

## HaBaWaBa shows us the future of waterpolo

*The International Festival had amazing numbers (1,485 athletes, over 3,400 attendees) and the new rules worked. WPD President Pisani: "More technique, less contact: it's a game for everybody"*

### OFFICIAL DATA

Two days after the end of **HaBaWaBa International Festival 2019**, it's time for some numbers. We're using these data to tell the enormity of the event in Lignano Sabbiadoro (Italy), the biggest and most spectacular in the world of youth waterpolo. An event that is possible due to **Waterpolo Development** commitment, but also to the help of clubs and coaches, who have fully understood the HaBaWaBa spirit, allowing kids - the Festival is all about them - to live an experience that they will remember for life in the best way possible.

As the official report by **Delta I.S.O.** - the company that manages the accreditation system of HaBaWaBa International Festival -, the **little players** of the 12<sup>th</sup> edition were **1,485**, from **10 different countries**. Along with them, 242 coaches and managers and 1,441 family members and fans arrived at Bella Italia & EFA Village. You have to add these numbers to those of the organizers - an army of 237 people including WPD members, referees, officials, volunteers, medicals and media - and 12 VIP guests. Overall, therefore, in one week the HaBaWaBa International Festival involved **3,417 people**. Once again, this was an incredible number for a kids' waterpolo event. As for the two tournaments, in 6 days of competition the **134 teams** (112 in U11 category and 22 in U9) played a total of **696 games**, scoring such as **8,448 goals**.

### WINNERS AND CELEBRITIES

**KSI Blue Dolphins** triumphed in the U9 tournament: in front of almost 3,000 spectators of the Olympic pool, after the national anthems ceremonials, the team from Budapest won the final over Italian **Club Aquatico Pescara**. **Pecsi** was the winner of the **U11 category**, defeating **Savona Brandale** in the final game. Pecsì have had an unique way to approach the game: the Hungarian kids have danced during the team presentations and many of them have kept dancing until the start of the game. And after the success, some wild celebrations started... So, for the first time in 12 years the Hungarian teams won both competitions of the event in Lignano Sabbiadoro (visit [HaBaWaBa.com](http://HaBaWaBa.com) and [the official HaBaWaBa International Festival Facebook page](#) to watch images and videos of the event).

Both teams were awarded during the closing ceremony, in Bella Italia & EFA Village Sports Palace. In addition to the winners, all of the 134 teams participating in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition will receive a trophy. The HaBaWaBa testimonial Fabio **Bencivenga** and other waterpolo stars as



Olympic champions Alexandra **Araujo**, Marco **D'Altrui**, Zsolt **Varga**, Zoltan **Szececi** and three-times Champions League winner Francesco **Postiglione** delivered cups and medals to the kids. The **Fair Play** award – assigned by referees and officials on the basis of the scores collected at the end of each game – was given ex aequo to **Lupetti Perugia** (Ita) and **Manianpama XS** (Ita) in the U9 category and to the Hungarian **Sote** in the U11 category.

The **Golden Baby** was a 5-years girl. Her name is Vittoria **Gerosa** and she was born on July 13, 2013: she was the youngest player of the entire Festival (N.C. Monza).

## THE FUTURE OF WATERPOLO

Waterpolo Development can be proud of the Festival and we are equally proud of **the success of the new HaBaWaBa rules**. "Kids immediately adapted to them and the rules change has given the outcome we wished: with the new rules, who moves more in the pool wins the game, which has produced a more dynamic and less physical waterpolo", WPD president Lucio **Pisani** says. "The new HaBaWaBa rules - Pisani continues - have also freed the kids' imagination, **they have invented new ways to dribble or defend**. In addition, the game has become less physically hard, allowing the smaller players to have fun and mitigating the fear of the parents: you know, some of them are afraid that waterpolo is a too dangerous sport for their children. Instead **this is a waterpolo 'for everybody'**, which can therefore attract more kids and broaden the base of waterpolo players".

As for the application of the rules, of course, there is still work to be done. "Obviously there was some problem of rules interpretation, we are only at their first implementation, but we think that our referees have done a great job and we believe we are on the right track. **FINA aims to make waterpolo faster and 'cleaner' in the future**, with these rules today's kids will already be prepared".

## SPREADING HABAWABA

During the Festival, members of Waterpolo Development Board had meetings with Egyptian Swimming Federation Secretary Ibrahim **Zaher**, who is working to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of **HaBaWaBa Egypt**, and Carolina **Arantes**, member of Associação Bauruense de Desportes Aquáticos (ABDA) of Bauru, who aims to bring an **HaBaWaBa International Circuit stage** to Brazil. And the HaBaWaBa summer is not over: in these days, Lignano is hosting the 4th edition of **HaBaWaBa PLUS U13**: 2 competitions (Girls and Boys), 63 teams, 11 nations represented.

For further infos visit [WPDWorld.com](http://WPDWorld.com) and [HaBaWaBa.com/en](http://HaBaWaBa.com/en)