to their tally. Fun fact about Sarica: He was a teammate of Mustafa Kemal Bitim, now he's coaching his son Onuralp Bitim.

RAYMAR MORGAN

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 08/08/1988

Position: power forward

Height: 2.03m/6'8"

Club career: Maccabi Rishon LeZion (ISR; 2010-11), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2011), Ironi Ashkelon (ISR; 2011-12), Barak Netanya (ISR; 2012-13), BG Göttingen (GER; 2014-15), Panathinaikos (GRE; 2015), ratiopharm Ulm (GER; 2015-17), Tofas Bursa (TUR; 2017-18), UNICS (RUS; 2018-20)

The man who puts "power" into power forward is in his 30s, but shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, Raymar Morgan is putting up crazy numbers this season, scoring in double digits in every single game in the BCL, averaging 18.3 points and 5.7 rebounds per game, while shooting 63.4 percent from the field. Coach Sarica loves using Morgan as an undersized center, which is just another connection to Draymond Green, his Michigan State teammate. But Draymond isn't the only superstar Golden State Warrior who's connected to Morgan - Raymar played alongside Steph Curry at the FIBA U19 World Championship in 2007. Crazy to think that not even a squad of Curry, Morgan, Patrick Beverly, Michael Beasley, DeAndre Jordan, Deon Thompson and others could win gold back then. They finished as runners up, losing to Serbia in the Final in Novi Sad. Although Morgan is a physical player who loves fighting on the inside, he's not afraid to step outside and take a three-pointer or two. He's shooting 35.7 percent from beyond the arc in the BCL and 31.0 percent in the Turkish League. Raymar is entering the Final 8 as the Basketball Champions League leader in field goals made (92) and total points (219) this season.

METECAN BIRSEN



Date of birth: 06/04/1995

Position: small forward

Height: 2.05m/6'9"

Club career: Fenerbahce (TUR; 2011-14), Eskisehir (TUR; 2014-15), Istanbul BB (TUR; 2015-17), Sakarya BB (TUR; 2017-18), Anadolu Efes (TUR; 2018-19)

Just in case Pinar Karsiyaka need it, the luck of the Irish is right there with Metecan Birsén on board. His full name is Metecan James Birsén, giving you a hint on his background - his mother is Irish, and to make things more worldwide, Metecan lived in Germany as a kid, before moving to Istanbul and moving up through the ranks of Fenerbahce youth system. Birsén went on to play for Anadolu Efes, too, before finding home at Pinar Karsiyaka. Along with Onuralp Bitim, Birsén gives a bit of domestic firepower on the wings. He has averaged 20 minutes per game this season, scoring 5.6 points with 4.8 rebounds to his name, too. His only double-digit game of the campaign came in the Regular Season, when he torched Fortitudo Bologna with 14 points and 6 rebounds in 23 minutes of work. He's been more productive in the Turkish League - 24 minutes, 8.4 points, 5.1 rebounds per game, while shooting 39 percent from deep.

ARCA TULUOGLU



Date of birth: 13/06/1997

Position: point guard

Height: 1.80m/5'11"

Club career: Karsiyakalilar (TUR; 2016-17), Selcuklu Belediyesi (TUR; 2017-18)

It's hard to imagine Arca being a factor at the Final 8. After going through Pinar Karsiyaka's youth system, Tuluoglu is now in his third season with the first team, but in a bizarre twist of circumstances, he's been on the roster in all 12 games of the BCL season for Karsiyaka, collecting 12 straight "DNP - Coach decision" notes. Tuluoglu played the best game of his career against Fenerbahce in the Turkish League, scoring 22 points with 8 assists in 38 minutes of action. He played only 23 minutes in all other games this season, scoring a total of 10 points.

MAHIR AGVA



Date of birth: 26/06/1996
Position: center
Height: 2.06m/6'9"
Club career: Ehingen Urspring (GER; 2014-15), Tigers Tubingen (GER; 2015-16), Frankfurt Skyliners (GER; 2016-17), Giessen 46ers (GER; 2017-19), Darussafaka (TUR; 2019-20)

Two words: Doner Kebab. Mahir Agva grew up surrounded by doner kebab everywhere, as his father opened the first doner kebab shop in Reutlingen, Germany, and Mahir was there to help out with the restaurant as years went on. But aside from kebab, Agva family also enjoyed a fair share of love for sports. Mahir grew out into a near seven-footer, showing he could make a living out of playing center in modern day basketball. He was bounced around Germany for a while, played the first ever BCL season with Fraport Skyliners, and finally moved to his parents' homeland in 2019. Agvas are originally from the southern part of Turkey, so once Darussafaka and Karsiyaka made the call, the decision was easy for Mahir to move abroad. Agva scored 8 of his 13 season points against Bilbao, and played a total of 48 minutes in the BCL this season.

SEMIH ERDEN



Date of birth: 28/07/1986
Position: center
Height: 2.10m/6'11"
Club career: Darussafaka (TUR; 2003-04, 2015-17), Partizan (SRB; 2004-05), Fenerbahce (TUR; 2005-10, 2014-15), Boston Celtics (USA; 2010-11), Cleveland Cavaliers (USA; 2011-12), Besiktas (TUR; 2011, 2017-18), Anadolu Efes (TUR; 2012-14), Hacettepe Universitesi (TUR; 2017), Istanbul BSB (TUR; 2018-19)

He may be in the August of his career, but nobody is waiting for the fall. Semih Erden turned back the clock once again, playing ten minutes per game on the brink of his 35th birthday, and even though he's yet to hit double digits in scoring this season, his influence is certainly felt in the locker room. Semih is vertical threat, ready to dunk home everything around the rim and challenge all the shots from the paint on the other side of the floor. Erden played a total of 69 NBA games in his career, alongside Ray Allen, Kevin Garnett, Shaq O'Neal, Paul Pierce, Rajon Rondo, Baron Davis, Antawn Jamison, Kyrie Irving and others. Fun fact: Semih Erden and D.J. Kennedy were teammates in Cleveland Cavaliers in 2011-12.

ONURALP BITIM



Date of birth: 31/03/1999
Position: small forward
Height: 1.96m/6'5"
Club career: Anadolu Efes (TUR; 2016-19)

High flying, three-point shooting wing. Sounds like a perfect fit for modern basketball, right? Onuralp Bitim is a two-time slam dunk champion in Turkey, making jumping over people a specialty of his, and he provided us with one of the dunks of the season, flying over Tofas' Ege Demir in the Play-Offs. Bitim has a steady looking shot, as well, even though we've not seen him at his best in the Basketball Champions League. But a trip back to the FIBA U20 European Championship 2019 shows that Bitim was a three-point threat, knocking down eight of them against Italy and Montenegro in two games he scored 29 and 25, respectively. Onuralp's father Mustafa Kemal Bitim was a basketball player too, and spent a part of his career as a teammate of Ufuk Sarica, his son's current coach.

D.J. KENNEDY



Date of birth: 05/11/1989
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.98m/6'6"
Club career: Erie BayHawks (USA; 2011-12, 2012-13), Cleveland Cavaliers (USA; 2012), Rio Grande Valley Vipers (USA; 2013), BCM Gravelines-Dunkerque (FRA; 2013), Hapoel Holon (ISR; 2014), Krasny Oktyabr (RUS; 2014), MHP Riesen Ludwigsburg (GER; 2014-15, 2017), Enisey (RUS; 2015-16), Guangzhou Long-Lions (CHN; 2016-17), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2017-18), Melbourne United (AUS; 2018-19), Umana Reyer Venezia (ITA; 2019)

Here's a piece of advice. Stay away from David John Kennedy in a knockout format. D.J. Kennedy is a leader and a winner, and even though this season wasn't his best one, he's still a player who led the BCL in scoring in 2018, booking a spot on the Star Lineup First Team, too. Kennedy is a left-handed menace, always playing with a lot of energy and finding holes in defenses with his variety of crossovers, stepbacks or hesitations. He is also a true legend of The Basketball Tournament, a four-time winner of the event and a two time MVP while wearing the Overseas Elite jersey. Kennedy's best game of the season was the one that sent Karsiyaka to the Final 8. D.J. scored 21 points on 6-of-9 shooting to go along with his 10 rebounds in a win-or-go-home game against Happy Casa Brindisi. Like the intro of this part said - you don't want to see David John on the other side of an elimination game.

TONY TAYLOR



Date of birth: 09/08/1990
Position: point guard
Height: 1.82m/6'0"
Club career: Tulsa 66ers (USA; 2012-13), Turow Zgorzelec (POL; 2013-15), Enisey (RUS; 2015-16), SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2016), Banvit (TUR; 2017-18), Virtus Bologna (ITA; 2018-19)

Partnering up with Amath M'Baye once more, Tony Taylor could join his former teammates Kevin Punter and Dejan Kravic as a BCL champion with two different teams. Taylor was the starting point guard for the Segafredo Virtus Bologna team back in 2019, so he is familiar with the role that Ufuk Sarica created for him in Karsiyaka. Taylor is just another natural born winner on this team, and the do-or-die game against Happy Casa Brindisi proved it once again. He matched his previous BCL career-high of 21 points in the first half alone, setting the new mark at 30 at the end of the game. Taylor is the main distributor on this team, averaging 3.8 assists per game, and his 1v1 defense is arguably the best in the entire BCL.

SEK HENRY



Date of birth: 28/06/1987
Position: point guard
Height: 1.93m/6'4"
Club career: Akita Northern Happinets (JPN; 2010-11), Bucaneros de La Guaira (VEN; 2012), AZS Koszalin (POL; 2012-14), Brindisi (ITA; 2014), Orlandina (ITA; 2014-15), Piratas de Quebradillas (PUR; 2015), Zaragoza (ESP; 2015-16), EB Pau-Lacq-Orthez (FRA; 2016), BCM Gravelines-Dunkerque (FRA; 2016-17), Maccabi Ashdod (ISR; 2017-18), Hunan Jinjian Miye (CHN; 2018), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2018-19), New Zealand Breakers (NZL; 2019-20), Hapoel Tel Aviv (ISR; 2020)

If Karsiyaka go on to win this whole thing, we know who the DJ at the party would be. Sek Henry comes from a musical family, his father Michael George is better known under his stage name Ras Michael, a reggae musician so influential in Jamaica that he was awarded the Order of Distinction by the Jamaican government. While Ras Michael's music went all around the world, so did Sek's basketball - he played in Japan, Venezuela, Poland, Italy, Puerto Rico, Spain, France, Israel, Turkey, China and Australia, with an easily recognizable stepback jumper and a lefty stroke that saw him knock down three three-pointers in five BCL games this season. Henry's signature moment came in the game against Holon in the Play-Offs - down by three, Henry missed a free throw, grabbed his own rebound and knocked down a three-point-er for the tie. Karsiyaka went on to lose the game, but Henry gave us one of the highlight plays of the season.

AMATH M'BAYE



Date of birth: 14/12/1989
Position: forward
Height: 2.06m/6'9"
Club career: Nagoya Diamond Dolphins (JPN; 2013-16), Brindisi (ITA; 2016-17), Olimpia Milano (ITA; 2017-18), Virtus Bologna (ITA; 2018-19)

Partnering up with Tony Taylor once more, Amath M'Baye could join his former teammates Kevin Punter and Dejan Kravic as a BCL champion with two different teams. The French forward had a different path compared to most of his compatriots. He went to Wyoming and Oklahoma in the NCAA, before embarking on his professional basketball adventure with a three-year long stay in Japan. Three different teams in Italy saw him rise to prominence in Europe, and his Karsiyaka tenure has been nothing short of spectacular. Highlight plays, game winning shots, elite defense and 15.6 points per game in the BCL this season. Along with Raymar Morgan, the French national team player has been a legit MVP of the Season candidate.

YONUS SONSIRMA



Date of birth: 08/10/1992
Position: point guard
Height: 1.92m/6'4"
Club career: Darussafaka (TUR; 2009-12), Olin Edirne (TUR; 2012-13), Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2013-15), Demir Insaat Buyukcekmece (TUR; 2015-16), Eskisehir (TUR; 2016-18), Turk Telekom (TUR; 2018-19)

The front office of Pinar Karsiyaka has done an amazing job in bringing back the players who know all about the culture of the team. Yonus Sonsirma plays his role perfectly, as the backup point guard ready to change the rhythm of the game, already armed with the Turkish League winning experience from 2015, with Karsiyaka, under coach Ufuk Sarica. Sonsirma is not the safest of bets when it comes to three-point shooting in the BCL, having made just five of his 25 attempts, but at 28 years old, Yonus is all about keeping the team's composure on the floor. You may not notice him next to all the big names in Karsiyaka, but don't be surprised if his stat line shows 0 turnovers and 5+ assists off the bench.

YALIM OLCAY



Date of birth: 13/04/1997

Position: forward

Height: 2.03m/6'8"

Club career: Western Carolina Cata-mounts (USA; 2016-19), UMD Bulldogs (USA; 2019-20)

We have not seen Yalim Olcay in action yet in the Basketball Champions League, but time is on his side as he gets to learn from Semih Erden, Raymar Morgan, Amath M'Baye and all the others. Olcay is a hometown kid straight out of Izmir, but his career did not see him book Pinar Karsiyaka minutes straight away. He was the leader of their U16 team, then moved to USA to pursue a college degree while playing basketball. He spent three years with Western California and one more with University of Minnesota Duluth, before moving back home and signing a deal with Pinar Karsiyaka. However, the game against Brose Bamberg in the Regular Season was the only one where he made the cut to be on the bench, and he didn't see playing time in that one, explained by a coach decision line in the boxscore.

NUSRET YILDIRIM



Date of birth: 27/04/1989

Position: small forward

Height: 2.00m/6'7"

Club career: Galatasaray (TUR; 2007-08), TTFNet Beykoz (TUR; 2008-10), Istanbulspor (TUR; 2010-11), Erdemir (TUR; 2011-13), Mersin BB (TUR; 2013-14), Trabzonspor (TUR; 2014-15), Banvit (TUR; 2015-16), Acibadem Universitesi (TUR; 2016-17), Turk Telekom (TUR; 2017-19)

Nusret Yildirim made the switch to Karsiyaka last season, but is having a hard time trying to push youngsters like Metecan Birsen and Onuralp Bitim out of minutes. Yildirim played double digit minutes in just four BCL games this season, getting much more playing time in the Turkish League where he averages 10 minutes over the course of 26 games. Nusret is yet to score in double digits in all competitions this season, but with the way he's conducting himself on the bench and on the floor, it seems like the high pressure situation of the Final 8 could bring out the best in him once coach Ufuk Sarica calls his name.

CAGATAY OZKAN



Date of birth: 09/07/2001

Position: small forward

Height: 1.98m/6'6"

Club career: Pinar Karsiyaka (TUR; 2018)

Cagatay Ozkan is the youngest player on this Karsiyaka roster. Add to the fact the part where he's supposed to earn minutes in a crowded fight for two forward positions, and it's easy to see why he hasn't made his BCL debut yet. Cagatay does have some experience for his age, as he participated in the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup back in 2018, helping Turkey reach the Quarter-Finals, where they were knocked out by Killian Hayes, Theo Maledon and the rest of the French team. As for Ozkan, this Final 8 will come as a learning experience like no other. Maybe that helps him become a valuable role player over the coming years.

SIG STRASBOURG TEAM PROFILE

ROLLER COASTERS.

The start of the 2020-21 season saw a major culture shift and changing of the guard at SIG Strasbourg. Long-time head coach Vincent Collet stepped away from the club after 9 years at the helm. Incoming was his assistant coach Lassi Tuovi from Finland. It was a bold move from the club to replace one of Europe's most experienced coaches with the relatively untested Fin. To add to the challenge for the young coach, was an almost entirely new squad. Only youngsters Jayson Tchicamboud and Essome Miyem were kept from 2020. The primary rotation had to be constructed from

players learning to play together and build chemistry on the fly. The outcome has surely been better than anyone outside the club itself could have expected. Strasbourg currently sit third in France, above ASVEL, and have made it to the Quarter-Finals of the Basketball Champions League for only the second time, despite taking part in every season since the competition's inception. The only thing about the season so far that you could say is traditionally SIG Strasbourg, is that they have done it in the most predictably unpredictable fashion.



Whilst few knew the name Lassi Tuovi before the season started, they certainly do now. Whilst he may not personally be the type to search out the comparisons to other coaches his age, it's clear that the achievement of being the youngest coach to reach this stage of the Basketball Champions League firmly places Tuovi in the list of the most talented, young, coaching phenoms on the continent. He has set this team up perfectly to succeed in the underdog or "Cinderella story" role. When your team is unlikely to shoot the highest percentages and you don't perhaps have the resources to chase expensive big men to generate a high volume of shots at the rim, you need to find ways to make every possession count. Strasbourg's stats this season reflect that plan perfectly. They lead all teams at the Final 8 for Offensive Rebound Percentage, pulling down 31.2 percent of their own misses and generating vital second chance opportunities. They

are also a remarkably low turnover team, with a Turnover Percentage of 13.2 percent, good for second amongst Final 8 teams. They also rank second at the Final 8 for Steal Percentage at 11.6 percent. Not only do they make possessions count for themselves, they make them count against their opponents. Another stat that tells a story for SIG is Assist Percentage. With just 60.3 percent of their baskets coming from an assist they create less of their scores from an assist than any other team travelling to Russia. That isn't necessarily a bad thing. Assists are also a double-edged sword when it comes to turnovers, especially in a knockout tournament. When you have players with the offensive talent of Bonzie Colson, Brandon Jefferson, Jaromir Bohacik, and DeAndre Lansdowne it makes sense to play in a way that finds them in the spots where they want to go to work.



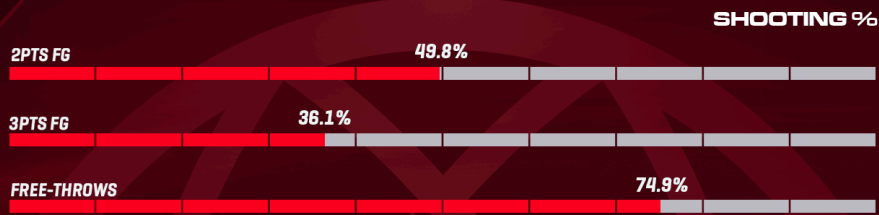
If we look at the sweet spots on the floor for this SIG Strasbourg team, we can see three clear zones; they shoot 70.2 percent at the rim, 50.6 percent in the paint, and 46.1 percent from the right corner. In terms of volume, the painted area and directly at the rim are not only two of their most efficient shooting areas but also two of their most used. Strasbourg attempted 32 percent of all their field goals in the paint and 13.8 percent of them directly at the rim. The next most used zone for them is the right wing, where they take another 13 percent of thief shots.

Strasbourg's season started in true BCL style with a walk off game-winner against VEF Riga. Lassi Tuovi's squad were down 2 with 12 seconds to go and got to the free throw line as a result of VEF Riga intentionally fouling. Jean-Baptiste Maille made the first from the line but missed the second. Fortunately, Bonzie Colson was there to stretch out a telescopic arm and wind in the offensive rebound. From

the rebound the ball eventually found its way back to Bonzie Colson, who, in turn, hit a shot to win the game with a defender in his grill and the clock counting down. This kind of sequence served as the perfect proxy for what was to come in SIG's season. They would go on to be involved in two further games decided by 3 points or less and a double overtime thriller in the return leg against VEF Riga. First, Gameday 2 saw SIG come crashing back down to earth with a 3-point loss to Rytas Vilnius. Despite not qualifying, the Lithuanians are the only club to have beaten Strasbourg twice this season. After that loss SIG got back on track with two wins against Peristeri. The last of their close games was an impressive 3-point win on the road in Athens, further cementing their confidence in clutch, late-game situations. Ish Wainwright and Bonzie Colson led the way with 18 and 20 points respectively. Brandon Jefferson sealed the game with a go-ahead 3-ball and under 12 seconds on the clock. The very next game SIG were back on



SIG STRASBOURG

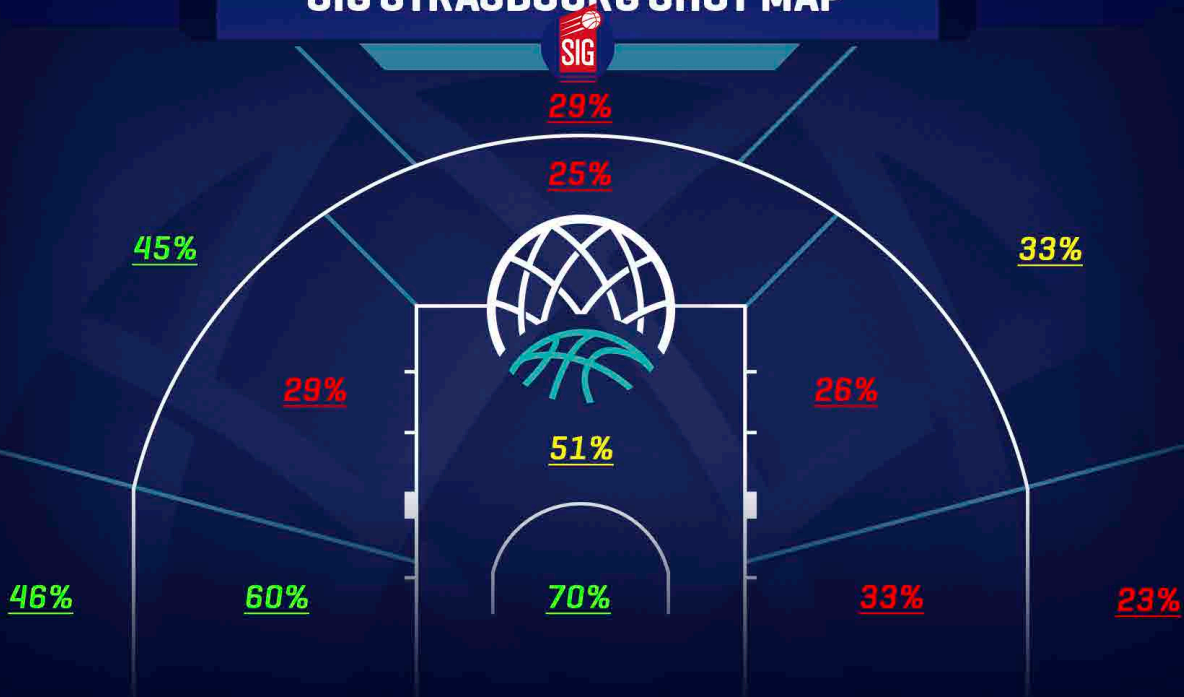


the rollercoaster against VEF Riga. 31 points from Bonzie Colson was the driving force but they needed even more heroics than that from their MVP candidate. Down 3 with 8 seconds on the clock Strasbourg executed their coach's plan of the tactics board to perfection and Colson hit another 3-ball with the clock counting down, this time from the corner. That was enough to swing the momentum and eventually they picked up a vital win in the hunt for the Play-Offs.

The Play-Offs couldn't have started any worse for Strasbourg. Straight out the gate was a loss on the road to Turk Telekom, then at home to Nizhny Novgorod, and finally, a comprehensive loss to AEK in Athens. Things were already looking out of reach after only 3 games. But this team wasn't ready to unbuckle and exit the ride just yet. An 18-point win at home against AEK, powered by 18 points each for Brandon Jefferson and Bonzie Colson, was just enough to light a small beacon of hope. When

they followed that up with a 10-point win on the road at high-flying Nizhny Novgorod, the flames were fanned even further. This set up a final day showdown with Turk Telekom in the Rhenus Sport Arena. 21 points from Jaromir Bohacik and 23 points from Bonzie Colson were enough to seal the deal and finish the most unlikely of comebacks from 0-3 down. The last time SIG Strasbourg were in the Quarter-Finals they ended up getting the toughest draw and got knocked out by the eventual champions, AEK. This time they come up against a Tenerife squad looking to be the first team to become double champions. If anyone could break the trend, it is probably this season's SIG Strasbourg.

SIG STRASBOURG SHOT MAP



LASSI TUOVI



Date of birth: 31/12/1986
playing career: Lappeenranta NMKY (FIN; 2002-04)
coaching career: Lappeenranta NMKY (assistant, FIN; 2004-11), Finland (assistant, national team; 2010-2021), Lappeenranta NMKY (FIN; 2011-14), Besiktas JK (TUR; 2015-16), SIG Strasbourg (assistant, FRA; 2016-17, 2018-20), Gravelines-Dunquerque (assistant, FRA; 2017-18)

It's unreal that Lassi Tuovi has been around for almost 20 years...and he's not even 35 yet! The Finnish playcaller only played for a couple of seasons before suffering a career-ending injury, but the love for basketball was too strong to keep him away from the sport. Tuovi started as an assistant, and was patient enough to wait for his chance in Lappeenranta NMKY, Besiktas JK and finally SIG Strasbourg. He's been the assistant coach for the Finnish national team for over ten years, and his tricks in the clutch led SIG Strasbourg to big time shots to tie or win close games. Tuovi will enjoy this Final 8 as the youngest of all coaches to make the cut. Impressive, but expected, with all the promise he has shown since 2004, and especially this season. Next one promises to be even better, it was a smart idea by SIG Strasbourg to give him a contract until 2022.

LUCAS BEAUFORT



Date of birth: 24/05/2002
Position: point guard
Height: 1.89m/6'2"
Club career: SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2017)

Lucas Beaufort is still such a youngster that he's still eligible and playing for the Espoirs, the youth team of SIG Strasbourg this season. He's had 13.2 points, 3.5 assists, 3.1 rebounds and 1.9 steals per game in that competition, but he has played only a single LNB and a single BCL game this season, which means he's highly unlikely to make an impact at this Final 8. The club career part is short here, because Lucas Beaufort is a product of SIG Strasbourg's academy. He has also played for the French youth national team, meaning he has all the right ingredients to make it to the highest of levels.

BONZIE COLSON

STAR
PLAYER



Date of birth: 12/01/1996
Position: small forward
Height: 1.98m/6'6"
Club career: Canton Charge (USA; 2018-19), Milwaukee Bucks (USA; 2019), Wisconsin Herd (USA; 2019), Darussafaka Tekfen (TUR; 2019-20)

Sure, 1.98m/6'6" sounds average, but Bonzie Colson makes up for the lack of size inside with a crazy wingspan that's almost seven feet long. When you know that piece of information, it's understandable the Milwaukee Bucks took the bait and brought him in to be another part of their physical freaks squad in 2019. Colson is close friends with Jared Dudley, who taught him a trick or two about spreading the floor, and the exchange of knowledge between Dudley and the Colson family is a two-way street since Bonzie's dad was Dudley's coach at Boston College. Bonzie is a game-winner, he hit clutch triples against VEF Riga twice this season, and he was number four in scoring in the Basketball Champions League heading up to the Final 8, averaging 19.1 points, with 6.3 rebounds also to his name, for good measure. Colson shares Strasbourg's BCL season-high of 31 points with Brandon Jefferson. His name, you've guessed it, against VEF Riga. Having him on board gives coach Lassi Tuovi a chance to play small-ball without fear of losing the rebounding battle - during his days at Notre Dame, Bonzie was the first player shorter than 6'7" to lead the ACC in rebounding since 1958. That's just a nerdy way of saying Colson has amazing feel for boards and positioning. He is still at the beginning of his professional career, he's 25, don't be surprised if he makes it back to the NBA in a season or two, if he keeps up this kind of pace.

JAROMIR BOHACIK



Date of birth: 26/05/1992
Position: forward
Height: 1.97m/6'6"
Club career: Prostějov (CZE; 2010-14), Brno (CZE; 2012-13), Leuven Bears (BEL; 2015-17), USK Praha (CZE; 2015-17), Nymburk (CZE; 2017-20)

The sweetest southpaw swing of the Basketball Champions League! Jaromir Bohacik's rise to prominence with ERA Nymburk and the Czech national team booked him his second run abroad, but this one happens at a much better moment than the two years spent in Belgium. Bohacik's number 17 is always on the opponent's scouting report, the 9.9 points per game don't pain the real picture because Jaromir is a game-winner. Just ask Turk Telekom - big shot after big shot, Bohacik counted to 21 points on 9-of-12 shooting to send SIG Strasbourg through to the Final 8. Although he's listed as a forward, he can do a lot of playmaking. The Czech player had 7 assists against VEF Riga, 6 against Peristeri, 5 against AEK this season.

LEO CAVALIERE



Date of birth: 27/04/1996
Position: small forward
Height: 2.02m/6'8"
Club career: EB-Pau-Lacq-Orthez (FRA; 2013-20)

When you look up "team player" in the dictionary, Leo Cavaliere's photo probably shows up. The forward averaged 19.8 minutes per game in the Basketball Champions League, with 6.1 points and 3.9 rebounds to his name, but the best part of his game isn't shown in the stats. It's the hustle, it's the fighting spirit and the willingness to sacrifice that brought him in to Strasbourg after seven seasons with EB-Pau-Lacq-Orthez. That's perhaps why you always feel like he's scoring 10 points or so, but the stats overview suggests a different view: Cavaliere's only double-digit game in all competitions was the one against AEK, 12 points in 18 minutes of work. Fun fact: His best BCL game with EB-Pau-Lacq-Orthez was against AEK, also the only game in double digits for him last season.

CLEMENT FRISCH



Date of birth: 07/01/2002
Position: power forward
Height: 1.97m/6'6"
Club career: SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2018)

Another youngster, another one who still plays for Espoirs, the youth team of SIG Strasbourg. In fact, Clement Frisch has played amazingly well for that section of the club this season, putting up 18.1 points and 8.4 rebounds per game. He played a couple of games for SIG Strasbourg in the French Jeep Elite League, but is yet to make his debut in the Basketball Champions League. If he can find similar kind of production on senior level, Frisch is bound to have a long and successful career in France.

SYDNEY HAWMMOND



Date of birth: 10/02/2000
Position: center
Height: 2.13m/7'0"
Club career: Hyeres-Toulon (FRA; 2017-18), Limoges CSP (FRA; 2018-20)

It's not often that SIG Strasbourg go and reach for somebody else's young gun, but that's what they did with Sydney N'Guessan Kablan Ola-Inka Assouan Hawmmond. As if having a name that long wasn't enough, Sydney says they call him Yendys (Sydney spelled backwards). The seven-footer has not played for SIG Strasbourg this season, but he's another piece of the puzzle born in 2000s, waiting for his chance in the coming years.

BRANDON JEFFERSON



Date of birth: 25/11/1991
Position: point guard
Height: 1.73m/5'8"
Club career: KTP (FIN; 2014-15), Phoenix Hagen (GER; 2015-16), Olimpija Ljubljana (SLO; 2016-17), Pallacanestro Trapani (ITA; 2017-18), Orleans Loiret (FRA; 2018-20)

Move over, David Holston. There's a new undersized boss of the Basketball Champions League. Brandon Jefferson is about as lethal as they get, attempting 95 three-pointers over 12 games in the Basketball Champions League, hitting 37 percent of them, including eight against Rytas Vilnius when he scored 31 points, being one of two SIG Strasbourg players to go above 30 in this campaign. Even if SIG Strasbourg don't win the entire thing in Nizhny Novgorod, Brandon Jefferson would be the favorite to win one of the stations at the hotel - he's excellent in NBA 2K, so stay away unless you want a lesson or two... Jefferson is all about sports, expect him to stick around after his playing career is done, because he majored in sports industry, with a minor in marketing.

DEANDRE LANSDOWNE



Date of birth: 06/06/1989
Position: shooting guard
Height: 1.88m/6'2"
Club career: Pioneros de Delicias (MEX; 2015), Hertener Lowen (GER; 2015-16), Hamburg Towers (GER; 2016-17), Lowen Braunschweig (GER; 2017-19), Brescia Leonessa (ITA; 2019-20)

This story is as crazy as they get. Just six years ago, DeAndre Lansdowne was a retired basketball player, not signing a single playing contract from 2011 to 2015. After graduating from Fort Lewis college, DeAndre did not touch a basketball for a year. Instead, he started working as a bricklayer and laborer, and only went back to basketball when Pioneros de Delicias called his number in the Chihuahua State League. The craziness just continued, because Lansdowne booked his first European contract with a YouTube highlight video, but bit by bit, he continued his improvement and a month before his 32nd birthday, he's got a chance to fight for one of the biggest trophies in all of European basketball! Lansdowne is all about power, but he can shoot the ball, too. He's averaged 10.8 points in 24.8 minutes per game, hitting 45.9 percent of triples along the way. Shouting "brick!" is allowed when he misses, it must feel comic to him to hear it after everything he's been through...

JEAN-BAPTISTE MAILLE



Date of birth: 23/11/1993
Position: point guard
Height: 1.90m/6'3"
Club career: Le Mans (FRA; 2008-13), Le Portel (FRA; 2013-14), Vendee Challans (FRA; 2014-15), Fos Provence (FRA; 2015-17), Limoges CSP (FRA; 2017-18), Rouen (FRA; 2018-19), Chalons-Reims (FRA; 2019-20)

Just what you need from your backup point guard. Jean-Baptiste Maille is rock solid for SIG Strasbourg, probably because he remembers his days of playing the Third and the Second Division of French basketball, and never wanting to go back. Maille only plays 17.1 minutes per game, but that's enough for him to average 3.3 assists and 1.2 steals. His shot is not a real threat, but he knows how to get to his spots inside the arc, shooting 53.6 percent from two-point range, compared to 33.3 percent from the outside. He is already thinking about his future outside of basketball, he's proud to admit he's a student at the EDHEC Business School.

ESSOME MIYEM



Date of birth: 15/07/2001
Position: power forward
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Centre Federal (FRA; 2016-19), SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2019-21), Souffelweyersheim (FRA; 2020-21)

Essome has a tough task in his basketball career - whatever he does, he will always be compared to his big sister Endene, one of the legends of the French national team, with more than 150 appearances for the squad. Essome is still a youngster and instead of settling for crumbles with SIG Strasbourg, he has spent parts of 2021 with Souffelweyersheim in the Pro B, earning 10 minutes per game, good enough for five points per outing. Miyem made his debut in the Basketball Champions League in the game against Rytas Vilnius, scoring two points in seven minutes of playing time.

YANNIS MORIN



Date of birth: 31/08/1993
Position: power forward
Height: 2.08m/6'10"
Club career: Cholet (FRA; 2012-15), Denain-Voltaire (FRA; 2015-16), Le Havre (FRA; 2016-17), Oklahoma City Blue (USA; 2017-18), Le Mans (FRA; 2018), Nanterre 92 (FRA; 2018), Chalons-Reims (FRA; 2018-20)

Sure, SIG Strasbourg are a dangerous team when they go with their small-ball lineup of death, but they have a solid backup plan - going big with Yannis Morin. The big man averages 20 minutes per game in the Basketball Champions League, getting six points and six boards per game, and being a bit more impressive in the French Jeep Elite League, where he puts up 10 points per game. Morin was born in Fort-de-France, capital of the French overseas department of Martinique. He made his switch to INSEP at 15, and tried his luck in seven teams in eight seasons before finding his spot on this SIG Strasbourg roster. Morin is working 24/7 to improve his game, you can keep track of his progress just by following him on social media - he posts a lot of his 1v0 workouts.

JAYSON TCHICAMBOUD



Date of birth: 28/01/2002
Position: point guard
Height: 1.91m/6'3"
Club career: SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2017)

It's still way too early to bring in the jury and give a final sentence on Jayson Tchicamboud's potential, but the background is there. Jayson's father is Steed Tchicamboud, nicknamed The Warrior, who played for the French national team and was a part of the silver medal winning squad at the FIBA EuroBasket 2011. Tchicamboud Junior also knows what it's like to wear the blue and white jersey, he was part of the youth teams for France, and is enjoying this season's ride with SIG Strasbourg. Jayson has five points in 34 minutes played in the Basketball Champions League in 2020-21. Another player straight from the academy, another proof they've got a solid system in place in Strasbourg.

IKE UDANOH



Date of birth: 02/08/1989
Position: power forward
Height: 2.03m/6'8"
Club career: Larre Borges (URU; 2012-13), Al Ahli Doha (QAT; 2013), Flyers Wels (AUT; 2013), Bisons Loimaa (FIN; 2014, 2015-16), Tapiolan Honka (FIN; 2014-15), Pallacanestro Ferrara (ITA; 2016), Pallacanestro Mantovana (ITA; 2016), Hyeres-Toulon (FRA; 2016-17), Astana (KAZ; 2017-18), Pallacanestro Cantu (ITA; 2018-19), Sidigas Avellino (ITA; 2019), Umana Reyer Venezia (ITA; 2019-20), Pallacanestro Trieste (ITA; 2020-21)

He is yet to hit double digits this season, but "hitting" is what he does best. Ike Udano will box out all the opponents, picking up 6.0 rebounds per game, making him a Top 20 rebounder of the season in the Basketball Champions League - and he's only playing 23 minutes each night! His main strength was what sent Strasbourg to the Final 8. Okay, Jaromir Bohacik and Brandon Jefferson were the ones making the big-time shots, but Udano picked up a whopping 9 offensive rebounds against the Turkish powerhouse. Udano will be a familiar face when he appears at the Final 8 in Nizhny Novgorod. VTB United League fans remember him from the 2017-18 season, when he was the rebounding leader in the entire league, playing for Kazakhstan champs Astana.

JORIS WAGNER



Date of birth: 03/01/2001
Position: guard
Height: 1.86m/6'1"
Club career: SIG Strasbourg (FRA; 2017)

SIG Strasbourg won't have problems with the guard position in the coming years. Another prospect who can cover the one and two spots on the floor is Joris Wagner, and he is already in his fourth season with the Espoirs team, meaning he got his first minutes over there as a 16-year-old! Wagner averages 12.8 points, 3.6 rebounds, 2.9 steals and 2.7 assists in that department, but he is yet to play in the Basketball Champions League.

ISHMAIL WAINRIGHT



Date of birth: 12/09/1994
Position: small forward
Height: 1.96m/6'5"
Club career: Nurnberg Falcons (GER; 2018-19), Rasta Vechta (GER; 2019-20)

If you had to describe Ish in a single sentence, you could just say "90 percent shoulders." The man mountain is the heart and the soul of SIG Strasbourg, which is the same role he had with Rasta Vechta that made us fall in love with the Uganda national team player. Actually, Uganda national team superstar - he averaged 21.3 points, 8.3 rebounds and 5.7 assists per game, making him #1 in points, #3 in rebounds and #5 in assists in the entire FIBA AfroBasket 2021 Qualifiers. Wainright gets SIG 9.6 points and 4.2 rebounds per game, but he also gives them the winning feeling - he was so proud of his alma mater Baylor winning the NCAA title that he must feel extremely motivated to win a big trophy or two with SIG, too.

FINAL 8 OFFICIALS

REFEREES



Antonio CONDE RUIZ
Spain



Aleksandar GLISIC
Serbia



Martins KOZLOVSKIS
Latvia



Saverio LANZARINI
Italy



Wojciech LISZKA
Poland



Manuel MAZZONI
Italy



Yohan ROSSO
France



Eddie VIATOR
France



Yener YILMAZ
Turkey



Ademir ZURAPOVIC
Bosnia and Herzegovina

TECHNICAL DELEGATES



Sergey FOMIN
Russia



Kestutis PILIPAUSKAS
Lithuania

GAME SCHEDULE



FINAL 8			TIME (LOCAL)	TIME (CET)	TIME (GMT)
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

QF1	Nizhny Novgorod	V	Casademont Zaragoza	19:00	18:00	16:00
QF2	ERA Nymburk	V	Pinar Karsiyaka	21:30	20:30	18:30

THURSDAY, MAY 6

QF3	Lenovo Tenerife	V	SIG Strasbourg	17:00	16:00	14:00
QF4	Hapoel Unet-Credit Holon	V	Hereda San Pablo Burgos	20:00	19:00	17:00

FRIDAY, MAY 7

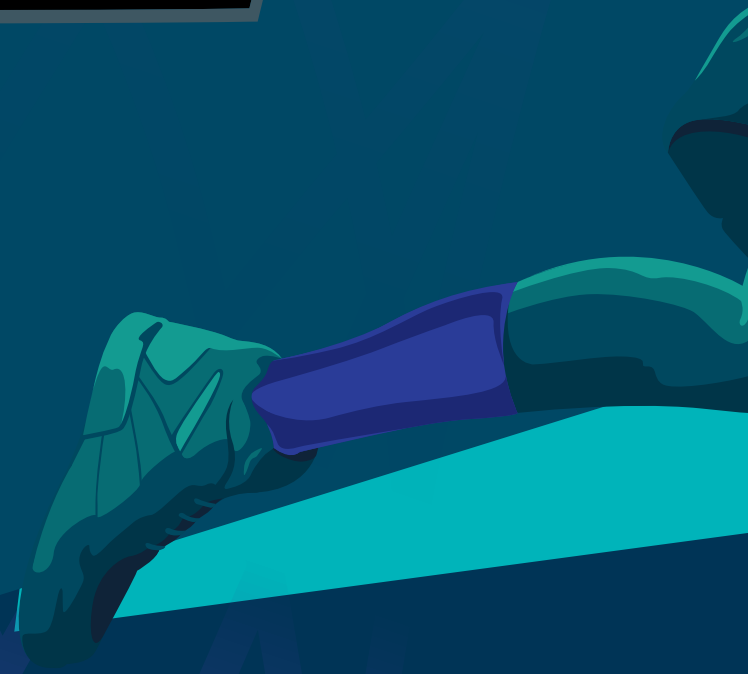
SF1	Nizhny Novgorod/Zaragoza	v	ERA Nymburk/Pinar KSK	19:00	18:00	16:00
SF2	Tenerife/Strasbourg	v	Holon/Burgos	21:30	20:30	18:30

SUNDAY, MAY 9

3RD	Third Place Game			16:00	15:00	13:00
FINAL	Final			19:00	18:00	16:00



FINAL 8
BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
NIZHNY NOVGOROD 2021







Wilson.

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
5, ROUTE SUISSE - P.O. BOX 29, MIES, 1295 SWITZERLAND