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EG2023 Georgi Nikolov: "Padel in Bulgaria is young but growing"

Padel ambassador in Bulgaria but also one of Italy's 150 federal instructors. And that's not all: Giorgi, in addition to being a top player, is also an entrepreneur in the padel world in Rome, where he runs a club. In his many racket-related lives and at only 34 years of age, Georgi Nikolov is also the **coach of the Bulgarian** team that took part in the European Games in Krakow.

"Padel is my life now," he says, "and I can say that I have made a profession out of my passion," says "Joro" the 'nickname' by which everyone calls and knows him. "I have been playing padel for ten years, I have seen the recent history and development of our sport. In its first phase, it was mainly a South American and Spanish discipline, then the Portuguese came along'. The positive aspect, he emphasises, is seeing now 'so many countries together, with new participations in every international event. These European Games 2023 had a fantastic opening ceremony, we really felt part of the big sports family. The Bulgarian team had already participated in the World Cup qualifiers, unfortunately without luck. Here the feeling is even stronger".

There is an Olympic atmosphere among the athletes: *"The atmosphere among the guys is fantastic, we are all friends, we joke, we have fun, but then when you get on the court the match is the match," says Nikolov, who continues: "Here in Krakow, we have met many people and many friendships have been strengthened, they all have smiles on their faces, a sign that this experience is really positive. "Joro" then highlights the situation of padel in Bulgaria: "The first players were all foreigners: Spaniards working in Sofia or people who knew the sport. Tennis players also came to our clubs, perhaps with distrust at first. Many leave only to return and tell how much fun we have. We are a very young sport in Bulgaria, but we are working and want to grow. The situation is obviously not comparable to that of other European countries, but they have very different social and economic conditions from ours".*

The final stage in Krakow's square, with the court and stands set amidst centuries of history, art and architecture, will be a powerful spot for padel and an unforgettable event: *"It will be a beautiful moment for padel thanks to the commitment of the International Padel Federation. The big tournaments already do this, in Spain they often play in the centre of cities and in Italy it happens too. Of course, when you play in a club and then go to a square, you seem to lose references because the place is much bigger. But then you get used to it and it becomes a real*

show, where you feel the crazy warmth of the public. It will be an unmissable promotion opportunity"

About the International Padel Federation (FIP)

About the International Padel Federation (FIP) The International Padel Federation (FIP) is the world governing body of padel, whose goal is to promote all forms of padel worldwide with: 90 Countries, 64 National Federations, + 25 million active players and 500,000 Federated Players. The sport was created in Acapulco, Mexico, by Enrique Corcuera in 1969. It was 32 years later that the FIP was established in Madrid by the legal representatives of the Argentine Padel Association, the Spanish Padel Association and the Uruguayan Padel Association, by means of Public deeds signed before the Notary Mr. Javier Gaspar Alfaro, with the protocol number 2486. We want to bring the worldwide Padel family together into one community, and make Padel a sport that is recognised and played in all the countries of the World. www.padelfip.com

Press contacts:

International Padel Federation

Email: press@padelfip.com