

Basketball

Detur boost for national teams

Valmor Camilleri

The Malta Basketball Association (MBA) yesterday announced a sponsorship agreement with Detur Operations and Trade Ltd.

MBA president Antonio Mizzi told a packed news conference in Sliema that the agreement will see the transport firm, which has a strong base in Sweden, Norway and Finland, giving its financial support to the national teams for the next 12 months, with an option of extending the contract for another three years.

"We are very proud that a prestigious company like Detur has opted to act as partners with the Malta Basketball Association," Mizzi said.

"They are an enterprising organisation and very successful. We're hopeful that this is just the start of a long and fruitful relationship."

Magistrate Mizzi also revealed that thanks to the new sponsorship, the MBA will be launching a new competition as from next season.

"We shall have a new competition in our calendar, the Detur Super Champions," he said.

"The competition, for men and women, will be played at the end of

the season and will see the winners of the National League, the Louis Borg Cup, the BOV KO and the MBA Shield competing for the new honour. This competition will serve as a perfect finale to our season."

Sinam Onem, Managing Director at Detur, said: "We wanted to give our contribution to Maltese basketball."

"This agreement forms part of a marketing strategy for this year that will also see us as main sponsors for the European Basketball Championships in Turkey in August."

"I would like to thank MBA president Mizzi and secretary Frank Camilleri for accepting to have our company joining the basketball family in Malta."

In the next two weeks the national teams will be taking part in the European Championships Division C.

The women's team will be in action in Armenia this week. Besides the host country, the Maltese girls will also play Moldova, Andorra, Gibraltar and Wales.

Sarah Pace and Elena Cassar are the two new faces in Santino Coppa's squad which also includes the more established trio Rebecca Brincat Thoresen, Josephine Grima and Ashleigh Vella.

The men's team, under the guidance of Bruno Di Pietrantonio, will

be in action in the first week of July at the University Sports Complex, Tal-Qroqq.

Malta was drawn in Group B along with Scotland, Denmark and San Marino. The other teams in the competition will be Andorra, Moldova, Wales and Gibraltar.

Towering forward Sam Deguara has recovered full fitness and will form part of the squad which will also include newcomer Joshua Jackson.

Jackson, 24, is the son of Daryl who played for Hamrun in the 1980s. Jackson Jr is currently plying his trade in Romania.

Meanwhile, Magistrate Mizzi said that he will be in touch with Italian basketball federation president Dino Meneghin in the coming days to solve a dispute regarding Maltese players in the Italian league.

The MBA had negotiated an agreement with the Italians that allowed Maltese players to enjoy the same status as home players in all divisions. However, as from this season it was decided that this directive will not apply to the top division - A1.

"I hope that we can solve this issue as quickly as possible because this new directive will hinder the prospects of Josephine Grima playing in the Italian top division this season with Priolo," Mag. Mizzi said.



Rebecca Brincat Thoresen receiving the Sportswoman award from Parliamentary Secretary for Sport Clyde Puli. Photo: Stephen Gatt

"We are hopeful that an amicable solution is found."

Also present for yesterday's news conference was Parliamentary Secretary for Sport Clyde Puli.

He hailed the initiative of the MBA to host the European Championship in Malta as it continues to enhance the country's

sports tourism sector, besides giving more experience to the team.

At the end of the meeting, Brincat Thoresen, who plays in Germany, was presented with the Sportswoman of the Year Award she won in this year's *Sportivi Nazjonali* contest.

MRFU honoured by FIRA-AER



The 84th Ordinary General Assembly of the Association of European Rugby (FIRA-AER) came to a close yesterday at the Corinthia San Gorg in St Julian's. At the end of the meeting, FIRA-AER president Jean-Claude Baque (left) presented special mementoes to Malta Rugby Football Union president Martin Galea (right) and administrator Mike Beerman as a recognition for the excellent organisation of the two-day assembly. Next year, FIRA-AER delegates will be meeting at the Canary Islands.

Motorcycling

Dominant Lorenzo claims fourth MotoGP of season

Stoner third for Ducati to break team's duck

Spanish rider Jorge Lorenzo won the Dutch MotoGP race in Assen yesterday for his fourth victory of the season and extended his overall lead in the championship standings.

The 23-year-old Yamaha rider eased home ahead of Honda-riding compatriot Dani Pedrosa while Australia's former world champion Casey Stoner recorded his and the Ducati team's first podium finish of the season as he took third.

Lorenzo - runner-up to his injured team-mate Valentino Rossi in the championship last year - leads Pedrosa by 47 points after six races.

The Spaniard led early on from Pedrosa and Stoner, who were duelling for second place with the

Australian appearing to be the big danger as he recorded faster times than Lorenzo's pole position ride on Friday.

Lorenzo's closest title challenger before the race, Italian rider Andrea Dovizioso, was not in the mix and with 11 laps to go was over five seconds in arrears and in no position to reduce the gap of 37 points between himself and the Spaniard.


Indeed Dovizioso, second at Silverstone last weekend, was being pushed all the way by American rookie Ben Spies, who confirmed that he is a fast rising star, overtaking the Italian with 10 laps remaining of the 26-lap race and ended up fourth.

Another who failed to fire was French rider Randy de Puniet,

who having started alongside Lorenzo was left for dead at the start and never recovered enough to launch a challenge for the victory.

De Puniet, though, managed to get back into contention for fourth place and was involved in a thrilling three-way fight for it with Spies and Dovizioso, with him and the Italian sparring through the last lap for fifth spot which saw Dovizioso eventually prevail.

Lorenzo, having dropped back almost within the clutches of the pursuing duo of Pedrosa and Stoner, then pressed the accelerator and was a comfortable two seconds ahead of his Spanish compatriot with just six laps remaining and coasted to victory.

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