



EUROPEAN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS  
DIVISION 3

# MAGAZINE

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**INTERVIEW**  
*MATTEA SALIBA*

TOP STORY  
***SUCCESSFUL OPENING DAY***  
**FOR LUXEMBOURG**



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It was a perfect opening day for the home teams at the CK Sport Center: the women won their two fixtures and are ahead in the standings, while the men beat Malta and will face Ukraine or Lithuania in the quarters on Thursday.

## GOOD START FOR LUXEMBOURG

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**WOMEN.** Luxembourg's victory against Greece was sealed after two quick wins from Elisenda Ruiz-Kaiser and Sandra Denis. "I hope Enas Mohamed's loss in the third match after being 2-love up won't be costly," said national coach Tomi Niinimäki, referring to the possibility of promotion being decided on rubbers. Later on, they made quick work of their second fixture v Gibraltar, and 16-year old Bianca Bidoli had a winning debut (picture).



**MEN.** Despite losing for his senior debut, 18-year old Jack Darlington fought valiantly, and Amir Samimi and Mark Radley's straight game wins put the home team in the driving seat. Daniel Kaiser sealed the deal on countback after winning game 1 against Paul Borg, but sadly had to retire after pulling his calf.

## WHAT THE COACH HAD TO SAY

**Tomi Niinimäki:** “Daniel Kaiser’s injury is a huge blow, but apart from that it was a good day overall. Our men’s team was ensured to make the quarters, but topping the group gives us an edge going forward. Tomorrow will be a bit strange, we need to wait for the result of Ukraine v Lithuania to find out our opponent, then match time will depend on the draw. We’ll have to adapt, and it’s a must win if we want to get promoted. On the other hand, our

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women have only one match which means three of them won't get to play. There are many moving pieces, but I am lucky enough to have Amir Samimi and Elisenda Ruiz-Kaiser as debutant captains. They are two very trustworthy individuals, and they get on well with everyone. Besides the results, it's very positive that our youngsters Jack Darlington (pic) and Bianca Bidoli got to play and gained some invaluable experience. Finally, the atmosphere was great in the club and also within the teams. All the players were cheering behind the glass during all our matches, and that's something we had put an emphasis on before the event. Tonight, I am a happy coach and let's hope it continues..."



## QUICK QUOTE - DANIEL KAISER

The opening day was very anticlimatic for Daniel Kaiser, who gave Luxembourg the win over Malta after winning game 1 before seeing his ETC3 end prematurely because of a calf injury.

“After I got injured, the first thing I asked my teammates was whether we’d won. It’s a consolation and I am putting on a brave face, but I am actually devastated to miss the rest of the event at home. I guess that’s life...”



*13 fixtures, accounting for a total of 46 matches, were played on Wednesday at the CK Sport Center. Here is where we stand in all the pools.*



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# DAY 1 RECAP

## WOMEN'S



The seven teams all play each other and there is no knockout stage, meaning every fixture is crucial. Such as the one between #2 and #3 seeds: Malta's win against Croatia put them in a very good position as far as promotion goes, even more so after Croatia beat top seeds Austria. *Mattea Saliba*

and her teammates (read her interview in pages 16-19) are on top alongside Luxembourg, and they'll have the opportunity to keep a perfect record on Thursday against Gibraltar and Isle of Man. With 6 fixtures on schedule, we'll have a clearer picture of the situation at the end of the day.



## MEN'S - POOL A

Led by Nicolas Serna, who'll be the subject of one of our features this week, top seeds Italy recorded a comprehensive win over Greece to open the 2026 ETC3. Then Greece v Slovenia was a fierce contest, especially the battle of generations between 57 year-old Damjan Adlešič and 18-year old Theofanis Andrikopoulos. The youngster won 11-9 in the fifth (see page 12) but his team lost on game countback, which means Italy and Slovenia are through to the quarters.

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## MEN'S - POOL B

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The 4-0 scorelines don't do justice to their efforts, especially those of their #1 Ivan Flores Vela (pic), but Gibraltar's losses to Romania and Croatia means they can no longer make the top 8 and the clash between their two opponents will decide who tops the pool.

## MEN'S - POOL C

Similar situation in pool C, with Monaco going down to Ukraine and Lithuania. Those two meet on Thursday morning, the loser will play Luxembourg in the quarters. Keep an eye on the Scherbakov v Gamal match, which promises to be very entertaining.

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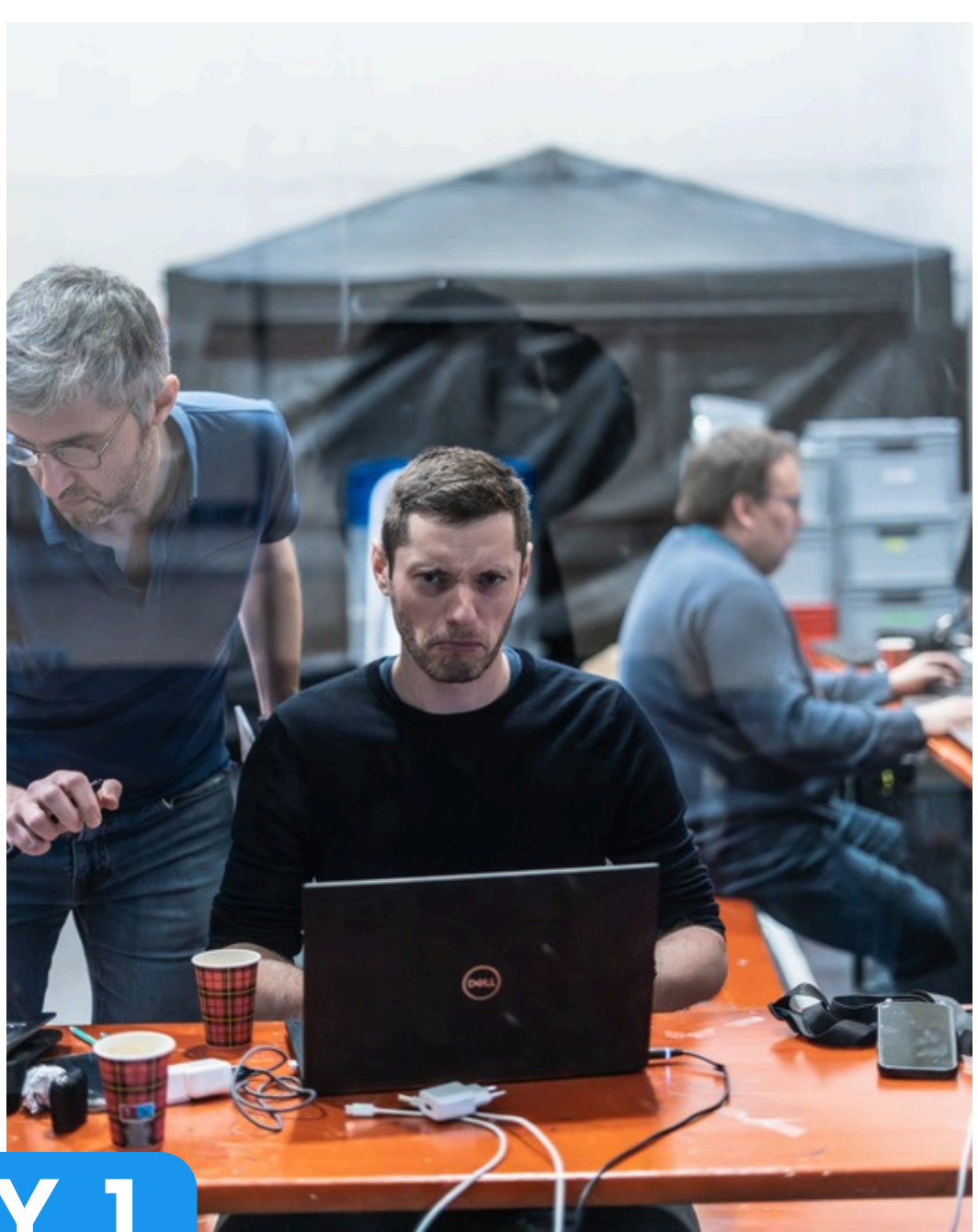
**Greece's Theofanis Andrikopoulos had to dig very deep to beat Slovenian veteran Damjan Adlešič, coming back from 8-3 down in the fifth**





**DAY 1**  
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**DAY 1**

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**DAY 1**  
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## MATTEA SALIBA

When we talk about Malta's ladies team, we usually think about the Sultana sisters, Colette and Lijana. But Mattea Saliba made a big contribution to their crucial win against Croatia on Wednesday, and we caught up with the 16 year-old.



Although it was the first fixture, Mattea Saliba's win in four hard-fought games against Dora Rezic is key in her country's quest for promotion.

We knew it would be hard for Colette against Franka Vidovic, and in the other hand Lijana was expected to win, so I was fully aware of how important my match was, and to be honest I think she was as well... I actually beat Dora in the final of the Croatian Junior Open a few weeks ago, so

I knew what I had to do: focus on my lengths as well as height, in order to prevent her to volley because she's quite tall, avoid going short too early and make the rallies as long as possible. I am glad it worked and I was really happy to win. I love team events, I've been playing the ETC3 since I was 13 years old! Obviously my teammates are older than me but they make me feel very welcome. We haven't always had a full squad in the

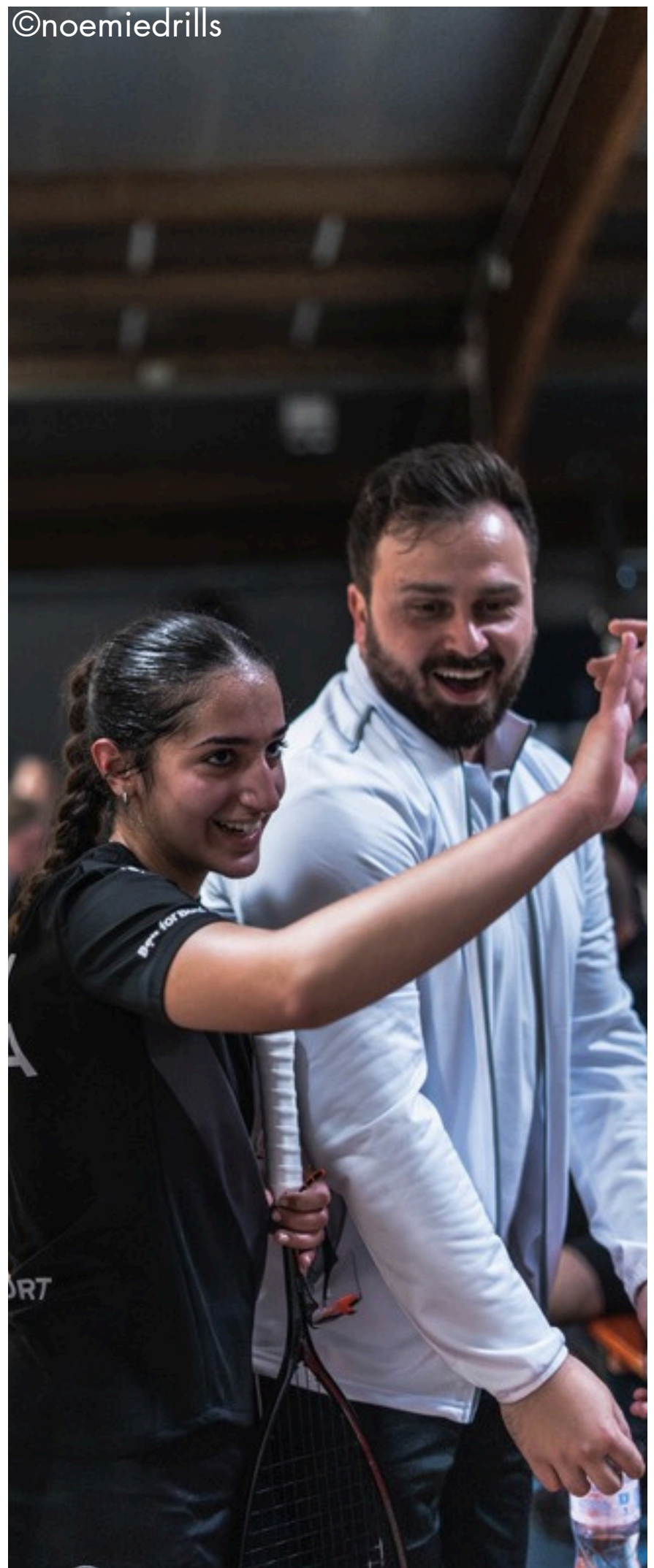
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last editions but this year is different, so hopefully we can make it to Division 2. The popularity of squash has actually grown lately in Malta, and we have to thank our coach Niall Engerer for that.

**Mattea missed the 2025 ETC3, because she was recovering from a torn ACL.**

I actually got this injury playing basketball, which is my other sport. It happened in January 2025 and I was out for 9 months. As much as I hated not being able to play, I have to admit it made me learn so much about myself. First of all, I found



out I was more than my sport, and I found joy in other things. It was also the opportunity to focus on my weaknesses, and for example I worked a lot on my upper body strength.

### **What about her future?**

Colette Sultana went to university in the United States, and her sister Lijana followed her footsteps, but I don't think I'll be doing that because of the distance, I am very close to my family. Going to the UK could be an option which I'll be looking into. As far as going pro, I would like to give it a try but I am still young and I have time to make my mind.

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# Welcome to ETC3 2026!

European Team Championship - Division 3



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International Squash  
One Goal

14 Nations • 19 Teams  
11 Men's & 8 Women's Teams

15-18  
April  
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