



MEDIA RELEASE

HOCKEY NEW ZEALAND INC.

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Vantage Black Sticks Reveal Exciting Mix of Veterans and Rising Stars for Pro League Showdowns

The Vantage Black Sticks have unveiled their men's and women's squads for the upcoming FIH Pro League games, presented by Sentinel Homes, in Christchurch against Australia and Great Britain, including the highly anticipated ANZAC Day double header. The games will take place at the Ngā Puna Wai Sports Hub April 22-30.

With key players unavailable due to European club commitments, it presents a fantastic opportunity for some familiar faces to return alongside some new talent to showcase the depth in New Zealand hockey.

Women's coach Phil Burrows remarked, "the upcoming matches are an exciting part of our home season and the last chance to see the team here before Olympic Qualification in August [in Whangarei]."

"It will be a great opportunity to expose new and exciting talent to international hockey and I am looking forward to working with this group to develop further as a team and individually, on and off the field."

Men's coach Greg Nicol echoed Burrows' sentiments, saying, "We have a wealth of talent in our country, and the Pro League games in Christchurch will give our emerging players a chance to shine."

"I'm confident that they will rise to the challenge, represent our country with pride and demonstrate the strength of New Zealand hockey."

Five players will make their debut for the VBSW including four current Junior Black Sticks, while five players will debut for the VBSM including three current Juniors – demonstrating the importance of the Junior Black Sticks programme in the high performance pathway.

Kelsey Smith is a notable inclusion with the double Olympian making herself available, and playing her way into selection, after the birth of her son seven months ago. Olympic veteran Jared Panchia will also make a return to the turf, having last played in Tokyo.

Meanwhile, Australian Scott Boyde will make his first appearance for New Zealand in what will be a zesty encounter against his former home nation after previously winning seven caps for Australia in 2016.

The ANZAC Day double header, a highlight of the series, will see both Vantage Black Sticks teams take on their Australian counterparts in a thrilling trans-Tasman encounter. With the New Zealand and Australian Defence Forces setting the tone with an exciting curtain raiser. Fans can expect a high-intensity, action-packed day of hockey and entertainment.

With a combination of seasoned athletes and fresh talent, the Vantage Black Sticks will be looking to put more points on the board in the Pro League season ahead of a month-long trip to Europe in June.

Tickets and game information can be found at blacksticksnz.co.nz/tickets.

Women

Paige Blake*, Leah Butt, Hannah Cotter, Kaitlin Cotter, Anna Crowley, Casey Crowley, Katie Doar, Madi Doar, Emma Findlay*, Aniwaka Haumaha, Olivia Merry, Grace O'Hanlon, Riana Pho*, Tessa Reid*, Brooke Roberts, Olivia Shannon, Kelsey Smith, Liz Thompson, Anna Willocks*, Tayla White.

Men

George Baker*, Scott Boyde*, David Brydon, Simon Child, Jordan Cohen, Benji Culhane*, Dom Dixon, George Enersen, Sean Findlay+, Connor Greentree, Leon Hayward, Sam Hiha, Isaac Houlbrooke*, Kim Kingstone, Dane Lett, Nick Lidstone*, Charlie Morrison, Tim Neild, Jared Panchia, Hayden Phillips, Simon Yorston.

*Debut

+Subject to European club release

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