

1. HRL Women: New season - same doubt, Podravka or Lokomotiva

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There is no big news ahead of the 32nd season of the Croatian women's handball league. Podravka Vegeta and Lokomotiva Zagreb are still untouchable for everyone and therefore the only candidates for the title. The competition system remained the same as in previous seasons. The only novelty is the fact that the league has 13 clubs because Sinj withdrew from the competition at the last moment. Thus, in each round one club will be free. The first round is scheduled for September 9, and the last round of 26 will be played on September 18/19. May 2024.

And this summer there were a lot of changes in the clubs. Defending champion Lokomotiv Zagreb was thus left without strikers last season, **Stela Posavec, Klara Birtić, Tena Petike, Lena Ivančok**. No matter how active the management of Lokomotiv is, it will be very difficult to make up for it. **Ukrainian goalkeeper Maria Gladun**, Slovak Nikoleta Trunkova came, **Kristina Prkačin** returned from Romania. As always, Lokomotiva will fill the rest of the team from the younger selections, that is, from its incubator.

Podravka Vegeta enters the new season with **Ivica Obrvan** as the new coach. And only two player changes. **Ana Turk and Iryna Stelmakh** left the club, and **Josipa Mamić** and **Katarina Pandža** came. Most of the squad from last season that won the Cup remained together, which is a big thing.

Along with Ana Turk, Bjelovar managed to bring two more valuable reinforcements . **Sara Krizmanić** arrived from Zrinski, and **Lea Smiljanec** from Podravka Vegeta. **Lucija Ivanda** left them and went south to Dalmatinka, and **Magdalena Nikšić** stopped playing . It is therefore realistic to expect that Bjelovarka will fight for 3rd place this year.

The team from Čakovec has an interesting team this season. In the new season, experienced expert **Goran Mrđen** will have at his disposal the experienced **Gabrijela Gudelj** , who is returning to Zrinski after one season in Split. **The talented Tena Megerle** arrived on loan from Koprivnica after the opposition . And there is also the returnee from Koka, **Dora Potočnjak**. **Selena Milošević** (Greece) and **Sara Krizmanić** (Bjelovar) left the club .

Koka had to change a lot during the summer. **Petra Filipović, Lucija Jandrašić, Dora Potočnjak, Jana Markulinčić** left Varaždin , and after the 4th round, **Lana Strugar will go to Split to study and play**. The newcomers are **Anđela Selak** (Makarska), **Nina Prančević** (Petason Vranjic) and **Dora Paić**. A big boost will undoubtedly be the fully recovered **Ines Pifar**.

In Ploče, the summer was relatively calm. Iva Bule extended her loyalty to the club earlier. **Renato Vladimir** and **Andrijena Vlatka Jelčić** continue to play for at least one more season . **As Lucija Ivanda** has joined the ranks of Dalmatinka , it will be easier for coach Ivan Jerković to assemble the starting line-up. There is also **Nikolina Petrović** (Scout). **Andreja Vugdeli** has left for now .

Osijek managed to extend the contracts with all key players from last season. Of course, the most is expected from the most experienced ones like **Dora Lacković and Josipa Paula Jerčinović**. **Magdalena Brkić** , who is returning from Italy after two years, has been reinforced in the goalkeeper position .

Dugo Selo largely remained together. Along with **Antonija Mamić, who already defended the last four rounds of last season, Mihaela Bešen** (Sesvete) and **Mateja Katanec** (Samobor) arrived , and former member **Ema Bićanić** also returned . **Dora Petković** (Ivanić) and **Laura Oršolić** , who devoted themselves to education, left the club .

Speaking of Sesvet, let's say that along with **Mihaela Bešen , Lea Zetović** left the club and will continue her handball career in Portugal at Sport Lisboa e Benfica. **Nika Peričić** (ŽARK) and **Lea Krznar** (Udarnik) came from Split .

Zamet stayed in the league and changed a lot this summer. **Montenegrin Katarina Šutović** has fully recovered . **Silvia Černeka (ex Masnić)** returned to handball after giving birth . **Ema Stručić** , Senja **Sara Svast** and **Iva Stanić** , Murvice **Ana Debelić** , Liburnija **Zora Markov and Mirna Brusić**, Omišaljka **Marijana Kovačević** and **Vita Vukelic** arrived from Podravka . **After the injury , Emma Jukan** also returned . As for departures, **Nika Budić** is in ŽARK Split, and **Mia Mrakovčić** is studying in Zagreb and it is still uncertain whether she will continue with handball. **Martina Nekić (Murvica)** also left the club , and Maja Visković is going to America on business.

There were few changes in Split clubs. Split 2010 was the only one left without **Gabriela Gudelj**, who returned to Čakovec. All other players from last season have remained. For

now, they are looking for the right wing. ŽARK Split, in addition to **Nike Perčić**, was left without **Ana Lovrić**, who is currently a free agent. **Nika Budić** from Rijeka and **Lana Strugar** (Podravka Vegeta loan) arrived. They also enrolled in studies in Split. The new faces are **Nikol Kremer** (Umag), **Karmela Maloča** (Petason Vranjic) and **Maja Zorica** (Sinj).

And finally, let's mention that the new league team Rudar from Labin will enter the new season significantly stronger. **From ŽARK Split, the young talented goalkeeper Ana Ugrin** arrived, **Karla Šegota** arrived from Opatija Liburnija, and the biggest reinforcement is the return of **Ana Jajčević**, who left Umag after 12 years, among the "Labudica".

These are the most important changes in clubs. But since the transfer window is ongoing, changes are possible every day.
