

Football – Champions League

Birkirkara leave today on their way to Andorra

HENRY BRINCAT

Birkirkara will be leaving Malta early this morning on their way to Andorra where on Tuesday they will be playing the first leg of their first qualifying round tie against Santa Coloma.

The match is being played at Andorra La Vella's small Communal Stadium which has a capacity of 1,800.

Coach Paul Zammit is unperturbed with the results of the past week where the champions lost 3-1 against Sliema and 3-0 against Valletta in the Euro Cup.

He said: "These were part of our preparations for the matches against Santa Coloma. It was difficult to play two matches in three days at such an early stage in the season. Of course, we would have liked to win, but despite the defeats, I did notice some positive things, among the bad ones. We have worked to improve on that aspect.

"We know that Santa Coloma are one of the best teams in Andorra. Like us,

however, they were not listed as the favourites to win the championship. We know that they have six Argentinian players and three Spaniards among their ranks. This makes them stronger on a club level than they are at national team level. They play aggressive football and I have told the players that they have to avoid mistakes if we are to emerge on top.

"We will be trying to play our own game and try to get a prestigious result which would give us a better chance in the return leg at Ta' Qali," said Zammit.

The Stripes coach is taking the following 18-strong squad to Andorra for Tuesday's match:

Goalkeepers: E. Lovizon, O. Borg.

Defenders: T. Paris, N. Vukanac, A. Scicluna, B. Nisevic, P. Borg, J. Zerafa, A. DeCesare.

Midfielders: P. Fenech, R. Muscat, S. Bajada, A. Tabone, T. Cilia.

Strikers: M. Galea, S. Comvalius, K. Pulo, J. Camilli.

Tennis

Matthew Asciak beats Marcus Delicata to win Marsa Open title again

The finals of the Emirates Marsa Open tournament were held at the Marsa Sports Club. This tournament is organised under the auspices of the Malta Tennis Federation.

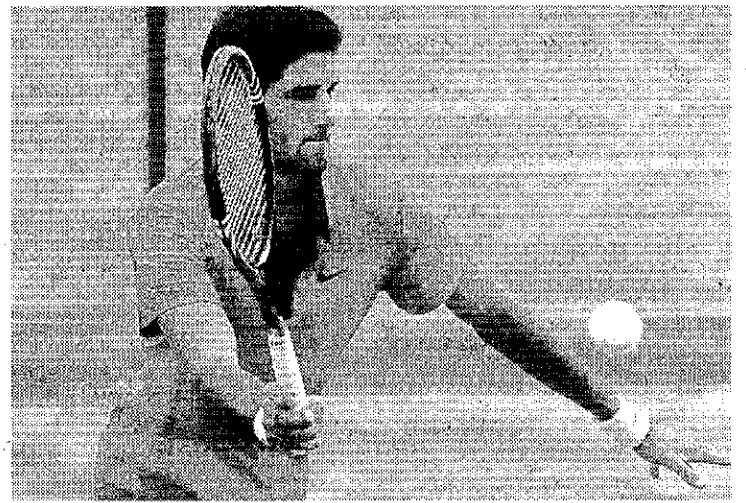
In the Men's Singles, Marcus Delicata made a return to the local scene after an absence of two years. He managed to reach the final after beating second seed Denzil Agius and fourth seed Bradley Callus. Both matches went to three close sets.

On the other side of the draw, Malta champion Matthew Asciak, fresh from his Davis Cup success, had a much easier passage when he beat Matthew Cassar Torreggiani and third seed Mark Gatt in straight sets. In both matches Matthew won 6/0 6/1.

The final between Asciak and Delicata was a match of two different contrasts. Delicata, using his drop shots and sliced strokes to try and unsettle Asciak, while Asciak opted for the more powerful play.

Marcus managed to unsettle Matthew for the first few games but then succumbed to the pressure of Matthew's strokes. The final score line was 6/3 6/1 in Asciak's favour.

The Men's Doubles was won



Matthew Asciak in action, on his way to winning the Marsa Open title again

by Bradley Callus and Matthew Asciak beating the Delicata brothers, Darryl and Marcus 6/3 6/1. Darryl and Marcus beat Mark Gatt and Denzil Agius in the semi-final 7/6 6/1.

The presentation of prizes was held on court 1 after the finals. Godwin Borg, chairman of the Tennis Section, together with Paul Fleri Soler, Emirates Area Manager for Malta and Cyprus, Joanna Balzan, Dowling Sales Executive, and

Marina Schuster, Senior Sales Executive, presented the prizes to the winners and runners up. Representing the Malta Tennis Federation was Mark Camilleri, the vice president.

At the end of the presentation, an air ticket and a three-day stay in one of Dubai's top hotels, kindly sponsored by Emirates, was drawn among those who watched the finals.

The winner was Mrs Anna Sillato.

Basketball

Detur Operations and Trade to sponsor Maltese national teams

The Malta Basketball Association yesterday announced their collaboration with Detur Operations and Trade, a company which does not operate in Malta, but which has showed its intentions to help the MBA during the coming season. Its help will incorporate the two national teams and the local season.

The company, represented by Mr Sinan Onem, the Managing Director of Detur Operations and Trade, will sponsor the national teams, with the first event being the European Division C Championship, due to be

played at Tal-Qroqq Pavilion, between 5 and 10 July. Further sponsorships include the MBA Shield, the Super Cup and a new honour, the Super Champions Cup, to be played at the end of the season, between the winners of four honours.

MBA general secretary Frank Camilleri as well Mr Onem, the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport, Clyde Puli, and the MBA president, Mag. Antonio Mizzi, addressed those present. Players from both national teams attended the conference.

Parliamentary Secretary

Puli thanked Mr Onem for placing confidence in Maltese sport. Puli said that this trust gives peace of mind that sport is doing well. He also thanked the MBA for once again organising an international competition in Malta which means that sports tourism will continue to increase. He augured luck to all the national teams who will be taking part in the FIBA competitions in the next weeks.

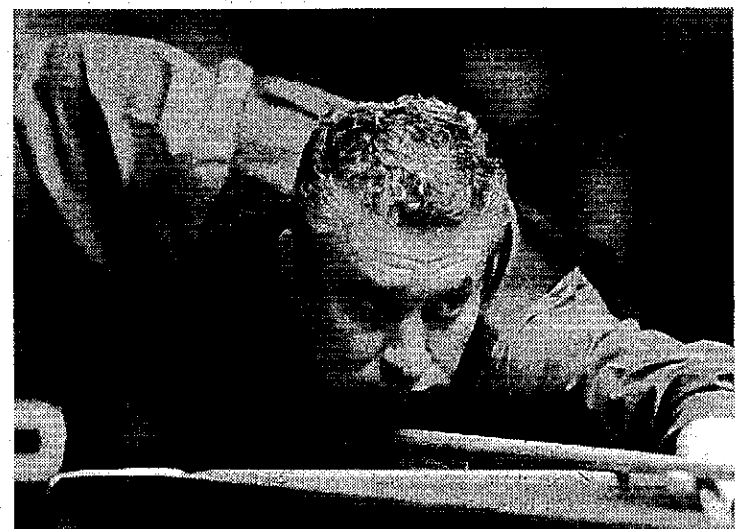
The Ladies national team coaches also spoke during the press conference, just a few hours before they leave for Armenia where the FIBA Europe Division C will be played next week.

Santino Coppa said that he is confident that once again the Maltese women will do their best to obtain a wonderful result as they did in the last years. The team will once again include top established players like Rebecca Brincat Thoresen, Ashleigh Vella and Josephine Grima with the introduction of a couple of youngsters. Malta will be playing the first game tomorrow against Wales. The Maltese contingent, led by MBA vice president Joe DePasquale Schranz, will leave Malta this morning.



During the signing of the sponsorship agreement between Detur and The Malta Basketball Association

Snooker



Tony Drago starts new season with excellent come from behind win ... but is eliminated by Burden

Malta's Tony Drago (photo) started the season on a positive note yesterday when he reached the Last 64 stage of the Player's Tour Championship.

But then, later in the evening, he went on to lose 4-1 to Alfie Burden in the next round.

In the match against Glover 4-3, Drago had to make a great comeback to set the clash with Burden.

Glover set the match alight winning the first frame in convincing manner 80-0, thanks to a break of 79, but the Valletta-born player levelled matters winning the second frame on the black 49-48. Glover then won the next two frames to take what seemed a commanding 3-1 lead.

Needing all the three remaining frames to advance, Drago hit back in an emphatic manner compiling three excellent breaks – two of them centuries – 118, 138 and a 94.