



EUROPEAN  
QUALIFIERS



# MALTA CYPRUS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022  
EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS  
GROUP H

WEDNESDAY  
1 SEPTEMBER 2021

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MESSAGE FROM THE MALTA FA PRESIDENT

# WELCOME UEFA PRESIDENT, WELCOME BACK FANS!



UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin (top left) will watch the Malta-Cyprus World Cup qualifier at the National Stadium today. The match will see the return of fans while the Malta FA will also take the opportunity to honour Fr Hilary Tagliaferro (right) for his outstanding contribution to local football.



Season 2021/22 is slowly but surely coming to life. The resumption of international football adds to the enthusiasm and excitement surrounding the new footballing campaign amidst hopes of a return to a semblance of normality.

This evening, Malta faces Cyprus at the National Stadium in the fourth 2022 World Cup Group H qualifier, an important match for our national team as we strive to deliver positive performances and results while maintaining the improvement in sync with our strategic objectives.

Beyond the footballing significance, today's match is a special occasion as we are honoured to have with us Aleksander Čeferin, the President of UEFA. The Malta FA has been a proud and active

member of the European footballing family since joining UEFA in 1960.

On behalf of the Maltese football community, I extend a warm welcome to Mr Čeferin on his first visit to our country since his election in 2016. UEFA's assistance in its multiple forms is essential for our Association not only to sustain itself but to keep moving forward. We are very grateful to Mr Čeferin for his constant support, encapsulating the principles of solidarity and respect which are at the heart of UEFA's work.

The key projects of the Malta FA strategy are the focal points of our discussions with Mr Čeferin and the UEFA delegation as we remain fully committed to implementing all the necessary reforms and changes to take Maltese football to the next level, especially in the technical

sector. The progress of our infrastructural projects is also on the agenda as we step up our preparations for the 2023 UEFA Under-19 Championship in Malta.

While our sights are firmly set on the present and future of Maltese football, today we are honouring an inspirational person, Fr Hilary Tagliaferro. Fr Hilary's contribution to Maltese football, especially at youth level, has been nothing short of extraordinary, not to mention his missionary work among those in need.

Finally, I'm delighted to welcome back our supporters to the National Stadium for a national team match after an absence of almost two years due to the COVID-19 restrictions. It's been a long time coming but the Malta FA is pleased that our efforts and appeals to allow spectators back into our stadia, with the appropriate measures in place, have been heeded.

While everyone is looking forward to a vibrant atmosphere at the National Stadium, I renew my appeal for the fans to adhere to the health protocol. Respecting the measures and instructions will not stop you from supporting our boys from the stands as we are all United For Malta.

Thanks for your support and enjoy the game!

The signature of Bjorn Vassallo, the Malta FA President, written in black ink.

**BJORN VASSALLO**



INTERVIEW WITH MALTA COACH DEVIS MANGIA

# 'WE WILL ENTER THE PITCH WITH A FIRM INTENT TO PLAY WELL AND GAIN POINTS'

**DEVIS MANGIA** IS KEEN FOR MALTA TO DELIVER A STRONG SHOWING IN THEIR 2022 WORLD CUP HOME QUALIFIER AGAINST CYPRUS, REITERATING HIS BELIEF THAT THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE HAS A HUGE BEARING ON THE MATCH OUTCOME. **KEVIN AZZOPARDI** SPOKE TO THE MALTA COACH...

The key words for Devis Mangia are consolidation and progression as Malta will be aiming to show further improvement and garner more points in their upcoming three 2022 World Cup Group H qualifiers, kicking off with the home match against Cyprus at the National Stadium this evening.

"We will enter the pitch with a firm intent to play well and gain points," Mangia said ahead of the home date with Cyprus.



**“Our match mentality is always the same. Results are important but my philosophy is that the result must be the product of the performance. I am convinced that we should always prioritise the performance and results will follow”**

“Our match mentality is always the same. Results are important but my philosophy is that the result must be the product of the performance. I am convinced that we should always prioritise the performance and results will follow.”

The clash with Cyprus precedes two away qualifiers against Slovenia (4th September) and Russia (7th September) in Group H also comprising Croatia and Slovakia. It is a difficult group but Malta have enjoyed an encouraging start, earning the plaudits for a dynamic performance in the opening home match against Russia, who needed a late goal to fend off Malta’s comeback in a 3-1 win. In their second match, Malta stunned Slovakia with superb goals from Luke Gamin and Alexander

Satariano but the hosts bounced back to rescue a point in a 2-2 draw which nevertheless resulted in Malta’s first point. After a goalless draw in the first half of the third qualifier, away to Croatia, the 2018 World Cup finalists scored three times in the last 30 minutes to secure the points.

For their part, Cyprus have impressed so far, taking four points from their first three qualifiers following a goalless draw at home to Slovakia and a 1-0 win, also at home, against Slovenia, losing only away to Croatia 1-0. While it is clear that Cyprus will be tough opponents, Malta’s cause has not been helped by injuries to a host of established players such as midfielders Matthew Guillaumier and Bjorn Kristensen, and forward Jurgen Degabriele.

While injuries are a concern for the national team coaching staff, Mangia is not downhearted.

“Cyprus have a strong squad with more players involved in overseas leagues compared to us but this is not an issue for me,” Mangia said. “We do have some problems as, in certain departments, we are short on numbers due to the absence of several players. The most important thing at this stage is to prepare for the game in the best manner possible.

“It is true that we must contend with injuries to players who would otherwise have been selected. However, we have other solutions and as I always like to emphasise, this also creates an opportunity for other players to prove that they have the right attributes to be part

of our squad because the national team's doors are open for everyone. The selection also reflects our ongoing efforts to give more experience to young players as we continue to rejuvenate the squad."

As in March, the September international window will see national teams take in three World Cup qualifiers in the space of seven days. Mangia will be relying on the experience and insights gained from the opening three games in

March to better cope with the demands of another competitive triple-header.

"In March, we noticed some characteristics," the Malta coach said. "We encountered some physical problems in the third game (away to Croatia). For this international window, we will try to do a careful rotation of the players and closely monitor the recovery periods between games, especially considering that we are in the early phase of the season."

**"Finally, we're going to play a home match in front of our supporters. The players have been wanting this for a long time, they are looking forward to the experience and I believe it could provide an added stimulus for them"**

## PRE-SEASON TRAINING CAMP

As part of their preparations for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers, Malta had a nine-day pre-season training camp in Austria during which they played two friendlies, losing 3-0 to Northern Ireland before turning in a much-improved performance in a narrow 2-1 defeat to Kosovo.

"Apart from the work carried out during the sessions held in Malta, the training camp in Austria was very useful," Mangia said. "It also enabled us to have a closer look at some new players who had not been part of the squad.



**Malta midfieler Teddy Teuma** defends possession in the home qualifier against Russia.

PHOTO: DOMENIC AQUILINA



Luke Gammie (right) scores a superb goal in the 2-2 draw away to Slovakia.  
PHOTO: MARK ZAMMIT CORDINA

"We faced some fitness issues from a physical point-of-view but this was to be expected as the players were coming from a long period of inactivity following the suspension of the domestic competitions in March. Compared to the players of Northern Ireland and Kosovo, our players lacked match fitness but other than that, I couldn't ask more from the players and the staff."

## RETURN OF FANS

While the national team's improved performances under Mangia have rekindled the fans' enthusiasm, the home clash with Cyprus has a special meaning as it will be the first Malta match open to supporters in almost two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mangia welcomed this positive development.

"Finally, we're going to play a home match in front of our supporters," Mangia, who took charge of the national team in December 2019, said. "The players have been wanting this for a long time, they are looking forward to the experience and I believe it could provide an added stimulus for them."

In addition to the potential tonic linked to the return of the fans, Mangia believes that the players will head into the Cyprus match and the qualifiers away to Slovenia and Russia fully confident in their abilities and convinced that they can do well, regardless of the strength of the opposition.

"Instilling self-belief and confidence in our players has been at the heart of our work from day one," Mangia said. "Everything is centred around this approach and I believe that the players have embraced this mentality. The players feel this sense of positivity and are fully aware of the footballing idea we want to present on the field of play.

"However, we must always think that we can improve and do better every single day. We have done fairly well so far but this is not sufficient. The players have shown a very good attitude and readiness to step up but we need to not only consolidate what we have done but also make another step forward in this project, including trying new tactical variations which we can be used in the forthcoming games." ↗

## MALTA SQUAD

### GOALKEEPERS

Henry Bonello (Hamrun Spartans); Cain Formosa (San Ġwann); Jake Galea (No Club); Matthew Grech (Pembroke Athleta).

### DEFENDERS

Andrei Agius (Hibernians); Steve Borg (Gżira United); Karl Micallef (Hamrun Spartans); Zach Muscat (Casa Pia, Portugal); Enrico Pepe (Birkirkara); Kurt Shaw (Sliema Wanderers).

### MIDFIELDERS

Cain Attard (Birkirkara); Ryan Camenzuli (Floriana); Triston Caruana (Valletta); Juan Carlos Corbolan (Hamrun Spartans); Joseph Essien Mbong (Hamrun Spartans); Nikolai Muscat (Gżira United); Brandon Diego Paiber (Floriana); Steven Pisani (Gżira United); Nevin Portelli (Gżira United); Teddy Teuma (R.U. Saint-Gilloise, Belgium); Dunstan Vella (Hibernians); Dexter Xuereb (Santa Lucia); Yannick Yankam (Birkirkara).

### FORWARDS

Jan Busuttil (Floriana); Shaun Dimech (Valletta); Omar Elouni (Sliema Wanderers); Jake Grech (Hibernians); Paul Mbong (Birkirkara); Luke Montebello (Birkirkara); Alexander Satariano (Frosinone Calcio, Italy).

EUROPEAN  
QUALIFIERS

# FIFA WORLD CUP 2022 EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

## GROUP H FIXTURES AND STANDINGS

**MATCHDAY 1 - 24/03/2021****Malta 1-3 Russia**

**GOALS** 0-1 Artem Dzyuba 23, 0-2 Mario Fernandes 35, 1-2 Joseph Mbong 56, 1-3 Aleksandr Sobolev 90

**Cyprus 0-0 Slovakia****Slovenia 1-0 Croatia**

**GOAL** 1-0 Sandi Lovric 15

**MATCHDAY 2 - 27/03/2021****Russia 2-1 Slovenia**

**GOALS** 1-0 Artem Dzyuba 26, 2-0 Artem Dzyuba 35, 2-1 Josip Ilicic 36

**Croatia 1-0 Cyprus**

**GOAL** 1-0 Mario Pasalic 40

**Slovakia 2-2 Malta**

**GOALS** 0-1 Luke Gammie 16, 0-2 Alexander Satariano 20, 1-2 David Strelec 49, 2-2 Milan Skriniar 53

**MATCHDAY 3 - 30/03/2021****Cyprus 1-0 Slovenia**

**GOAL** 1-0 Ioannis Pittas 42

**Slovakia 2-1 Russia**

**GOALS** 1-0 Milan Skriniar 38, 1-1 Mario Fernandes 71, 2-1 Robert Mak 74

**Croatia 3-0 Malta**

**GOALS** 1-0 Ivan Perisic 62, 2-0 Luka Modric 76 (p), 3-0 Josip Brekalo 90

**MATCHDAY 4 - 01/09/2021**

MALTA vs Cyprus	20.45
Slovenia vs Slovakia	20.45
Russia vs Croatia	20.45

**MATCHDAY 5 - 04/09/2021**

Cyprus vs Russia	18.00
Slovenia vs MALTA	18.00
Slovakia vs Croatia	20.45

**MATCHDAY 6 - 07/09/2021**

Russia vs MALTA	20.45
Slovakia vs Cyprus	20.45
Croatia vs Slovenia	20.45

**CURRENT STANDINGS**

	PLAYED	WON	DRAW	LOST	GOALS FOR	GOALS AGAINST	POINTS
Croatia	3	2	0	1	4	1	<b>6</b>
Russia	3	2	0	1	6	4	<b>6</b>
Slovakia	3	1	2	0	4	3	<b>5</b>
Cyprus	3	1	1	1	1	1	<b>4</b>
Slovenia	3	1	0	2	2	3	<b>3</b>
<b>Malta</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>

**CENTURY OF APPEARANCES**

Defender Andrei Agius made his 100th appearance for Malta in the friendly match against Kosovo (1-2), played at the Wörthersee Stadium in Klagenfurt, Austria on 4th June, 2021. The 35-year-old Hibernians defender had made his international debut against Moldova during the 2006 Malta International Tournament. Picture shows Malta FA President Bjorn Vassallo (left) presenting a commemorative Malta shirt to Agius before the friendly game against Kosovo.

PHOTO: STEPHEN GATT

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■ MALTA SQUAD

# MALTA PLAYER PROFILES

## FOR WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS AGAINST CYPRUS, SLOVENIA & RUSSIA


**HENRY  
BONELLO**
**GOALKEEPER**

**CLUB** Hamrun Spartans FC  
**DOB** 13 October 1988

**CAPS** 28

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**29 February 2012**  
 Malta 2 Liechtenstein 1  
 (Friendly)


**CAIN  
FORMOSA**
**GOALKEEPER**

**CLUB** San ġwann FC  
**DOB** 30 November 2000

**CAPS** 0


**JAKE  
GALEA**
**GOALKEEPER**

**CLUB** unattached  
**DOB** 15 April 1996

**CAPS** 2

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**27 October 2020**  
 Malta 2 Gibraltar 0  
 (Friendly)


**MATTHEW  
GRECH**
**GOALKEEPER**

**CLUB** Pembroke Athleta FC  
**DOB** 19 February 1996

**CAPS** 0


**ANDREI  
AGIUS**
**DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Hibernians FC  
**DOB** 12 August 1986

**CAPS** 100 (6 goals)

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**25 February 2006**  
 Malta 0 Moldova 2  
 (Malta Int. Tournament)


**STEVE  
BORG**
**DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Għira United FC  
**DOB** 15 May 1988

**CAPS** 59 (3 goals)

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**7 October 2011**  
 Latvia 2 Malta 0  
 (Euro Championship Qualifier)


**KARL  
MICALLEF**
**DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Hamrun Spartans FC  
**DOB** 8 September 1996

**CAPS** 4

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**26 March 2019**  
 Malta 0 Spain 2  
 (Euro Championship Qualifier)


**ZACH  
MUSCAT**
**DEFENDER**

**CLUB** AC Casa Pia (Portugal)  
**DOB** 22 August 1993

**CAPS** 44 (1 goal)

**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
**4 September 2014**  
 Slovakia 1 Malta 0  
 (Friendly)

## MALTA SQUAD

**ENRICO PEPE****DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Birkirkara FC  
**DOB** 12 November 1989  
**CAPS** 3  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
6 September 2020  
Malta 1 Latvia 1  
(UEFA Nations League)

**KURT SHAW****DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Sliema Wanderers FC  
**DOB** 1 April 1999  
**CAPS** 11  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
12 October 2019  
Malta 0 Sweden 4  
(Euro Championship Qualifier)

**DEXTER XUEREB****DEFENDER**

**CLUB** Santa Lucia  
**DOB** 21 September 1997  
**CAPS** 1  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
30 May 2021  
Northern Ireland 3 Malta 0  
(Friendly)

**CAIN ATTARD****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Birkirkara FC  
**DOB** 10 September 1994  
**CAPS** 7  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
6 June 2017  
Ukraine 0 Malta 1  
(Friendly)

**RYAN CAMENZULI****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Floriana FC  
**DOB** 8 September 1994  
**CAPS** 16  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
25 March 2015  
Georgia 2 Malta 0  
(Friendly)

**TRISTON CARUANA****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Valletta FC  
**DOB** 15 September 1991  
**CAPS** 5 (1 goal)  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
26 March 2018  
Finland 5 Malta 0  
(Friendly)

**JUAN CORBALAN****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Hamrun Spartans FC  
**DOB** 3 January 1997  
**CAPS** 15 (1 goal)  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
11 October 2018  
Kosovo 3 Malta 1  
(UEFA Nations League)

**JOSEPH MBONG****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Hamrun Spartans FC  
**DOB** 15 July 1997  
**CAPS** 29 (1 goal)  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
29 May 2018  
Armenia 1 Malta 1  
(Friendly)

**NIKOLAI MUSCAT****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Gżira United FC  
**DOB** 13 July 1996  
**CAPS** 2  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
18 November 2019  
Malta 1 Norway 2  
(Euro Championship Qualifier)

**BRANDON PAIBER****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Floriana FC  
**DOB** 5 June 1995  
**CAPS** 1  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
15 November 2019  
Spain 7 Malta 0  
(Euro Championship Qualifier)

**STEVE PISANI****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Gżira United FC  
**DOB** 7 August 1992  
**CAPS** 28  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
28 March 2015  
Azerbaijan 2 Malta 0  
(Euro Championship Qualifier)

**NEVIN PORTELLI****MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Gżira United FC  
**DOB** 16 September 1999  
**CAPS** 0

## MALTA SQUAD



**TEDDY TEUMA**

**MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Royale Union St Gilloise (Belgium)  
**DOB** 30 September 1993  
**CAPS** 11  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 3 September 2020  
 Faroe Islands 3 Malta 2  
 (UEFA Nations League)



**DUNSTAN VELLA**

**MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Hibernians FC  
**DOB** 27 April 1996  
**CAPS** 8  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 1 June 2018  
 Georgia 1 Malta 0  
 (Friendly)



**YANNICK YANKAM**

**MIDFIELDER**

**CLUB** Birkirkara FC  
**DOB** 12 December 1997  
**CAPS** 0



**JAN BUSUTTIL**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Floriana FC  
**DOB** 6 March 1999  
**CAPS** 1  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 11 November 2020  
 Malta 3 Liechtenstein 0  
 (Friendly)



**SHAUN DIMECH**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Valletta FC  
**DOB** 8 August 2001  
**CAPS** 6 (2 goals)  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 7 October 2020  
 Malta 2 Gibraltar 0  
 (Friendly)



**OMAR ELOUNI**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Sliema Wanderers FC  
**DOB** 16 March 1999  
**CAPS** 0



**JAKE GRECH**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Hibernians FC  
**DOB** 18 November 1997  
**CAPS** 17  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 29 May 2018  
 Armenia 1 Malta 1  
 (Friendly)

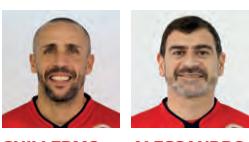


**DEVIS MANGIA**

HEAD COACH

**DAVIDE MAZZOTTA**

FIRST ASSISTANT COACH



**GUILLERMO GIACOMAZZI**

ASSISTANT COACH

**ALESSANDRO ZINNARI**

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR



**PAUL MBONG**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Birkirkara FC  
**DOB** 2 September 2001  
**CAPS** 6  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 3 September 2020  
 Faroe Islands 3 Malta 2  
 (UEFA Nations League)



**LUKE MONTEBELLO**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Birkirkara FC  
**DOB** 13 August 1995  
**CAPS** 11  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 26 March 2017  
 Malta 1 Slovakia 3  
 (World Cup Qualifier)



**ALEXANDER SATARIANO**

**FORWARD**

**CLUB** Frosinone Calcio (Italy)  
**DOB** 25 October 2001  
**CAPS** 8 (1 goal)  
**NATIONAL TEAM DEBUT**  
 11 November 2020  
 Malta 3 Liechtenstein 0  
 (Friendly)



**MARIO CAPECE**

GOALKEEPERS COACH

Keith FENECH – Team Manager  
 Luca PAGANI – Fitness Coach  
 Francesco ZANASI – Fitness Coach  
 Facundo STYK – Match Analyst  
 Pamela SCHEMBRI – Communications Director/National Team Media Officer  
 Daniel McKEAN – Team Doctor  
 Luke BUSUTTIL LEAVER – Physiotherapist  
 Julian RIZZO NAUDI – Physiotherapist  
 Simone DONATO – Physiotherapist  
 Aaron ANCILLERI – Masseur  
 Frankie CIANTAR – Kit Manager  
 Mark PISCOPO – Kit Manager

INFORMATION CORRECT AS OF 30/08/2021.



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## FACTS AND FIGURES

# CARABOTT EVER-PRESENT IN SIX MEETINGS WITH CYPRUS



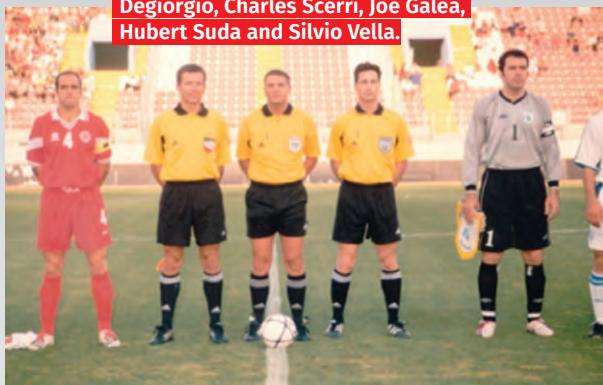
**1**

Valletta midfielder Nicholas Saliba made his international debut on 23rd November 1988, in a 1-1 draw against Cyprus at the National Stadium. Saliba, who was 22 years, two months and 28 days when he made his Malta bow, came on as a substitute for Hubert Suda, of Sliema Wanderers, who was playing his second game for Malta.

« The Malta team that faced Cyprus in a friendly match on 23rd November, 1988 at the National Stadium. The match ended 1-1.

**6**

David Carabott is the only player who has featured in all six matches against Cyprus followed by 10 others with three appearances each – the late David Cluett, Joe Brincat, Carmel Busuttil, Raymond Vella, Martin Gregory, Michael Degiorgio, Charles Scerri, Joe Galea, Hubert Suda and Silvio Vella.



**14**

Hibernians and Valletta had the most appearances with 14 each... followed by Hamrun Spartans and Sliema Wanderers (12); Birkirkara (6); Rabat Ajax (5); Floriana (4); KRC Genk (3); Kaiserslautern, Lokomotiv Sofia, Žurrieq (2); Airdrie Utd, Brentford FC, Chernomore Varna, Shamrock Rovers, St Andrew's (1).

The youngest Malta player to face Cyprus was Joe Brincat (Hamrun Spartans), aged 18 years, seven months and seven days, on 12th October, 1988, during the 1-0 victory in the friendly match at the Tsirio Stadium, Limassol.

**18**

« David Carabott (left) has represented Malta in the six previous matches against Cyprus.



# 18

**Malta and Cyprus will meet again after 18 years, two months, 25 days ago (precisely 6,660 days) – the last encounter was a European Qualifier at the National Stadium on 7th June 2003. Cyprus won 2-1. The record between the two sides reads: Cyprus: 3 wins, Malta: 1 win; 2 draws.**

# 35

The oldest player was David Carabott (Valletta) who was 35 years and 20 days when Malta lost 2-1 to Cyprus on 7th June, 2003. Ironically, Carabott, who was on the books of Hibernians at the time, is the youngest scorer against Cyprus at 20 years, six months and five days. He opened the scoring in the friendly match (1-1), played on 23rd November, 1988 at the National Stadium.

# 26

Defender Luke Dimech (Birkirkara) was the oldest player to score against Cyprus, aged 26 years, four months and 27 days, on 7th June, 2003. He reduced the deficit in the 2-1 defeat during a European Qualifier.

A total of 42 players selected by three different coaches (Horst Heese, Pippo Psaila and Sigfried Held) were used with a total of 81 player appearances against Cyprus. The players who featured for Malta in matches against Cyprus represented 16 clubs, seven of which were foreign.

# 42



MALTA'S NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM CHOSE



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## ■ PREVIOUS ENCOUNTERS

Defender Luke Dimech scores with a glancing header in Malta's 2-1 defeat to Cyprus in a EURO 2004 qualifier at the National Stadium on 7 June, 2003.



# CLOSE MATCHES AND MIXED RESULTS FOR MALTA AGAINST CYPRUS

Malta have had mixed results against Cyprus, recording some positive results in friendly matches but conceding narrow defeats in the two EURO 2004 qualifying matches. **LENNARD KELDER** looks back on Malta's previous encounters with Cyprus...

## EURO 2004 Championship Qualifying Round

**20/11/2002**  
**CYPRUS 2-1 MALTA**

**SCORERS** Rainer Raufmann 50; Ioannis Okkas 74; Michael Mifsud 90.  
**REFEREE** Anton Guenov (Bulgaria).

This was Malta's first competitive match against Cyprus, a EURO 2004 qualifier at the GSP stadium in Nicosia. Malta coach Sigfried Held fielded three foreign-based players, Luke Dimech (Shamrock Rovers), Stefan Giglio (Lokomotiv Sofia) and Michael Mifsud (FC Kaiserslautern), but had to cope without Joe Brincat, suspended, and the injured Chucks Nwoko.

In the first half, Malta were well-organised in defence and up front,

creating scoring opportunities through Michael Mifsud, Adrian Mifsud and Danijel Bogdanovic but were frustrated by the excellent goalkeeping of Nikos Panayiotou.

Cyprus stepped up their game after half-time and five minutes into the second half, Rainer Raufmann broke the deadlock, beating Mario Muscat after meeting a cross from Kaifas. The hosts doubled their lead on 74 minutes thanks to Ioannis Okkas who

finished off some good work by Theodotou and Yiasoumis. On the stroke of full-time, Michael Mifsud pulled one back for Malta with a strong shot after being served at the far post by captain David Carabott.

**MALTA** Mario Muscat, Carlo Mamo (Miguel Mifsud 74), Brian Said, Jeffrey Chetcuti, Luke Dimech, David Carabott, Stefan Giglio (Daniel Theuma 80), Gilbert Agius, Danijel Bogdanovic, Michael Mifsud, Adrian Mifsud (George Mallia 62).

**COACH** Sigfried Held.

### 07/06/2003

#### MALTA 1-2 CYPRUS

**SCORERS** Michael Konstantinou 22 (pen.), 53; Luke Dimech 73.

**REFEREE** Bernhard Brugger (Austria).

An early red card for goalkeeper Saviour Darmanin after just 23 minutes left Malta with a mountain to climb in the return match at Ta' Qali. In a swift Cyprus counter-attack, Darmanin rushed out to stop Michael Konstantinou's run but his intervention was deemed irregular by Austria referee Bernhard Brugger who awarded Cyprus a penalty and dismissed the Pietà Hotspurs goalkeeper. Mario Muscat replaced Nwoko to take over in goal but could do nothing to stop Konstantinou's spot-kick as Cyprus took a 1-0 lead.

Despite this setback, the Maltese worked hard and did well to contain the Cypriots, also carving out some goal opportunities themselves. However, eight minutes into the second half, Cyprus all but sealed the points as Konstantinou added his second of the night after receiving from Okkas. With 17 minutes remaining, Luke Dimech revived Malta's hopes by scoring



Raymond Vella (left) captained Malta to a 1-0 victory in a friendly match away to Cyprus in 1988.

his first (and only) international goal, a fine header from a Gilbert Agius free-kick. This goal inspired the hosts who intensified their efforts in search of an equaliser, pushing the Cypriots back for most of the remaining time. Unfortunately, Malta's efforts were not rewarded as Cyprus held out for a 2-1 victory.

**MALTA** Saviour Darmanin, Simon Vella, Brian Said (Danijel Bogdanovic 85), Luke Dimech, William Camenzuli, David Carabott, Noel Turner, Stefan Giglio, George Mallia (Gilbert Agius 67), Chucks Nwoko (Mario Muscat 22), Michael Mifsud.

**COACH** Sigfried Held.

### FRIENDLY MATCHES

#### 12/10/1988

#### CYPRUS 0-1 MALTA (LIMASSOL)

**MALTA SCORER** Carmel Busuttil 87.

**MALTA** David Cluett, Edwin Camilleri, Alex Azzopardi (Michael Woods 46), Joe Brincat, John Buttigieg, Martin Scicluna, Ray Vella, David Carabott (Martin Gregory 70), Michael Degiorgio, Charles Scerri, Carmel Busuttil.

**COACH** Horst Heese

#### 23/11/1988

#### MALTA 1-1 CYPRUS (TA' QALI)

**MALTA SCORER** David Carabott 16.

**MALTA** David Cluett, Martin Scicluna (Michael Woods 63), Alex Azzopardi, Joe Galea, Joe Brincat, John Buttigieg, Hubert Suda (Nicky Saliba 56), Charles Scerri (Silvio Vella 86), David Carabott, Michael Degiorgio, Martin Gregory.

**COACH** Horst Heese

#### 11/10/1989

#### CYPRUS 0-0 MALTA (LARNACA)

**MALTA** Reggie Cini, Silvio Vella, Joe Galea, Jesmond Delia, David Carabott, Charles Scerri, Ray Vella, Michael Degiorgio, Joe Zarb, Hubert Suda (Jesmond Zerafa 42), Carmel Busuttil.

**COACH** Horst Heese

#### 07/10/1992

#### CYPRUS 3-0 MALTA ( LIMASSOL )

**MALTA** David Cluett, Silvio Vella, Joe Camilleri, Joe Galea, Joe Brincat, Kris Laferla, Ray Vella, (Hubert Suda 66), Nicky Saliba (Jesmond Zerafa 63), Martin Gregory, Carmel Busuttil, Stefan Sultana (David Carabott 66).

**COACH** Pippo Psaila ↗

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ΚΟΠ CFA



## CYPRUS SQUAD

### Goalkeepers

#### Constantinos PANAYI

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 08/10/94 CAPS 23

#### Demetris DEMETRIOU

CLUB APOLLON LIMASSOL FC  
DOB 15/01/99 CAPS 6

#### Neofytos MICHAEL

CLUB APOEL NICOSIA FC  
DOB 16/12/93 CAPS 4

### Defenders

#### Andreas AVRAAM

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 06/06/87 CAPS 44 (5)

#### Nikolas IOANNOU

CLUB FC COMO 1907 (Italy)  
DOB 10/11/95 CAPS 27 (2)

#### Marios ANTONIADES

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 14/05/90 CAPS 15

#### Fanos KATELARIS

CLUB APOLLON LIMASSOL FC  
DOB 26/08/96 CAPS 10 (1)

### Antreas KARO

CLUB APOEL NICOSIA FC  
DOB 09/09/96 CAPS 9

### Constantinos SOTERIOU

CLUB AEL LIMASSOL FC  
DOB 21/06/96 CAPS 5

### Thomas IOANNOU

CLUB ETHNIKOS ACHNAS FC  
DOB 19/07/95 CAPS 5

### Paris PSALTIS

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 12/11/96 CAPS 2

### Nikolas PANAGIOTOU

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 12/05/00 CAPS 0

### Midfielders

#### Kostakis ARTYMATAS

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 15/04/93 CAPS 49 (1)

#### Charalampos KYRIAKOU

CLUB APOLLON LIMASSOL FC  
DOB 09/02/95 CAPS 38

### Grigoris KASTANOS

CLUB US SALERLITANA 1919 (Italy)  
DOB 30/01/98 CAPS 36 (3)

### Alexander GOGIC

CLUB HIBERNIAN FC (Scotland)  
DOB 13/04/94 CAPS 7

### Michalis IOANNOU

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 30/06/00 CAPS 3

### Forwards

#### Dimitris CHRISTOFI

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 28/09/88 CAPS 59 (8)

#### Pieros SOTIRIOU

CLUB PFC LUDOGORETS RAZGRAD (Bulgaria)  
DOB 13/01/93 CAPS 47 (10)

#### Fotios PAPOULIS

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 22/01/85 CAPS 17 (2)

#### Ioannis PITTAΣ

CLUB APOLLON LIMASSOL FC  
DOB 10/07/96 CAPS 17 (1)

### Loizos LOIZOU

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 18/07/03 CAPS 10 (1)

### Marios ILIA

CLUB ETHNIKOS ACHNAS FC  
DOB 19/05/96 CAPS 9 (1)

### Marinos TZIONI

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 16/07/01 CAPS 8

### Onisiforos ROUSHIAS

CLUB ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA FC  
DOB 15/07/92 CAPS 8

### Panagiotis ZACHARIOU

CLUB OMONIA NICOSIA FC  
DOB 26/02/96 CAPS 7 (1)

### Dimitris THEODOROU

CLUB ETHNIKOS ACHNAS FC  
DOB 10/09/97 CAPS 1

### Head Coach

#### Nikolaos KOSTENOGLOU

INFORMATION CORRECT AS OF 30/08/2021.



VALLETTA

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■ 2021-23 UEFA UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP

# NATIONAL TEAMS' FOOTBALL PHILOSOPHY AT HEART OF MALTA U-21 WORK



The Malta Under-21 coaching staff, led by head coach Gilbert Agius (third from right).

A new challenge beckons for the Malta Under-21 team as they kick off their 2021/23 UEFA Under-21 Championship qualifying campaign with a home match against Northern Ireland on Friday, 3rd September, 2021 followed by a trip to Russia four days later. **Rodney Vassallo** spoke to Malta Under-21 coach **Gilbert Agius** ahead of the start of this new competition...

Gilbert Agius, who succeeded Silvio Vella at the helm of the Malta Under-21 side in March, is eyeing further improvement from his new-look team following the initial work carried out in the pre-season training camp in Slovenia in the May-June period. The training camp, which included two friendly matches against the Qatar Under-23 team (0-5) and Bosnia & Herzegovina U-21 (0-1), was a useful opportunity for Agius and his staff to start working with

the squad which now comprises several new players.

"It was a good experience for all, myself included," Agius said of the training camp. "To build a new squad for the new competition you need time, especially to work on the team's organisation and the level of understanding between the players."

"Our main objective is to explain and implement the footballing philosophy of the national teams. The boys were very open to our

ideas and methods and we are happy with their attitude. That said, everyone is well aware that there is still a lot of work to be done."

Agius has made a few changes from the squad selected for the Slovenia training camp. "There are many factors that influence the squad selection, including current form, injuries and players changing clubs," the Malta Under-21 coach said. "Our approach is to identify the players who have the right

attributes that fit with the idea of football of the national teams. We also wanted to involve other players who were not part of the Slovenia training camp for different reasons."

Apart from Northern Ireland and Russia, the other teams in Group C are Spain, Slovakia and Lithuania. Agius knows that his young team faces a stern test in all the qualifiers but he insisted that sustained improvement, in terms of team and individual performances, are the top priorities.

"Our expectations are to see improvement both as individuals and collectively as a team," Agius said. "Results help to build confidence and self-belief in the project but mostly we want our players to keep improving and gain more understanding and experience of what is expected from them vis-a-vis the national teams' football philosophy and, above all, that they show the right commitment and attitude.

"These matches will be challenging but we need to prepare in the best way possible as that is the only way we can achieve our objectives." ↗

### MALTA UNDER-21 SQUAD

**GOALKEEPERS** Dylan Ciapara (Mosta FC), Duncan Formosa (Gudja United FC), Amara Sylla (Birkirkara FC).

**DEFENDERS** Glenn Attard (Pembroke Athleta FC), Matthew Ellul (Hibernians FC), Christian Gauci (Valletta FC), Karl Mohnani (Melita FC), Owen Spiteri (Floriana FC), Carlo Zammit Lonardelli (Sirens FC).

**MIDFIELDERS** Ayrton Attard (Hibernians FC), Jean Paul Attard (San Ģwann FC), Emerson Camilleri (Santa Lucia FC), Aleandro Garzia (Floriana FC), Marcus Grima (Balzan FC), Adam Magri Overend (Floriana FC), Liam McKay (Santa Lucia FC), Andreas Vella (Santa Lucia FC).

**FORWARDS** Jamie Carbone (Santa Lucia FC), Jake Engerer (Sliema Wanderers FC), Jeremy Micallef (Valletta FC), Bradley Sciberras (Floriana FC), Jamie Sixsmith (St Andrews FC), Mattia Veselji (Floriana FC).

## 2021-23 UEFA U-21 CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING ROUND MALTA'S GROUP C MATCH SCHEDULE

**3 SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Centenary Stadium  
Malta vs Northern Ireland 16.30

**7 SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Russia vs Malta 18.00

**8 OCTOBER, 2021**

Lithuania vs Malta

**12 OCTOBER, 2021**

Slovakia vs Malta

**12 NOVEMBER, 2021**

Malta vs Spain

**16 NOVEMBER, 2021**

Northern Ireland vs Malta

**25 MARCH, 2022**

Malta vs Russia

**29 MARCH, 2022**

Malta vs Lithuania

**3 JUNE, 2022**

Malta vs Slovakia

**7 JUNE, 2022**

Spain vs Malta

INFORMATION CORRECT AS OF 30/08/2021.



The Malta U-21 team during a training session ahead of their opening 2021-23 UEFA U-21 Championship qualifiers.



## MALTA WOMEN GEARING UP FOR 2023 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

### Gianluca Lia

The Malta women's national team will return to competitive action as they kick off their 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup qualifying campaign with a double-header against Denmark and Bosnia-Herzegovina this month. The other teams in Group E are Russia, Azerbaijan and Montenegro.

Led by coach Mark Gatt, the Maltese girls will be looking to improve on their performance in the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 qualifiers when they finished fourth in the six-team group with a total of 10 points – a record for the women's national team.

The preparations for the FIFA Women's World Cup commitments included the VisitMalta Women's Trophy where Malta hosted Slovakia and Tokyo 2020 runners-up Sweden. In addition, the Maltese girls faced fellow Group E opponents Montenegro in a friendly double-header in June. A Jade Flask goal helped Malta to a 1-0 victory in the second match against the Eastern European side after Montenegro had won the opening game 2-1.

As in the previous European qualifiers, Malta will launch their campaign with a daunting match against giants Denmark, one of the teams competing in next summer's UEFA Women's Euro 2022 final.

tournament in England. Viborg Stadium will be the venue of the game against Malta on 16th September. Denmark, currently 15th in the FIFA rankings and drawn from Pot 1, start as favourites to top the group and advance to the World Cup in Australia/New Zealand 2023.

In the second qualifier, Malta will host Bosnia at the Centenary Stadium on 21st September. In their UEFA Women's EURO home qualifier against Bosnia, played on 10th March, 2020, Malta came close to pulling off a famous comeback, losing 3-2 after being two goals behind. Nevertheless, a performance like that against the 58th-ranked team in the world underlined the progress made by the Maltese team.

The growth of the women's game in Malta is also reflected in the number of players moving abroad. Once again, coach Gatt can rely on a number of foreign-based players. On the other hand, the players who are based in the Maltese league have also been showing steady improvement and Birkirkara's brave displays against Glasgow City and Slovan Bratislava in the recent UEFA Women's Champions League qualifiers are testament to this improvement.

Heading into this qualifying competition, Gatt will be assisted by former Hibernians captain and national team player Dionne Tonna

### MALTA'S GROUP E SCHEDULE

**16/09/2021 (18.00)**  
Denmark vs Malta

**21/09/2021 (18.30)**  
Centenary Stadium  
Malta vs Bosnia-Herzegovina

**21/10/2021**  
Russia vs Malta

**26/10/2021**  
Azerbaijan vs Malta

**26/11/2021**  
Malta vs Montenegro

**30/11/2021**  
Bosnia-Herzegovina vs Malta

**08/04/2022**  
Malta vs Denmark

**12/04/2022**  
Malta vs Russia

**02/09/2022**  
Malta vs Azerbaijan

**06/09/2022**  
Montenegro vs Malta

who will be part of the senior technical staff in an official competition for the first time.

A record 51 teams are taking part in these World Cup qualifiers, split into six groups of six teams and three groups of five. They will be competing for nine direct spots in the finals as well as the chance to play off for three other European berths. Another berth will be at stake through the inter-confederation play-offs. ↗



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