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“We will be host of the World Championships, so we have to achieve a good result”

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The women’s water polo tournament of the 2017 FINA World Championships will be a domestic contest for the Hungarian team. The European champion and Olympic semi-finalist has begun preparation for the World Championships, but the first task will be the World League series. Head coach Attila Bíró is really motivated ahead of next year’s big event.

Is it a brand new era for the national team, or just a little bit? – BpMedia asked Attila Bíró.

Just a little bit, since we are not going through a massive generational change. I do not think that we have too many ‘old’ players, and on the other hand we will be host of the World Championships, so we have to achieve a good result, and we will line up our best team. There will be some changes, however, because we have a lot of young talents.

Hungary won gold in the European Championships right after you had been appointed as new coach of the national team, but at the Olympics you failed to win a medal. From now on do you only look to the future?

To tell you the truth in the first couple of weeks it was very hard to accept the fourth place of Rio, but you always have new tasks and goals, so you have to look ahead. For certain players it is easier, for others it is more difficult. I think now all members of the team are looking ahead, they want to have a good result in Budapest next year. For me it would be more difficult to forget the past if the 2017 World Championships were held somewhere else. I am very motivated and happy to have the opportunity to prove in front of a home crowd.

Do you feel any pressure after achieving some good results with the team and because of the fact that the World Championships will be held in Hungary?

I think I can cope with that. Every player is dreaming of participating in a domestic big event, and a coach is no exception either. This will be the first time for me to do that. Of course we have already played at home in World League matches and other international tournaments, and since the atmosphere has been fantastic in those events, I really look forward to the World Championships. The venue will be the Mecca of water polo, everyone likes the Margaret Island. The main task of the upcoming months will be to find those players who can withstand the pressure.

Do you think there will be a big competition to become a member of the team?

I think so. Do you know anybody who does not want to play in front of thousands of fans in a World Championships? I have called many young players ahead of our first match in the World League, and I plan to do the same later as well. Everybody will get the chance despite the fact that we want to qualify for the World League Super Final, too. These youngsters are hungry for success, and it is very good to have them in the team regarding the future. Many of them want to play in the 2020 Olympics, but for them the World Youth Championships in New Zealand at the end of the year is a priority now.

A World Championships after the Olympics is always different from the others. On one hand everyone wants to have a good result, but on the other hand it is held at the beginning of a new Olympic period, so the coaches are building a new team for the next Olympic Games. What do you expect from the other teams at the World Championships?

Our rivals are in a very similar situation, a couple of players have retired, like Tania Di Mario of Italy, but I can imagine that she will still be back. The Australians are the exception: they will change a lot, since they are very disappointed with their performance in Rio. There will be plenty of good teams at the World Championships, like Hungary. I think we can win a medal, this is our dream, we are going to work a lot to achieve that.

Hungary women's national water polo team at the World Championships:

1986, Madrid: 5th place

1991, Perth: 4th place

1994, Rome: 1st place

1998, Perth: 7th place

2001, Fukuoka: 2nd place

2003, Barcelona: 5th place

2005, Montreal: 1st place

2007, Melbourne: 4th place

2009, Rome: 7th place

2011, Shanghai: 9th place

2013, Barcelona: 3rd place

2015, Kazan: 9th place

2017, BUDAPEST: ?