

Written by

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[Eurobasket 2013](#) is finally here. [Phoenix Suns](#) players [Goran Dragic](#) (Slovenia) and [Marcin Gortat](#)

(Poland) will both participate in Group C in the initial round of Pool Play, starting on September 4. Each of the six teams in Group C will play each other, with the top three finishers moving on to round two against top finishers from other groups. From there, four teams advance to the playoffs.

Our brothers over at Canishoopus.com (hereafter referred to as CH), the SB Nation Wolves blog, ran a [really great, indepth preview of Group C](#) . Also, the OKC Blog, Welcome to Loud City, [previewed Group C here](#) .

Poland

Here's CH's bottom line on Poland:

This team could be really dangerous with inside players who are hard to stop outside and a throughout strong shooting backcourt. Watch out for this team. I think they are almost a lock to make it into the second round and from then on, they are a team nobody would want to face. Of course, a lot will depend on the chemistry between Gortat and Lampe.

And here's WTLC's bottom line on Poland, who they rank 2nd in Group C:

Final Verdict: I might be crazy for ranking Poland this high, but I have a lot of confidence in them. The truth is, we haven't seen Poland in their full form yet, since they seemed to sit a key

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player in the vast majority of their warmup games. Moreover, Poland's starting five is as good as anybody's, and I can see their bigs making mincemeat of the weaker Slovenian and Croatian defenses. Positions two to four are really a toss-up, but my money's on Poland. I could see them breaking into the tournament if they don't get too fatigued.

And here's insights from Lukasz Lysikowski, owner of [Suns Nation](#) , a Polish Suns blog that follows BSotS:

There are quite high expectations in Poland as for our team, but they are not exaggerated because we have the best team in recent years. Especially, all of the supporters see Lampe-Gortat duo as the best big men combination beside turkish Ilyasova - Asik.

Of course, the main goal is not to finish Eurobasket on the first round, but there are opinions shared that Polish team wants to qualify for the World Championships in Spain. The biggest problem is that we need to beat Slovenia, Spain, Turkey or Greece to advance to quarterfinals and this can be really hard to do.

We will see how it works out, but I am quite optimist as far as Polish team is concerned.

Slovenia

Here's CH's bottom line on Slovenia:

Without Lorbek the pieces don't really fit together and Slovenia suffers from the fact that they have a few top caliber players at this tournament in Dragic and Nachbar, but have them surrounded with a supporting cast that can't be relied on in bringing out their strengths. With generous refereeing that is guaranteed and some Goran heroisms they are a threat to make it into the playoffs but a medal seems out of reach.

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Here's WTLC's bottom line on Slovenia, who they rank 3rd in Group C:

Final Verdict: Slovenia boasts a strong team going into this Eurobasket, but they just look really flawed to me. They're already dealing with having no true distributor, and relying on two score-first guards. But when you combine that with their lack of defensive post presence, I have a hard time seeing them win against teams of similar caliber. I'm really not confident about ranking them over Croatia, but I'm giving them the benefit of the doubt because their talent is just that much higher, and Croatia is nearly as flawed.

And here are insights on Slovenia from Bright Side's own Pece.

Pece has been recapping Slovenian warmup games for the past month, and recently provided me with some local insight into the Slovenian team and Dragic in particular. As the hosts of the tournament, pressure and expectation to play well are higher than ever. And Goran Dragic is at the center of that attention.

On Slovenia in general: Excitement before championship in Slovenia is on the peak. Everything is now somehow connected to the basket. My kids are tomorrow starting new school-year so I have to wrap all their notebooks - you probably guessed that every one of them has one basket hero on the cover. Like in previous years preparations for championship, fans and analysts in Slovenia questioned who was "in" and who was "out".

On who's missing: [Ben Udrih](#) (NY [Knicks](#)) was the main star of this overture, and despite his repeated assurances of participation in the championship, at the end withdrew without any reason. The other notable absence is Erazem Lorbek (Barcelona), who was the best player in our last two tournaments, but he had long lasting injury through season, so this was expected. All teams will be incomplete this year, but Slovenia (only 2M people) doesn't have long line of hardened basketball veterans, who play in high level competition, so impact here is huge. Dragi? and Udrih could play together like long awaited Dragic-Bledsoe duo and Lorbek really doesn't have any peer in Slovenia. This became evident in preparation games. Our worst spot was power forward (Lorbek's spot), so we had to relocate our best shooter (Nachbar, ex-Houston, now Barcelona) from 3 to 4. Our secondary play maker, Jaka Lakovi?, due to his age and unexpected injury, raised a few doubts about potential of this team.

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On expectations: But, nevertheless, a general public is still expecting a medal. All doubts by experts and evident shortcomings are rejected with believing in supernatural effect of home court

On Dragic in particular: Even before the tournament, after watching Dragic? playing more than ten friendly games, we can say that he became matured, reliable performer. He will always give double digit points and he showed big confidence, which enables him to play in clutch moments.

In previous years Dragic? had more problems with European style of game. Basketball is usually slower here (sometimes a lot), there is no time restriction for parking in the paint for defensive player, zone defense, pressing defense and general defense orientation are common or dominant. This year, the strategy is tuned for faster play and team exercised quick pass from rebound to PG and then quicker transition.

Also, Dragic has some good complementary shooters, mainly Nachbar, who is in his prime (he achieved his personal record this year by making 35 points against mighty CSKA Moscow). Focusing on or exposing speed as THE salvation became almost mantra these days, I presume the same in Phoenix as in Ljubljana, but we also saw some nice P&R game between Goran and our centers. It was not often, but sure refreshing.

In the end, one general impression: In Europe Dragic? plays less restricted. It seems like if he is making some personal, live experiments, not so on new techniques or skills, but mainly things regarding confidence and determination.

I cannot imagine better training for new season in NBA.

Summary

There you have it, folks. Eurobasket 2013 is a great tourney for those starved for basketball of any kind. And hopefully, Gortat and Dragic will taste some success as the anchors for their country.

We'll keep you up to speed throughout the next two weeks as the tourney progresses.

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Go Slovenia!

Go Poland!

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Eurobasket 2013 Primer: Phoenix Suns Dragic, Gortat carry the weight of their country on their shoulders

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