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# Men's Water polo: A rejuvenated Italy can compete in Budapest

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*The Italian men's water polo team - or the famous Settebello - is always among the top podium pretenders at the FINA World Championships. Alessandro Campagna's current squad will come to Budapest as bronze medallist of the Rio Olympics and fourth placed team from the previous World Championships in Kazan, how will they perform in Budapest this summer?*

The last time Italy triumphed at the FINA World Championships in the men's water polo tournament was at the 2011 edition in Shanghai. In total, the Italians have collected three World Championships gold medals (just as Hungary) - the first one in 1978 in West Berlin, then the second one 17 years later, on home-soil in Rome in 1994.

Finishing on top of the World Championships podium is always extremely difficult, despite the great power and tradition of any given team, a lot of factors must be in harmony to be able to reach the top. Especially at the beginning of new Olympic cycles, generational changes and rejuvenation is a common pattern in team sports.

Alessandro Campagna has been had coach of the Italian men's team since 2008, and changes happening slowly to his squad: from the World Champion team (Shanghai, 2011) Stefano Tempesti, Niccolo Gitto, Pietro Figlioli, Valentino Gallo, Christian Presciutti and Matteo Aicardi were also playing in Rio, while 21-year-old Alessandro Velotto and 22-year-old Francesco Di Fulvio represented the younger generation at Olympics last year.



All in all, small nuances will decide in Budapest, the men's field in water polo is foreseen to be quite balanced. As for Italy, how strong the squad shall be at the 17<sup>th</sup> FINA World Championships? The 30-year-old, previous World Champion, **Alex Giorgetti** - who has already announced his retirement from the national team - gives his opinion:

*'There are a lot of changes, two great players have just retired. Christian Presciutti and our legendary goalkeeper, Stefano Tempesti will not play for the national team anymore, they will be really missed. Both of them held a great share in the success of winning the bronze medal in Rio in 2016. I think a goalkeeper is half the pledge for success, so the expectation for the young players is really high to fill the shoes of Tempesti. From now, Marco Del Lungo will be the number one goalie and other young players will be tried in the coming month I believe. As for the field, Matteo Aicardi, Pietro Figlioli and Valentino Gallo can be the leaders of the team in Budapest'.*

Alex Giorgetti also mentioned that almost all teams will try new and young players this year, so predicting chances for the tournament is not an easy task. The personal opinion of Giorgetti is that the reigning Olympic and World champion Serbia, the host nation Hungary, or perhaps Greece has the greatest chances of standing on the top of the World Championships podium in Budapest on July 29 this year.

The draw of the water polo tournament of the 17<sup>th</sup> FINA World Championships will be held in late February.

### **Italy at the FINA World Championships:**

- 3 gold medals (1978, 1994, 2011)
- 2 silver medals (1986, 2003)
- 1 bronze medals (1975)
- 4 4th place (1973, 2001, 2013, 2015)

Latest placement: 4th (Kazan, 2015)