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Pineau and Szmals World Handball Players of the Year 2009

The turnout in the IHF election of the male and female World Handball Player of the Year was high – more than 33,000 votes were cast through the Internet. At the end, Slawomir Szmals (Poland) and Alison Pineau (France) led the field. 20-year-old Pineau, who became Vice World Champion with France at the WCh 2009 in China, has received 39.8% of the votes and narrowly prevailed over Katrine-Lunde-Haraldsen from Norway (33.9%) and Liudmila Postnova from Russia (26.3%). The results were a lot clearer for the men: Szmals aged 31 has received two-thirds of the counted votes (68.7%), so that Nikola Karabatic from France (20.9%) and Igor Vori from Croatia (10.4%) didn't have the slightest chance.

The election of the World Handball Players of the Year which has been carried out by the IHF since 1988 therefore offers a double premiere: Never before has a player from Poland received this award, and Pineau is the first Frenchwoman to be awarded this title.

Alison Pineau:



Alison Pineau, who plays for the French club Handball Metz, made it into the All-Star Team of the World Championship 2009 as the best playmaker. She was largely responsible for her team's win of the silver medal which was a big surprise for many people – but also for the fact that her team was the only team to defeat later World Champion Russia during the whole tournament. In 2007, at the age of 18, she was already part of the French national team which came in fifth at the WCh in its own country –

one year after she had played her first international match within the women's team against China. After two Frenchmen (Nikola Karabatic and Thierry Omeyer) had been elected World Handball Player of the Year in the last two years, Pineau now continues this success for the women. Up to now, she has scored 153 goals during 67 international matches for France. She won her first international medal with the French national team at the Youth European Championship 2005. This time and one year later at the Youth World Championship, Pineau was voted into the All-Star Team as the best playmaker.

Slawomir Szmals:



“Kasa“, which is Szmals's nickname, inherited his uncle's talent – who had already been goalkeeper of the Polish national team and played in the German Bundesliga. In 2003, Szmals also left his home country Poland for Germany, transferring from Wisla Plock to TuS Nettelstedt. In 2005, he transferred again to Rhein Neckar Löwen. 31-year-old Szmals, who comes from the Polish city of

Opole, experienced his first unforgettable moment with the national team at the World Championship 2007, when the Polish team, also thanks to his saves, reached the WCh final which they lost against host Germany though. At the World Championship 2009 in Croatia, Szmajda again backed up the Polish team. Once again, he reached the semi-final of the World Championship – this time, the Polish team won the bronze medal. At this year's European Championship, Szmajda who is able to react very quickly again led his team to the semi-final, but Szmajda and Poland finally lost the third-place play-off against Iceland. In Austria, Szmajda was voted into the All-Star Team of the European Championship as the best goalkeeper. After the World Championship 2007, Szmajda was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. He has played 185 matches with the Polish national team so far. After the victories of Nikola Karabatic in 2007, who was playing for THW Kiel during the voting period, and Thierry Omeyer in 2008, also playing for Kiel, Szmajda is now the third World Handball Player in a row coming from a German club.

Election results – World Handball Players 2009:

Women:

Alison Pineau (France/Handball Metz) 39,8%

Katrine Lunde-Haraldsen (Norway/Viborg HK) 33,9%

Liudmila Postnova (Russia/Zvezda Zvenigorod) 26,3%

Men:

Slawomir Szmajda: (Poland/Rhein Neckar Löwen) 68,7%

Nikola Karabatic: (France/Montpellier HB) 20,9%

Igor Vori: (Croatia/HSV Hamburg) 10,4%

II Extraordinary IHF Congress postponed taking place in Marrakech in 2011

The II Extraordinary Congress of the International Handball Federation will take place in Marrakech in 2011. The IHF took this decision on the fringes of the Super Globe in Doha (Qatar). The new date and place of the Congress became necessary after the II Extraordinary Congress, which should have been taking place in Rome in April 2010, had to be postponed at short notice. Restrictions in the air transport caused by the volcanic eruption in Iceland had led to this decision.

„It is reasonable to call an independent Extraordinary Congress in due time. Taking into consideration formal, logistic and economic aspects, it is the best solution to hold the II Extraordinary Congress directly prior to next year's XXXIII Ordinary Congress of the IHF“, IHF President Dr Hassan Moustafa explained.