

Welcome to the second write up of the Vancouver Indoor Invitational November 27th Edition.

We decided to post the link to this document instead as the formatting did not work on the website, please visit www.indoorinvitational.ca for other blogs, etc.

The teams have officially been picked and will be posted here! Just so everyone is aware of how it works; each player is given a ranking (1-5) with 8 players in each rank. Every team is then randomly drawn one player within each rank resulting in 8 evenly distributed teams.

In the event one team ends up with the best player from each rank, or something similar, some minor shuffling will be done to balance things, but in 10 years of the Invitational this has only been done a few times.

It's important to note that John himself plays in the tournaments and the teams are drawn completely fairly with a witness. If anyone has any objections to this, please let it be known and a redraw can be done in front of multiple people. This draw was done in the presence of the England captain, Joe Senior.

Before we start on the team introductions, I want to take a moment to make sure **everyone** has signed the waiver:

<https://www.waiverfile.com/b/TotalSportsGroupInc/Waiver.aspx?id=92ec7e69-1082-4b6c-a18c-492d2e93e81e>

And to read the rules: <https://indoorinvitational.ca/pages/rulebook>

Now, onto the fun stuff! As with every tournament before this one, each tournament is done with International Team Names. The captains who are chosen prior get the luxury of choosing the team name and that name can only be picked **once**. We had a reset due to a 5-year hiatus so all countries were available for this tournament.

Each team is given a colour based on the Pinnies provided by the Invitational, but you can also bring this colour too. **Red, Orange, Blue, Black, Yellow, Green, Pink, White**. These colours are divided to the teams they match the most, sometimes that doesn't always work out, and some teams get the short straw of not matching their nationality. Please note that team formations are done based on positions of what I would think if we didn't have goalies, so you might see me saying 1-2-1 when there is 3 in midfield for example, it's because someone will be in goal.



Is our local bookies, for you Canadians and non-europeans that don't know 'Ladbroses' this is what it's a play on. These bookies will give you the latest odds on your team's chances of winning.

So, let's meet the teams!



Jersey:



The second smallest nation in the tournament, and one of the original teams from one of the very first tournaments. It's a new look team though, with one exception, captain John Jeffery who is taking charge of the Jersey minnows for a second time.

On paper, this team looks extremely solid, the random generator came out nicely fitting them as the 'highest scoring team' on paper. This is worked out by calculating each person's rank, within their rank, meaning they technically have the highest rated squad out of any.

I see them lining up in a 1-2-1 (CM Diamond) formation, the lack of a real out and out striker means I see their main forward sitting closer to the midfield than other teams. I think it'll be a tight knit group that passes a lot, whether they have the end product is the real question.

The fundamental flaw of this team is their lack of goals. They easily have the best defensive side in the tournament, but that means nothing if they can't get goals. From the back they have the experienced **Johnathon Jefferys**, this will be his first tournament playing a more defensive role, in his younger days he would be seen as the midfield playmaker, nowadays the only playmaking he's doing is when he makes lego houses with his nephew. The strongest asset is going to come if he can turn it on in goal though, I imagine he'll be established as the team's main goalie and as a former Ice Hockey goalie, it could prove vital.

Next up, **Danny Groomfield** AKA Groomers, on paper potentially the best defensive player in the tournament, but can he do it on the fast-paced pitch of 5-a-side? That remains to be seen. He'll be the martial at the back with the ice-cold coolness to play in goal if needed or step up to take a penalty in the final. Not the fastest player on the field, unless the only other player is John, but pace doesn't make everything, especially in 5-a-side.

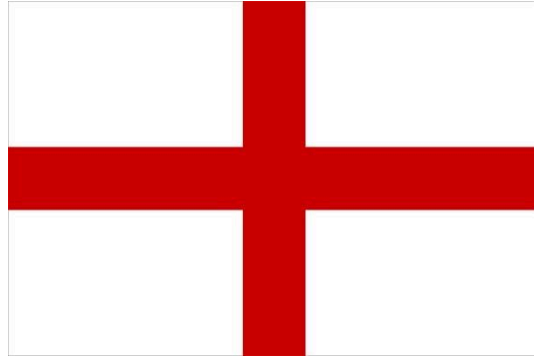
The midfield will be martialled by **Amy Butler** and **Leo Hynes**, productive and high in fitness, expect these two to be running up and down the pitch gathering up the ball, turning and not being afraid to run with it. Amy is a little bit more of an unknown quantity, having just moved over from Ireland, she's competing in pretty much her first football event since moving. Based on some research, some suggest she's a strong contender for the Female Star or Overall MVP awards. Leo on the other hand is more of the engine, someone who you could see being a real Dark Horse award candidate, quietly going about his game in a strong and competitive performance.

Finally, we have **Pedro Byrne**, the man who will be tasked with scoring the majority of this team's goals (most likely). Pedro is a strong contender for Male Star or MVP of the day, slick skills and a powerful runner but not usually someone you see in the opposition area, as he's more of a creator. In the first times he's been seen shooting, he's had some audacious attempts, including one ridiculous effort to score. It's possible his scoring touch is there and we've just yet to see it properly, but it remains to be seen whether he and this team have enough in them to make it far, especially with the bonus points for high scorers.

Lad Jefferys

4/1 – In my opinion despite the paper odds being in Jerseys favour, they are not the favourites, but I would expect them to be in the top 4 teams. I think their lack of goalscoring is going to be a serious issue given the extra bonus points that can be won each game.

If it turns out Amy is a natural goal scorer, or Leo turns out to be a 5-a-side goal scoring monster, Jersey could be the ones to watch. I would say though, expect this team to keep clean sheets, or at least keep out more goals than most.



England:

Euro finalists in the summer, now the team heads to Vancouver to compete in the Indoor Invitational. Like many before them, this team has competed before, but again a new look side given the reset on team names and inaugural tournament in Canada.

This team is among the favourites on paper coming out second in the random generator scoring. I personally see the team lining up in a 1-1-1-1 (disjointed formation). The team has a lot of ball carriers and a lot of people who can run a lot, so I don't expect the traditional 2 in midfield, 1 upfront / defence formation. I think we'll see a much more fluid lineup with people swapping positions a lot.

They do not have any natural defenders on paper, but Gaby, Joe, Harshit and Adam are all comfortable there, with their main goal scoring threat being Ebuka up top. The biggest flaw I can see in this team is not their lack of a real goalie, this is because our scouts have seen both Joe Senior and Adam Jones try their hand in goal with success before, it's actually their lack of team cohesion.

This is a weird thing to say considering every team is new, but the players are all pretty similar, all of them like to dribble with the ball - could that cause some issues with teamwork?

Starting with the captain **Joe Senior** who has known the league organizer for over 10 years now, yet has still not participated in an Invitational. He'll be looking to make his mark and do one over on his long-term friend who has yet to win a trophy. Not to mention the rivalry between England and Jersey - a feisty first game for both teams ahead. Joe is a calm guy, he'll be the soft-spoken captain who will never shout but help guide players through which could be a real benefit with the team he has. A midfielder by trade but able to play in all of the positions, including a decent job in goal - I expect Senior to be playing in goal for the important game but could switch from midfield and defence when he plays on pitch depending on the players.

Next up we've got the team's female player, **Gaby Ramirez**, who could be the favourite to win the Female Star and a solid candidate for the Overall MVP. A midfielder who is dynamic and likes to run at people but is also comfortable and putting a foot in, in defence. Gaby might be one of the smallest players in the competition, but rest assured that if you try and take her on, she will not hesitate to take you out. I expect her to chip in with a fair few assists, but perhaps she lacks a little in the goalscoring area, taking after her partner on that front. I imagine she'll be sitting just behind the forward, perhaps pushing out on the right hand side looking to cross the ball into the box.

Ebuka Nnamoko is an unknown quantity, rumours suggest he is a strong favourite for Overall MVP of the day though. The truth is, barely anything is known, other than he can match what is currently considered the 'best player' on paper. I would imagine based on this information that Ebuka is a forward thinking player who can score goals for fun. Or, were the rumours false? Regardless, this team has enough skill to score goals even if it wasn't the case. At this point I'm putting him as the out and out striker and focal point of the team. A high chance of him getting the top goalscorer award if things are as they seem, which could lead him towards the Overall MVP also.

In the central part of midfield, I expect to see **Adam Jones**, the Liverpool lad is looking to replicate his inner Leon Osman for the upcoming Invitational. With the ability to play in most positions he could end up moving around a little, but if we're putting out the strongest lineup for this team, meaning Senior in goal, I would imagine Adam will be taking up that central position. An elite dribbler with a beautiful array of passes, he'll be seen as the main talisman of the team, I expect to see a lot of the link up play to go through him first. He is also a vocal player, so in the moments where the team needs a spark, and perhaps the captain is being a bit more quiet, I think he will step up. The major downside to Adams' game is his lack of shooting ability, this is no ordinary lack of shooting ability though, it gets to the point where he'll probably be looking for a pass if he's one-on-one with the goalie, at least he's aware of it though. It would not surprise me to see Adam up there for the Male Star award, I don't think he has the goal scoring ability for Overall MVP.

Last but not least, **Harshit Narang** who comes to us with his overseas Vaccine Passport ready and raring to play! One of the youngest, if not the youngest players in the tournament, he's got a little bit of pressure on his shoulders to be the 'young gun'. But I don't think this will be an issue, Harshit is someone

who I can see running the whole day and not being tired, which is going to be an incredible asset in a 8 hour 5-a-side tournament. Come playoff times having a player like this could be the difference maker. Given the attack minded look of this team I think Harshit will probably be sitting more towards the back of the team as the defender, perhaps switching with Senior and Adam for the midfield spot on occasion. Our scouts have yet to see him shoot, so we don't have much to say on his forward ability, but based on this small amount of information I'd say he's more of a pass first kind of guy. Harshit could be a strong contender for the Perseverance Award or The Dark Horse Award.

Lad Jefferys

- 2/1 - If England don't make it to the Semi Finals, or at least top 2 in the League regular standings, I will be very surprised. While they are somewhat reliant on Ebuka being as good as rumours suggest, even if he wasn't I think they will be challenging - that's how well balanced I see this team, it's why I think they could end up in the 1-1-1-1 formation as well.

The only negative I see to this side is if Ebuka is not a goalscorer, they might need to give Senior some more outfield time, he has a scoring touch and that might be needed, which could suggest more rotation in goal for others.





Canada

The home advantage! Canada is bringing a worldwide soccer tournament home 5 years earlier than expected. Another strong team on paper, and another strong team in our eyes too. The biggest country in the tournament will be looking to exercise their power and take advantage of the home ground in Vancouver.

With no real standout goalie, their formation could change a lot, but I'll go with a 2-1-1 defensive for this team. They have the natural ability in a few players to make a difference and I think some would choose this team as their favourites overall, so having a defensively sound formation while allowing the attack minded players to flourish without worry of what's behind them could work incredibly well.

Starting with the captain again, **Luis Gonzales** takes charge of the team. A smooth passing, Pirlo esque player (not just the hair). I think Luis will be a more defensive player for this team given the ability they have up top, he'll probably take charge of a defensive role alongside a few different players throughout the day. Another vital part of this team is going to be communication, with 5 players who have definitely never played together before and from all different areas of BC, Luis will have to be in control when it comes to using his voice in the right way. The biggest downside of Luis' game might be the long day of

football, he will give it his all for the whole day without a doubt, but I could see his legs starting to fade towards the end.

Sitting next to Luis in defence is **Chris John** who will likely be part of the defensive unit for most of the day. If one of the more attack minded players go in goal, I can see Chris being a forward player, specifically as a holding striker. He's not extremely tall, but he knows how to shield the ball well and has a good set of passes on him, so he'll be able to do a job up to as well. The best thing about his game is his ability to read the match, he'll know where to be at the right moments, while also having an ability to do many things in the game such as scoring and taking a turn in goal. Positionally he's going to be one of the better players in the tournament, he might not have the most pace but on a short field it'll be tough to get past him. That being said, his pace could be an issue if he is on the attack and loses the ball, he might have difficulty tracking back in time. He does like to run with the ball out of defence, so this could happen for sure.

Pia Von-Westphalen is perhaps tipping Will to be the name of the tournament now, the star winger for the Think Panthers soccer team will be looking to improve her reputation in the upcoming tournament. Pia is a more attack-minded player, but I could potentially see her playing a bit of defence on the smaller pitch, usually you would see her high up the field on the wing, but I don't think that suits this team. So instead I could see her playing as either a defender if one of Luis or Chris are in goal, or as a central midfielder that likes the ball at her feet before putting it further up the pitch. One of the strongest components of Pias game is her ability to track players, which could make her a vital asset. The one area that could be an issue for Pia is her touch from high balls. I don't imagine on a smaller pitch this will be an issue, but on the odd occasion it doesn't happen, it might be a problem. A strong contender for the Perseverance Award.

The more attack minded players consist of **Justin Carey & Perez Brayan**, which in truth we don't know much about either. It seems we're going through all of the players we don't know too well early on, just like Ebuka these two have yet to be scouted, so we're going off rumours. Early indications are that Perez is going to be a very strong contender for Overall MVP, he plays a lot of futsal and football outside of the invitational, and seems to be someone who has a strong urge to win. Justin on the other hand is one of the other youngest players in the tournament, and looks more of a "I just want to play footy" kind of guy. Justin plays a lot as well though and is captain of a 5-a-side team which suggests he might be good on these smaller pitches. Suggestions are Perez will be the main guy upfront, with Justin taking over if he goes in goal, while Justin will sit in that center midfield role and carry the ball out, looking to make passing plays with Pia/Perez while they attack. Early indications put Justin at a decent contender for Male Star, while being a possibility for top scorer if he finds his scoring touch.

Lad Jefferys

- 2/1 - Similar to England I put them as strong favourites to win the whole competition, they have an abundance of talent with goalscoring threats in a few people - which could be why they are even stronger threats than England.

The only concern I see with this team is the lack of a goalie. Luis could potentially be decent, as could Chris, but outside of that I don't see anyone else being someone comfortable enough to play multiple games in goal. This could be a problem given those are the two best defenders on the team.



Ireland

Top of the mornin to ya! Sorry, sorry, can't help it. The Irish are coming, and funnily enough, their team actually fits the players with 3(or4) of the 5 players actually being Irish! The chances of that happening

are pretty slim, given there are only 6/7 Irish players in the tournament. Could this give the team a boost going into the Invitational though? Will we feel the passion from the Irish come through?

The truth is, they're going to need to bring their A-Game, on paper the Irish were by far the worst side, but I honestly do not think that tells the whole story at all. The issue with this team is their true lack of defence, their main defender is probably going to end up being the captain and he would probably not class himself as one. That being said, they have probably one of the strongest passing teams in the whole competition, can they outwork their opponents by using passes? As can be seen in the formation above, I've gone with a 1-2-1 (attacking) formation) with the one at the back almost being a central midfielder.

Firstly we'll start with the lady of the group, **Athena Tvivanopoulous**, a name of epic proportions is coming to us having just moved here recently. Our scouting team knows as much about her game as they do how to pronounce her surname, but the little birdies have told us that she'll be a consistent performer with nothing really negative about her game. She could be a real contender for The Dark Horse award if the rumours are true. The award goes to someone who ticks along going under the radar but was absolutely vital for their team, as someone who can potentially score, defend and make plays - this could be her!.

Heading to the top of the pitch, we'll find **Ali Alsaihaty** chilling by the opposition goal waiting to score. We'll start with the negatives, and that is that you do not want this person near your own goal (**unless he's in it**) he's not a defender and he'll be the first to admit that. That being said, put him in goal, and he'll produce some unbelievable saves from time-to-time. He's still better further forward, but he does pull out a cracker and isn't afraid to take his turn in goal. Moving upfront though and you have a player that I think will thrive in the 5-a-side environment, he loves to get the ball at his feet, turn and run at a player. He's not the most technically gifted, so you won't see him doing 50 stepovers to get past people, but he really loves to take the ball by knocking it past people and shoot which in these small pitches is a huge asset. Ali could be in for the Perseverance Award or the Dark Horse, and I could even make a case that if his team finds him in the right spaces often enough, he could be looking at an outside shot at Top Scorer.

One of the people tasked with supplying the ball to Ali will be **Robbie Creaner** who straight off the bat is a strong contender for Male Star or Overall MVP. If this team can get ticking, they won't have trouble getting goals, creating them will be Robbie, as well as contributing a few too. A fantastic dribbler and a good passer, Robbie unlike Ali likes to use his tricks to get past people, using what we call 'tight edges' in Ice Hockey, and that's not just complimenting his hair do. I fully expect Robbie to be one of the players with both goals and assists on his resume, scoring the occasional screamer. From a goalscoring perspective, I think it will be more long-range efforts and he'll be used as an 'outlet' rather than a striker.

I can see him having to defend a lot too, bombing up and down the right side, serving as a defender/midfielder/attacker combo. From a weakness perspective, he does sometimes play himself into trouble, given the lack of a defence on this team it could leave them vulnerable if he loses it - especially given he'll be playing defence too. I'm not sure what to make of the thought of him going in goal either.

Shane Carmody was the final player to sign up for the tournament, probably a good thing for the Irish team as if there is anyone I can see playing at the back, it's this guy. Our team has scouted him once before, and he played a more defensive role, though that might have been out of necessity, it might be the same in this team though. If my memory serves me right, Shane is a tall player who won't be easily

knocked off the ball, so crosses are not going to work against this team when he's in defence. He's not someone afraid to go in for a challenge either, so expect to be clattered into if you're not paying attention. Going forward he has a decent array of passes on him, while also being willing to dribble out of the back. Weakness wise he might not be the fastest player, so similar to Chris from Canada, if he does try taking the ball out of defence and he loses it, he might have trouble getting back.

The captain of the team is **Fionn Thielitz**, some say he stands in front of his mirror at night and says "I am Messi". His housemates agree, but for different reasons. If this team is going to have a genuine shot at winning, they need Fionn to be on his game. I definitely see him as the glue that can hold things together. Most of the time you'd see Fionn playing upfront, but given the attack-minded team he has, I see him playing just in front of the defender almost like a 'stopper' and someone the defender can pass to, too carry the ball out and find one of the forwards. Expect to see him getting a fair few goals from midfield though as he'll be bombing up and down the field looking to latch onto any loose balls and bury it home. I probably expect to see him getting at least one goal a game in the regular season, apart from vs Jersey, where he goes up against his Kryptonite in goal, John. Weakness wise, he's one of those rare players that doesn't have anything that stands out, I could potentially see his fitness letting him down a little on back-to-back games, especially given the team is very attack minded so he'll be doing a lot of back and forth. I could see him going for the top scorer even if he plays midfield.

Lad Jefferys

- 6/1 - The weakest team so far for me, sorry Ireland, I think the addition of Shane to the team has increased their odds but if this was the team prior, with another attacking player I would probably put them at the bottom. That being said, they have really really good players on paper, it's just whether they can sort it out defensively.

If they can figure out a system that works, then I would put them up a notch, probably level with Jersey.





Vietnam

Welcome to Asia! Our one and only Eastern team this tournament, the Vietnamese team come in with a likely 1-2-1 formation, solid team all around here, you'll find this team will work hard for one another and on paper, it's by far the **nicest** team to be a part of! If you want a joyous day, just go hang out with this team that is full of awesome characters. Not that you other folk are not awesome, of course.

The Vietnamese are looking to represent Asia in this one, our first tournament with only one Asian team so it'll be interesting to see if they can channel that. They say 'nice guys finish last', I don't think that will be the case with this team though as they have 2 very good goalscorers, and 3 very good playmakers while being defensively sound.

Starting at the back, or at least whom I think will be at the back with **Colby Song** who in his normal footballing adventures would be further into the midfield area, occasionally playing defence. In this team though I think he's the strongest choice in defence. Colby is very fast and comfortable with the ball at his feet, giving the goalie an outlet from defence. If he ends up pushing further forward he'll be a decent outlet also, he's not got the best shot but he can find a pass pretty well. Another great point is Colby is more than willing to take his fair share in goal, and he's pretty good too. The main downside to Colbys game is he can overplay in quick sequences sometimes, whether that's a quick passing segment down the wing which he overruns, or perhaps just gets a little caught in possession, however, these are rare things so don't expect slip ups often.

The next player you might see in goal a few times is captain **Will Van Dao** who along with Pia has a pretty awesome name. Speaking of playing in goal, we've seen him play there a few times and he is probably their strongest choice, but that being said he is also a very good outfield player. I would expect to see him in the middle of the field, he has a low centre of gravity which makes it easy for him to make quick turns with the ball so I imagine he'll be waiting in the center circle for a pass from the defence or goalie to quickly turn and get the team on the attack. His footballing brain is his biggest asset, for example creativity wise he has an eye for a really great pass but is willing to play the simple ball if needed and know when that is the best option. From a negative point of view, he has been seen to overdo it at times, and that's not necessarily in a losing the ball kind of way but trying too hard for a short period then being extremely tired - this could be an issue with back-to-back games. A strong contender for the Dark Horse award in my opinion.

Likely sitting on one of the wings will be **Maddy Churchwell** who is someone that can really make a difference with their dribbling skills. They are not going to score a tonne of goals, but you might see them crop up with one or two. What Maddy does best is drive the play at people, she's quick on the ball and not afraid to just run straight at someone then use their quick turn of pace to go another direction.

While these are small goals, I expect to see her finding Ola up front quite often through wingplay crosses. The negative side for Maddy is her defensive game, while she isn't afraid to put in a tackle, she does sometimes go too far forward and can't get back quick enough to help the team. If Maddy plays at her regular ability, she is a genuine outside shot at Female Star, if she turns it up a notch she could be a favourite.

Speaking of **Olaniyi Osatuyi (Ola)**, he will be the main person upfront most of the time, unless he's having a turn in goal. This is not something that should be up for discussion if Vietnam wants to win (no offence Ola!!) but Ola trying to defend is like watching Bambi on Ice. That being said, he is one of the best strikers in the tournament, without a doubt will be up there for one of the Top Scorers and potentially Male Star of the day. I think his lack of defensive game would rule him out of Overall MVP. Ola is a big guy who will hold the ball up very well, on a small pitch it remains to be seen if this will be a positive or negative but in my opinion his ability to turn and shoot is going to be a major threat to every team. Just recently he has started to do a bit more on his own with some pretty fancy footwork, this could be the type of player needed to open teams up.

Finally we have **Brian Kingston** who will be pretty much all over the pitch for this team, he's someone that can defend, attack and most importantly, score goals from midfield. This guy is another contender for top goalscorer, but on top of that he could be a shot at Overall MVP too. Brian is a pretty tall guy, so he does well at shielding the ball and the biggest negative I can give him is he sometimes loses control of the ball when it's wet - that isn't happening indoors! Just like Ola he can hold it up, turn quickly and shoot, I would go as far as saying Brian has the best shot in the whole tournament. The question will be whether he can get up and down the field enough to get those goals. From an actual negative side of things, he likes a long pass which isn't going to be possible on these pitches, I also think the smaller players might be able to get around him quite easily - when he's defending that could be a problem.

Lad Jefferys

- 5/1 - Honestly, these odds could be higher and this team is my Dark Horse for the competition, out of the top 3 teams I think they have the most balanced team, they have defence, hard-workers and goalscorers, not to mention it would be a pleasure playing for them.

All 5 of their players can score goals, but they don't even need them too as long as a couple of people do, I expect to see this team getting a fair few bonus points.





Monaco

The smallest nation in the tournament, Monaco, are coming into the tournament with high ambitions and dreams of a fairytale ending. There were doubts about their eligibility to participate in the tournament, but the International Indoor Invitational Committee formed today allowed them to participate.

Given the team are somewhat minnows in the tournament, I imagine they'll use a 2-1-1 formation to play more defensive. They don't have any out-and-out defence, but unlike Ireland their whole team is defensively sound so that should work in their favour.

Starting off with the captain **Shane Rynn** is more of a midfielder, but we likely see him playing a more defensive role today. Having first hand scouted his off the line clearances, it shows he has a defensive side, along with the fitness to back it up and get up and down the pitch if needed. What Shane lacks in technical skill he makes up with giving his absolute all and will leave it all out on the pitch. He's the definition of lead by example which will surely rally his fellow minnows. And that's not to put a damper on his name either, this guy has tekkers when push comes to shove, he's not afraid to bust out a Cruyff turn or pivot to get away from his man/woman. On the negative side of things, while he's a competitive

player, he is perhaps on the quieter side of captains which could be good or bad depending on how you see it.

Moving up to the likely striker in **Liam McGuire**, if you asked Liam where he thought he was going to play, it probably would not be striker. More of a defensive midfielder type player but he has got a little bit of an eye for goal based on our scouts, so that's why he's been given the duty of striker for this team. Liam is not small, but not big, however, he holds the ball up really well even against bigger opponents, this alongside his low centre of gravity makes him a formidable striker as he has the tools to not only hold the ball up but also dribble past you. He'll also hound you non-stop, which could be a nightmare for defences who are looking to play out from the back, expect Liam to be constantly on their heels. A negative would be that he isn't a striker and that's a lot of pressure if he is the one to go upfront to get the goals.

Conor Mallon is up next, most players playing in this tournament will have likely heard about him at some point. On paper Conor is down as the best player in the tournament, but can he translate that into Indoor 5-a-side? I would have to say it suits him better so he's going to be an incredibly difficult player to deal with, a very high chance at Top Goalscorer and Overall MVP. Conor is the all rounder attacking midfielder and I expect to see him playing center mid most of the tournament. He can pass, shoot and has an engine on him. His strongest point though has to be his ability to beat a man and hit the net which is why in 5-a-side I could see it being incredibly dangerous. The biggest negative though is Conor isn't great defensively, which as a center midfielder I could see being somewhat of a liability at times.

The female on this team is **Kate Humphries** who provides a real passion for playing football and sports in general. She might be a little less experienced than most in the tournament, but she's finding a real place for her game on the wing with a real desire to run at people. She's comfortable with the ball at her feet and has a lot of power which makes her dangerous in a 5-a-side close quarters game, she can hold the ball up while also powering past people. One negative thing about her game is her decision making at times can be a little rushed, sometimes she needs to take another moment to think about where she's going to put the ball. A contender for the Perseverance Award no doubt.

Finally is another one of our young guns, **Callum Arul**, friend of Harshit in England. He'll be looking forward to their game to see who wins the battle of the friends. Callum is as eager as they come, always wanting to learn. What he lacks in experience, he makes up in eagerness. But sleep on this kid, he's a dynamic player who is very comfortable on the ball. His slightly lanky legs make it easy for him to get round players, and while we haven't seen him shoot a whole lot, something suggests he could be a bit of a dark horse when it comes to striking which could in turn lead him to be a contender for the Dark Horse Award.



- 6/1 - Definitely not favourites in my opinion, despite having potentially the best player in the tournament I think they're just lacking a little in the striker department to be able to make a real dent.

Regardless if they do end up winning, this team will be a fun team to play for, a couple of more talkative people with a few quieter people makes for a really fun mix. That being said, this team if they had a goalscorer (outside of midfield) would be formidable.



Germany

The best team in the world rankings brings their team over for the Indoor Invitational, can they live up to the expectations of the mighty German team?

I'm fully expecting a 1-2-1 for this team with some seriously good balance within the squad allowing for changing of positions and goals being shared all around.

First we'll talk about **Coral Robinson**, the team's female player and a very strong contender for the Female Star. I would even put her in a potential running for top scorer. I think out of all the females she's the one that can score the most goals. Coral is an impressive player who is great at passing and has a deft shot on her. She's not really a dribbler despite playing on the wing, I see her more as a 'wide playmaker' that can come inside and shoot - Muller-esque. The scouser will be looking to replicate Everton elites such as Andy Van Der Meyde, Dan Gosling and Kevin Kilbane on the 27th. One negative about her game would be the defensive side, she lacks a little when trying to come back - definitely more of a forward thinking player which needs to be kept in mind by the team's captain.

Speaking of the captain, **Jayson Postle** is taking charge of the Germans for the tournament and is widely tipped to be in the running for the Top Scorer award, alongside Male Star of the day. Jayson might be one of the best out and out goalscorers in the tournament, similar to Ola he's very much a striker and won't do much going back but he will get you goals. A little bit of a different type of striker though, expect Jayson to come deep, get the ball and run at the defence, whereas Ola is more of a target man. With an array of different shots in his bag he's going to keep goalies busy throughout the day. One negative of Jayson's game will be his defensive side as mentioned, he won't be someone you see tracking back, nor will he be your 'defensive forward' kind of player.

Toluwase Ayooluwa Olaku AKA "TJ" will be the team's main defender if all goes to what I would expect. TJ is a big bodied defencemen who is pretty tall, so don't expect to get much over the top of him. Not only that but he's pretty quick and agile too, so he's not your typical big bodied defencemen. What is interesting about TJ in the few times we've seen him play is he's only really dribbled the ball a few times, but whenever he did that he looked natural as if he was a midfielder previously so in the small game I think we could see him utilizing it a little more. I imagine this guy might have a pretty powerful shot on him too, which could be fun to watch - I'm tipping him for a potential goal of the tournament. Negative wise he's not the strongest passer, sometimes going a little hard or wayward which in a small field can be detrimental at times.

One of the players I can see being tipped for the Dark Horse Award is **Raymond Chan** who will be sitting likely in midfield. Raymond might have one of the biggest engines in the competition, so teams are going to really dislike playing against this guy especially in the later rounds. What makes him even more annoying is he's decent at everything, passing, dribbling, defending and even shooting. In the later rounds it would not surprise me if he's the difference maker especially on a smaller field where people are constantly running. I think he'll be playing in the center as he is comfortable with the ball, he's not the best playmaker or the most skillful but he will do a grand job there and be all over the place when out of possession. He's also decent in goal. Negatively there isn't much to go on, I would say he's not 'the best' at any particular skill "Master of None" vibes, but out of all the negative points so far, this is probably the least negative!

Last but not least (have I written this a lot so far? I think I've been pretty good, but I have wanted to everytime with the last player) we've got **Reza Rahiem** who is one of the better dribblers in the competition but with a keen eye for goal. I think with him and/or Raymond in midfield this team has the energy of 6 AA duracell batteries. Reza has a tendency to find his way out of tricky situations which in a small field is going to be incredibly valuable. Not only can he shoot, but he also has a really great eye for

a pass, and sees the game better than a lot of people. Genuine contender for Overall MVP or Male Star, outside shot at Top Scorer, I think Jayson will take most of the goals on this team though. Negative points will be his tackling, not so much his defensive ability as he has all around good positioning, but as with any forward thinking player, he can't tackle very well.

Lad Jefferys

- Evens - Ladies and Gentlemen, your favourites for the Inaugural Vancouver Indoor Invitational: Germany. This team has it all, goalscoring threat, defensive solidarity and an engine in midfield. If there is any downside to this team it's that they'll have to put one of these players in goal each game which takes a brilliant player away.

In my eyes there is only one team I think should definitely be in the final and it's this team, as with all invitationals there is always one that comes out with my verdict as being the best. Unfortunately for them, they've only gone on to win once (sorry, the curse is on you now).





United States of America

The land of the free, home of the brave. The team will need to be brave in this tournament though, coming in as the underdogs with both Jersey and Monaco being football rich countries and well, we know what happened the last time they tried to beat Vietnam.

Despite their size they are still a smaller team and will need to call on all of that American pride, I fully expect them to be belting out the national anthem come kickoff time. I see them doing the regular 1-2-1 formation with a more defensive minded forward.

Leading that national anthem will be the slightly quiet captain, **Nelson Jung**, who is coming in as the leader of the USA because 3 of the international teams he tried to pick before them were taken. Nelson has not been scouted much, but in the times he was, he was seen to be decent on the ball and willing to be patient with his passing. This is a really valuable tool in such a fast paced setting, taking that extra second while everyone else is rushing will help him see things that others don't. He's also very handy in defence, using his awareness to track overlapping runs from midfield. His shooting could perhaps use some work, or more so his willingness to shoot, in the short time we've watched him he's had a couple of chances to take a shot and looked for the pass instead. Given this team's lack of a real defender, Nelson might find himself in defence a bit more given he is probably their best defender.

In midfield we'll have the Heinz Duo of **Martin Boland** and **Dina Davidson**, having played together for almost a whole season now these two will be vital for this team's success. Dina will be the main speedy outlet, willing to make those bombarding overlapping runs looking to center the ball, she's agile and decent on the ball. Her general control could use a little work so on occasion the ball will go wayward, but for the most part she's an extremely talented player who will be looking to create goals more so than score them. Martin on the other hand is a more central box to box midfielder, expected to do duties in both the defence and attack, he is not afraid to take a shot and has a great passing range. With the speed they have upfront I could see this team using the long ball tactic a bit more and Martin will be instrumental to that. Martin has a good shot at Male Star and is one to watch but does he have the X-Factor needed to take this team to a top level?

Next up is the guy I expect to see up front **Sumo Chatterjee**, there is a possibility we see him in midfield given his non-stop engine he has, but he lacks a little creativity which he makes up for in speed and decent striking ability. Some of us also believe he could be the team's defender as he has played there in the past, depending on how the team wants to line up. Defensively he is great, he will hound people until he gets the ball, attack wise he's extremely fast and will go after every lost cause, he is also decent at striking - likely better in smaller goals too. All in all, Sumo is a brilliant all rounder who only lacks on the creativity side. He could be utilized in any position to a good effect, I think this team likely has him upfront given the abilities of other players though. That's a great benefit of being a versatile player.

Finally, we have **Ulises Seamanduras**, the tournament's only natural goalie and this team's main hope at winning the tournament. In truth, this is just because of how good this guy is in goal, he would be every team's main hope. Having Ulises in your goal is a cheat code, in a small goal setting he's going to be even better, with his cat-like reactions and willingness to put his body on the line it's going to be very tough to get past him. Not only this, but he has a decent passing set, so we could see some long balls from him too. Weakness wise, he's been known to get a little in his own head, which can see his performance drop a little if he's not happy with his own performance, he could also use a bit more talking given he's the furthest back player. This person is the number one candidate for the Dark Horse award, but the truth is, he could be the first goalie to win Male Star or MVP.

Lad Jefferys

- 10/1 - Look away now USA fans, our team has given the USA the lowest rank of the tournament, every tournament has to have one and unfortunately this has gone to Murica this time around. But, just like our favourites, we've been wrong most of the time, with the "weakest" on paper ending up as winners no less than 4 times in the past which given the amount of teams that are involved it is a pretty good ratio and probably suggests we should retire from bookmaking.

On the positive side of things the team is relatively balanced and any team with a proper goalie already has an advantage - take this rating with a grain of salt.



Please note that all odds below are done at the base of Lad Jefferys opinion only and most of the time they don't know what they're talking about and just throwing numbers in there.

Tournament Favourites

1. Germany – Evens
2. England -2/1
3. Canada – 2/1
4. Jersey – 4/1
5. Vietnam – 5/1
6. Ireland – 6/1
7. Monaco – 6/1
8. USA – 10/1

Top Scorer Odds (Top 5)

1. Jayson Postle - 2/1
2. Conor Mallon - 3/1
3. Ebuka Nnamoko - 4/1
4. Coral Robinson - 8/1
5. Olaniyi Osatuyi - 8/1

Overall MVP

1. Conor Mallon - Evens

2. Perez Brayan - 3/1

3. Ulises Seamanduras - 5/1

Female Star

1. Amy Butler - 2/1

2. Coral Robinson - 3/1

3. Gaby Ramirez - 3/1

Male Star

1. Ebuka Nnamoko - 3/1

2. Brian Kingston - 4/1

3. Pedro Byrne - 5/1