

FIVB Women's World Championship first round tournament calendar released

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Defending champions Russia (WR 6) will begin their bid for a third successive title when they take on Thailand (WR 12) in their opening match of the FIVB Volleyball Women's World Championship Italy 2014, following confirmation of the first round calendar.

The first round of the FIVB Women's World Championship Italy 2014 will take place from September 23 to 28, in Roma, Trieste, Verona and Bari, with a total of 12 matches played on the opening day of the first round.

In Pool A, Argentina (WR 18) will take on Croatia (WR 24), the Dominican Republic (WR 8) will play against Germany (WR 9) and hosts Italy (WR 4) will take on Tunisia (WR 27) in Roma.

The Pool B matches in Trieste will see Canada (WR 20) take on Cameroon (WR 26) and Serbia (WR 7) play against Turkey (WR 11). The last pool B match of the day will see Brazil (WR 1) – current Olympic champions and 2013 FIVB World Grand Prix and FIVB World Grand Champions Cup title holders – take on Bulgaria (WR 35). The South Americans are hoping to add to their impressive list of recent accolades with their first ever World Championship title.

Verona will host Pool C matches between the Netherlands (WR 18) and Kazakhstan (WR 23), Russia (WR 6) and Thailand (WR 12), and USA (WR 2) and the [NORCECA 6 representative](#).

Finally Pool D in Bari will see China (WR 5) against Puerto Rico (WR 17), Japan (WR 3) take on Azerbaijan (WR 37) and Cuba (WR 21) play Belgium (WR 22).

The FIVB Volleyball Women's World Championship Italy 2014 will be divided into three phases. In the first phase, the 24 participating teams are divided into four pools of six teams following [the Drawing of Lots, which took place in Parma on March 10](#). The teams will play in a round-robin system over five days – three matches per day - with four cities (Rome, Trieste, Bari and Verona) hosting a pool each.

The top four teams of each pool will advance to the second round (in Bari, Trieste, Verona and Modena), where the 16 teams will be split into two pools of eight (top four teams of Pool A and D will play in Pool E, top four of Pool B and Pool C will play in Pool F), with the top three of each pool advancing to the third round.

The top three teams from the two second-round pools will advance to the third round with the winners, placed in each pool, while the second and third will be drawn. The third and final round will consist of a round-robin system, with the top two teams of each pool advancing to the semi-finals before the final takes place in Milan on October 12. The third ranked teams will be tied for fifth place.

Italy will host the women's championship for the first time ever. As one of volleyball's strongest and proudest nations, the best of women's volleyball will have a wonderful stage to perform on, especially after an outstanding standard was set during the FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship in 2010.

A total of six cities - Rome, Trieste, Verona, Bari, Modena, and Milan - will host the FIVB's premier tournament for women. Not quite the 10 cities from 2010 but some of the six cities are well known as historic volleyball venues at Italian club level, especially the host of the finals – Milan.

Italy has hosted many women's competitions in the past - the FIVB Junior World Championships in 1985, four European Championships (1971, 1991, 1999 and 2011) and three finals of the FIVB Grand Prix (2003, 2004, 2006) - but it is the first time for the FIVB Women's World Championship.

A record number of 279 teams participated in the qualification process for the 2014 FIVB Volleyball World Championships. This total, coming from 166 national federations across the five FIVB confederations, represents an increase of 65 teams from the previous best of 214 teams from 119 federations for the 2010 World Championships (compared with 102 in 2006, 72 in 2002 and 63 in 1998).

There were 127 teams that have played in the qualification process for the Women's World Championship.

Russia won their second straight FIVB Volleyball Women's World Championship title in Japan in 2010 after beating Brazil in the final. Japan completed the podium after beating USA in the bronze medal match.

Russia are the most successful nation in the history of the World Championship having won a total of seven titles with their predecessors – the Soviet Union. Cuba (WR 21) and Japan (WR 3) have both triumphed on three occasions, China (WR 5) twice, and World Championship hosts Italy (WR 4) once (2002).
