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1. HRL WOMEN: Podravka for a new title or?

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For the best Croatian women's handball clubs, summer is long over. Many have been in full swing for more than a month and a half and are impatiently waiting for the league to start. Their countdown has come to an end because this week the league finally starts. The first part brings us 9 rounds and lasts until mid-November when the national team begins preparations for the World Championship. The continuation is on January 10/11, 2026, and the end is in mid-May. Almost every club has made some player changes. Who won and who lost, we will find out very soon.

The team from Koprivnica did not have an overly active summer on the market. There was no reason to, because Podravka's team was dominant in both domestic competitions last season, and they left a great impression in Europe. The new name this season is goalkeeper **Petra Marinović . Hannah Vuljak** was returned from loan to strengthen the right side until **Klara Birtić** fully recovers . A serious injury ruled out **Mia Brkić** from the team , and that will be a big problem for **Ivica Obrvan** because she was in the best shape of her life. HRS arbitration ruled in the case of **Ivana Fratnik** and **Veronika Babara , so they arrived from Lokomotiva, like many in recent years. Nikolina Kragulj , Ana Crnjak** (Rudar) and **Terezija Ćurić** (Bjelovar) left Podravka this summer .

The locomotive has almost completely changed its face. With the new coach **Silvija Ivandija , the proven goalkeepers Tea Pijević** and **Antonija Mamić** and the sisters **Paola and Stela Posavec** have returned . **Tara Đelekovčan** arrived from Koka , **Žana Bulatović** from Osijek , **Ema Balaško** from Bjelovar , **Maša Kuzmanović** from Budućnost , and **Dunja Tabak** from Serbia , i.e. Slovakian **Tatjana Štutranova** . **Mela Mehmedović** (Romania), **Anđela Žagar** (Crimea) left the club . Uncertainty lasted for a long time about **Ivana Fratnik** and **Veronika Babara** , who wanted to go to Koprivnica and in the end got that wish, so Lokosice was seriously weakened. And they will probably be looking for new reinforcements.

The Dalmatian team remained in almost the same composition as last season. **Iva Bule** was a target for many clubs for a long time, but in the end she decided to stay in Ploče. **Ema Barbir** , although she is employed, extended her contract , just like **Petra Gustin** . **Ivan Jerković** will undoubtedly have good support in the great trio that made us happy with European silver – **Vanesa Bebić** , **Nika Batinić** and his daughter **Antea Jerković** .

Koka finished last season in 5th place, which was a very good achievement for the team from the baroque city. This season, they lost **Tara Đelekovčan , who was taken to Zagreb, or Lokomotiv, due to university obligations. Dora Pajić** returned to Osijek . Young **Magali Lujić** (Sesvete) arrived, who can cover several positions.

Split 2010 also changed its lineup a bit. Tara Čović (Rudar Labin) left the city under Marjan for Labin .

While we're at it, let's just say that goalkeeper Ana Ugrin left the club , and was replaced by **Ana Crnjak** , who won the double with Podravka last season. There's also **Ema Žunko** (Dugo Selo '55), who was a Lokomotiv player until recently, and **Tara Čović,** who arrived from Split in 2010.

The teams of Zameta and Zrinski, which were just above the relegation zone, made few changes. The young talented Serbian **Magdalena Malenović from Jagodina joined the Rijeka team, and goalkeeper Milena Vujisić** left the club . In Čakovec, one experienced handball player was replaced by another. Although not in the same position, both are top players. **Paola Posavec** returned to Lokosica, and **Dora Krsnik arrived in northern Croatia from Romania. The young Tena Megerle** returned to the club where she used to be, but offered little due to injury. Goalkeeper **Ema Novosel** arrived from Zagreb , and the list of new players is rounded out by **Maja Grgošević** and **Milica Anđušić (Jagodina). Ana Papić,** who has finally recovered, will be a big reinforcement .

Many players have left Bjelovar. **Marta Turkalj** , **Ana Turk** (end of career), **Tena Megerle** (Zrinski), **Ema Balaško** (Lokomotiva Zagreb), Hannah Vuljak (return to Podravka Vegeta) have left or stopped playing. New faces are **Terezija Ćurić** (Podravka Vegeta), **Mina Petrović** (Budućnost, Podgorica). There is also finally a healthy **Ema Guskić** with a new attempt at a comeback. If she succeeds, that would be great news for coach **Goran Mrđen.**

Sinj has almost completely stayed together. And that is the best possible news for a club that finished in 9th place last season. The competition on the line will be strengthened by the returning **Petra Zorica** (Cetina), and on the wing **Nika Ercegović (Petason Vranjic). At the last moment, the experienced Gabrijela Gudelj** (Zrinski) arrived . The club has made a great step forward in media coverage and it is wonderful to see a special digital edition of the magazine Naša priča. Bravo Sinjanke and Sinjani.

In the city on the Drava for this season, they have a combination of experience (**Katarina Borac, Petra Frančić, Josipa Josipović, Lea Hren**), but also youth and talent (**Mia Jozipović**). The new trumps are **Ana Javorić, Marija Rnić** and the returning **Dora Pajić** . Only **Žana Bulatović** (Lokomotiva) and **Ana Pehar** , who announced the end of her career, left the team led by **Zdenko Kordi .**

The returnees in the league, Sesveta handball players, stayed together. It will be a combination of experience (**Bernarda Čalušić, Petra Dičak**) and youth (**Matea Koska, Paola Korman, Barbara Dalmatin** , etc.). **Prof.** will be on the bench . **Zorica Samardžija** .

Since the league has 14 clubs this season, Dugo Selo '55 has extended its life in the 1st HRL despite finishing below the line last season. The young force that wore the Croatian jersey this summer at the European competition in Montenegro will be the backbone – **Josipa Zubac, Lorena Marinić, Lucija Renić.**

And a new member of the elite club, which he returned to after a full 24 years, ŽRK Brod, has slightly strengthened its ranks. The experienced **Lana Jarak** (Izviđač), formerly in Dalmatinka and Lokomotiva, and **Ena Uremović** have arrived .

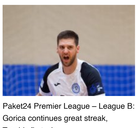
And we could go on and on. Every club has its own goal and idea of how to present itself in the best light. Let's wish them all a good and successful season.

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