

Team Europe ambassadorial team at the FIB 2020 World Championship U17 Boys

Winter bandy on ice has a tremendous growth potential to attract more players to the sport worldwide. FIB has an active strategy and policy to realize this potential with the help of all the different national bandy associations. In this respect much focus is placed on promoting the sport and recruiting young players from an early age to the game, and not least - to retain them. To achieve this in practice, the bandy sport needs champions and ambassadors that can be good and inspirational role models. The best motivators and role models for youngsters are other young peers and ideally from their own countries i.e. in this case other young bandy players. To build momentum and exponential interest for the sport among the younger generation there must be a wide and concerted effort from both "developed" bandy nations (typically A-group WCS nations) and "developing" bandy nations (typically B-group WCS nations). The "developing" bandy nations need the help of developed bandy nations to gain more exposure and interest for the sport. In conjunction with FIB 2020 World Championship U17 Boys in Lidköping, March 13-15, FIB in collaboration with Jan Wang Norderud and Magnus Alm has taken the initiative to introduce a "Team Europe" as an **ambassadorial team** for the sport in line with the objective of generating more interest and awareness among youngsters in developing bandy countries in Europe. With this intent and purpose in mind, and to achieve a full and adequate 11-a-side team with a representative standard of bandy sporting skills and competing capabilities, it has been decided that the team can be made up of a mix of indigenous players from a number developing bandy nations in Europe and from the US together with players from developed bandy nations that have national teams representing in WCS U17. Importantly, the latter players have dual nationality (hold two passports) and have a strong affiliation and affinity to their second (mother/father) countries through family ties and other forms of friendly connections. They are fluent in both countries' language and culture and as such they may represent very effective ambassadors and advocates of the bandy sport in their other second nationality countries.

Hence, FIB recognizes this group as a group of players with dual nationality as an untapped resource, and in line with FIB's development strategy, FIB has taken the innovative step to form a Team Europe U17 that will participate in the WCS in Lidköping with a primary objective to muster more interest and awareness in developing countries. In this case Team Europe has been allowed to participate in the Boys WCS U17 together with the countries Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden.

Therefore, and on these grounds, FIB assumes that the respective associations of the developed countries participating in the Boys WCS U17 will respect and support this initiative of an ambassadorial Team Europe and welcome the team into the tournament. That is in the interest of all the individual bandy associations and of the bandy sport collectively and worldwide.