To be hosted in the beautiful surroundings of ‘The Annabelle Hotel’ in Paphos, Cyprus, on 12th-15th April 2013, the European Nations Cup will be the very first official IFP tournament to be conducted without physical playing cards and dealers. The event will showcase a whole host of brand new IFP Match Poker technology. Not only will players receive their hole cards on individual smartphone devices, but every single action on all 14 tables will be logged and openly available for replay and analysis via the “IFP Player”.

The 14 participating Nations are as follows: Cyprus (host), Bosnia Herzegovina, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Russia and UK.

**MY TEAM**

Country: ______________________________

Player 1: ____________________________

Player 2: ____________________________

Player 3: ____________________________

Player 4: ____________________________

Player 5: ____________________________

Player 6: ____________________________

Reserve: _____________________________
All ENC sessions will feature Match Poker play and last approximately three and a half hours. Due to varying speeds of play, some players’ break times may be extended or reduced accordingly. The in-running scoreboard will be shown to players right up until the commencement of the final ENC Session, where the final hands will be played “in the dark”. During ENC sessions only spectators and coaches will have access to the IFP Player. All players (including reserve players) will only have access to the IFP Player between ENC sessions and after the final Awards Ceremony.

### Event Schedule

**The Annabelle Hotel in Paphos, Cyprus**

**April, 12th-15th**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday, 12th</th>
<th>Saturday, 13th</th>
<th>Sunday, 14th</th>
<th>Monday, 15th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>ENC Session 2</td>
<td>ENC Session 4</td>
<td>IFP Match Poker Summit &amp; Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Dinner &amp; Opening Ceremony</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Results &amp; Prize-giving</td>
<td>Paphos Sight-seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENC Session 1</td>
<td>ENC Session 3</td>
<td>Closing Ceremony</td>
<td>Check-out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**International Federation of Poker**
The IFP is once again very proud to be promoting the Mind Sports version of Poker, “Match Poker”. Match Poker borrows the basic concepts of Duplicate Bridge and offers a way of organising individual and team poker tournaments completely free from the “luck of the draw”. Match Poker tournaments are unique in allowing a fair assessment of the skill of the players without any influence of the random deal of cards. Furthermore, players/teams begin each hand with a fixed and equal stack size, allowing for clear comparisons to be made and the most skilful play to be rewarded.

For individual players, little adjustment is needed to understand and compete in Match Poker tournaments. Each hand, in isolation, is still a hand of No-Limit Texas Hold’em and a player is still looking to win the most (or lose the fewest) chips they can on that given hand.

Reducing Variance and Highlighting Skill

In a typical poker tournament, three major factors are outside of the control of the participating players and are determined by random chance:

- The quality of the hands received during the tournament.
- The position in which these hands are received.
- The quality of the other players at the table.

At Match Poker team tournaments, such as the 2013 European Nations Cup, the same order of cards is used at all tables. The “seat draw” dictates that teammates play on different tables with one specific player from each team sitting in each of the different seat positions, and that all teams are split evenly across the tournament tables. Over the course of a hand, therefore, each team receives each set of hole cards in the same positions, and against equal opposition. A team’s collective skill in playing these hands and consistently outperforming the other teams determines their finishing position. In no way does the quality of the cards a player or team receives influence their chance of winning the tournament.

The IFP recognises that there is an element of chance in all sports and that Match Poker is no exception. However, by eliminating the major element of chance in regular poker (the random dealing of cards), variance is dramatically reduced and individual and team Match Poker champions can be crowned with much greater statistical significance.

Capped No-Limit Betting Structure

To preserve fairness and the integrity of the Match Poker concept, in every hand each team must always have a chance to win or lose as many chips as any other team and so must begin each hand with the same number of chips. The maximum number of chips a player may commit to the pot on any one hand (the cap) is set at 200 times the big blind. Once a player has committed this number of chips to the pot, they are “all-in”. A player may not commit more chips than the cap to any pot, nor may they start a hand with fewer chips than the cap in play. Every player starts every hand with the same starting stack, but otherwise play is conducted according to regular No-limit Texas Hold’em.

Electronic Software

For the first time ever IFP Match Poker software will send hole card information to players via smartphones instead of using physical decks of playing cards. Tournament deals are randomly generated. Players will use smartphones for information only, with real poker chips being used for all rounds of betting. All action on all 14 tables will be electronically recorded, and openly available to players to review via the IFP Player between sessions of play (including all players’ hole card information).

Scoring

On each hand, a player will have a net change of chips – negative if they commit chips to the pot and do not win, zero if they fold without committing chips, and positive if they win the pot. This is an individual player’s “chip-score” for that hand.
Players 1 and 2 are in the blinds, 25 and 50 respectively. Player 6 raises to 400 pre-flop and Players 3 and 5 call. Player 3 leads out 1000 on the flop, Player 5 folds and Player 6 moves all-in. Player 3 folds and Player 6 wins the pot uncontested.

A team’s chip-score is simply the aggregate of all of its member’s individual chip-scores for that hand.

Team chip-scores are compared and points are awarded according to the example table (right).

A similar linear points structure would be used for tournaments with differing numbers of teams. For a tournament with 14 teams, for instance, 1st place would get 14 points, 2nd place would get 13 points and so on. Where two or more teams have equal chip-scores, the associated points are shared between them. This points structure is applied after each and every hand, and the team with the greatest number of points at the end of the tournament wins, with overall team chip-scores used only to settle ties. A consequence of this revised IFP Match Poker scoring is that each hand is as important as any
other (i.e. the first hand of the tournament contributes just as many points as the very last, as does a hand with seemingly little action compared to a hand with multiple all-ins). During each hand players have no knowledge of how their teammates are performing on the other tables, and even the smallest of bets/calls could make all the difference when the aggregated team chip-scores are compared. For the 2013 European Nations Cup the IFP has adopted a sporting four-session event structure (akin to Basketball’s quarters) to allow teams to adapt and strategise throughout the course of the tournament. For the first time the IFP Player will feature as a tool for teams and coaches to analyse previous sessions and revise their tactics. A new random seat draw will also be made at the start of each session. It is widely accepted that matches conducted over several hundreds of hands are adequate for skill to be the determining factor of the result. In order to record and score Match Poker, software has been designed to allow tournament officials to input the actions of all players at the table (checks, calls, bets, raises and folds) along with the bet amounts on each round and the subsequent winner(s) of the pot. This software communicates directly with the scoring system that displays in-running scores as soon as a hand has been completed on all tables.

**Player of the Tournament (and Player of each Seat)**

While the 2013 European Nations Cup is primarily focused on crowning the overall winning National Team, for the first time the IFP will also be awarding trophies to individual players who demonstrate great skill. These will be players with the highest overall chip-scores in each seat position. From these six players, the overall “Player of the Tournament” will be the player whose overall chip-score in relation to the average chip-score for their seat position is greatest.

**Player Responsibility, Disputes and Sanctions**

Despite electronic devices being incorporated for the very first time, it remains the responsibility of each player to keep their hole card information hidden. Where other tournament tables are within earshot, players are also expected to refrain from any “table-talk” and audible reaction pertaining to the cards in play. Communication with teammates, of any nature, during a session of play, is strictly forbidden. Due to the speed of play naturally varying from table to table, the event schedule (including all start, finish and break timings) will be maintained as much as possible, but is subject to change at short notice. Players are kindly asked to act in a timely fashion and refrain from unnecessarily holding up play. Since tables must be full at all times, no “sitting out” is permitted, and teams must contain at least one reserve player (prohibited from viewing any of the action of the session in play) who may be called in as a substitute where necessary. At the conclusion of each hand players are responsible to check and approve that the correct chip-score has been recorded against their name. Once this approval process has been completed and a new hand begins players no longer have the opportunity to dispute historical records. The Tournament Director, at his/her discretion, may deduct points from any team(s) not adhering to these guidelines.

**Television Coverage**

Match Poker tournaments provide a unique and innovative viewing experience. Never before have viewers been able to see exactly the same hands being played in different ways by different participants, and to evaluate the merits of each unique play. Post-production use of split-screen can show poker players from different teams facing analogous situations and choosing different courses of action. With an astute commentator evaluating each play, Match Poker tournaments will allow viewers an unparalleled depth of analysis. The IFP Player allows users to view all of the action from a Match Poker tournament. Users can follow specific tables, teams or players, or directly compare how the same hands are played on different tables. The IFP Player also has in-built analysis tools and cue points allowing users to filter the play according to specific actions (3-bets, all-ins and showdowns for instance) and digest a diverse range of statistical information.

**Future Development**

Collaborating with leading academic institutions around the world, the IFP is continually analysing and developing Match Poker. By researching alternative methodologies and formats the IFP aims to further refine the discipline and introduce online and mobile forms of Match Poker in the very near future. Match Poker is still in its infancy but the IFP is extremely pleased with the worldwide reception it has received to date, and its exceptionally powerful ability to highlight poker’s many skilful components. Such transparent comparison and analysis of play has never before been achieved in poker and the IFP is utilising this to pioneer truly groundbreaking and unique educational tools. Match Poker also remains a big part of the IFP’s worldwide campaign to gain poker the sporting recognition it truly deserves.