

## 2009 SALAAM CUP TEAM PREVIEWS

These previews were compiled by third-party observers and therefore, may not fully represent the team reported on. This is only to be used as a guide or just for fun. If you feel your team is better than what was portrayed in this report, then prove it at the 2009 Salaam Cup and maybe the writer will be good to you next time. Oh and by the way, some of the logos for the teams are not their real logos, but we felt we should put something there so they don't feel left out.



### MALTON SLAPPERS

#### **Team Preview:**

The home team will make their 5th appearance in Salaam Cup with hopes of finally getting past the semi's this year, in which they have been eliminated 2 years in a row. Captain, Azhar Hussain has kept intact the original Malton squad since 2005 with a few additions from last year's team to complete the puzzle. The team had lacked bodies the previous 2 years, which usually would catch up with fatigue in the later rounds. With a full roster, it will be tough for opponents to match up as their speed and depth will favour this Malton team.

#### **Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* The offense is built to have a balanced scoring from 3 lines. The main offensive threat will come from the 2009 Team Pakistan goal leader Mudassar Hussain & Mohamed Bilal. The secondary scoring will be provided by Rizwan Hassan, Safi Ahmed and Kashif Taquiuddin, who can equally match any opposing top line forwards.

*Defence:* Captain Azhar Hussain, will anchor Malton's defence. While doing so, Azhar has upgraded the goaltending from previous years by bringing on board Nayyar Razvi, but the core ahead will be given the true test. Defensemen Azhar Hussain, Nadeem Quraishi and Mazhar Hussain have the experience & grit, but will depend on Fahad Malik & former Greenbird Nomi Choudhry to provide the speed from the backend. Nonetheless, this defensive squad has the capability to shut down any top offensive teams as long as they play their game and tempo.

#### *Analyst prediction:*

Finals

#### *Key players to watch:*

Mohammed Bilal, Mudassar Hussain, Safi Ahmed, Rizwan Hassan & Nomi Choudhry.

#### *Previous salaam cup success:*

2005 - Quater-Finals Loss

2006 - Quater-Finals Loss

2007 – Lost in Semi-Finals

2008 – Lost in Semi-Finals

Grades:

Offence - B+

Defence - B

Goaltending - A

Overall - B



**DONLANDS**

**Team Preview:**

The raging canucks from Donlands are making their 3rd Salaam Cup appearance in 2009. They have been disappointed the past 2 years with 1st round exits in both, but showed a huge improvement each year.

With a young, talented and flashy team, Donlands will not only focus on getting past the 1st round, but have the finals in sight. Unlike last year, where the focus of the team was shifted more on looking good with team t-shirts and bringing the sea of red to cheer them on, this year have been a no-nonsense attitude, let by Captain Suleman Nakhuda. To succeed, they have to put more thought in the game than off-floor activities. This team is the sleeper of the tournament if they can control their emotions and stay disciplined.

**Scouting Report:**

Analyst prediction:

Semi-Finals

Key players to watch: Suleman Nakhuda, Imtiaz Manjra, Uzair Motala

Previous salaam cup success:

2007 – Lost in Quater-Finals

2008 – Lost in Quater-Finals

Grades:

Offence - B+

Defence - C

Goaltending - C+

Overall - C+



### **Team Preview:**

Another team ranked low due to past history but with the new additions to this year's line-up, will definitely be a much improved team. From being the walk over team in 2007 to surprising the Ghetto P's in 2008, this team has had a major MJ like facelift courtesy of players from other participating Salaam Cup teams. In doing so, the Dragon's have put all the pressure on themselves to get to the finals and vie for the coveted Salaam Cup. The team is designed to compete and win, but there's still a question mark on the defensive end.

### **Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* Rexdale has added former Knights top center Gehad al-Hundi to provide some spark to a semi-skilled offense. Akib Malik and Naiem Malik will be called upon to assist Gehad with the scoring.

*Defence:* Dragons management have decided to part ways with goaltender Raza Zaidi and start with former Malton goalie Ibad Khan, even though, Raza had more success in the 2009 world championships compared to Ibad. The key question is: Did the Dragons pick the right goaltender? If it doesn't turn out favourably, will Captain Naiem Malik or Captain Imran Syed kick the bucket out from under themselves?

Defensemen Faraaz Alvi and Imran Syed will be taking on most of the load on defence. They will provide some offense from the back-end, but neither have the ability to shut down fast-breaking forwards.

### **Analyst prediction:**

Semi-Finals

### **Key players to watch:**

Gehad-ul-Hundi, Naiem Malik, Faraaz Alvi & Imran Syed

### **Previous salaam cup success:**

2007 – Lost in Quarter-Finals

2008 – Lost in Quarter-Finals

### **Grades:**

Offence - B

Defence - C

Goaltending - A

Overall – B



## GREENBIRDS

### **Team Preview:**

The reigning Salaam Cup champions are back for their 4th title in 5 years. “Dynasty” is what comes to mind when you hear the name Greenbirds. After losing in the finals at the inaugural Salaam Cup Championship in 2005, Greenbirds have been golden in 2006, 2007 & 2008 with an unprecedented 3 championships in a row.

The Greenbirds are ranked #1 due to past history and accolades even though the 2009 squad will not be as dominant as they were previous years. This is mainly due to key players not being 100% with bumps and bruises from playing in an exhausting and disappointing world championships and tier 1 season. Injuries to key players such as Bilal Buttar and Ahmed Chaudhry will just make it tougher for the Birds to four-peat, but if anyone can, it’s the Birds in Green that can do it.

### **Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* The team is led by Ijaz Chaudhry, who will have his hands full with keeping his team in game shape as he well knows that this tournament will not be a walk in the park as in previous years. On offence, first line wingers Sajjid Ayubi and Usama Mahmood will be his go-to guys to carry the offence.

To succeed, Ijaz will need his aging forwards Osman Buttar, Rizwan Kalair & Junaid Mohammed to pick up a step for secondary scoring, even though, their great depth is what makes them elite.

*Defence:* On defence, the Greenbirds will shut down every team with one of the best Muslim goaltenders: Yasar Razvi. With a great defensive core led by Ijaz Chaudhry, Dilawar Alvi, Sami Choudhry & Tariq Ayubi ahead of Yasar Razvi, it will just make life harder for opposing forwards to get a ball in the Greenbirds net.

### **Analyst prediction:**

Finals

### **Key players to watch:**

Sajjid Ayubi, Usama Mahmood, Osman Buttar, Ijaz Chaudhry, Emmad Khawaja.

### **Previous salaam cup success:**

2005 – Lost in Finals

2006 - Champions

2007 - Champions

2008 - Champions

Grades:

Offence - B  
Defence - A+  
Goaltending - A+  
Overall - A



**ML WARRIORS**

**Team Preview:**

The elite team from the east end are always a surprise in the Salaam Cup. From shocking everybody in 2005 by defeating the powerhouse Greenbirds to claim the first ever Salaam Cup Championship, to losing to those same Greenbirds the next year in the finals, to not entering a team the year after, this team is full of surprises. Maybe, the wheels have fallen off the aging bunch and the good years have past. Regardless of which team comes to play this year, they are ranked in the top four as the skill level and experience is still there to do some damage. According to Captain Imran Patel, the top guns from the 2005 & 2006 Warriors squad will not be attending this year's tournament due to prior engagements or injuries.

**Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* With Imran Patel and Samir "Gaborik" Patel, the Warriors boast two of the tournament's most dynamic offensive players. Bold, exciting and talented, these two forwards make the Warriors an exciting team to watch. But for the Warriors to take that coveted next step, the improvements will have to come on the back end of the team.

*Defence:* Last year, they allowed 6 goals in the quarter-finals. Figure that Imtiaz Hatia will earn the majority of point play on the power play. But also expect one of the many offensively gifted forwards to take control of at least one of the spots on the point during their power plays. The ML defence is old but with age comes experience. The question is: will they have enough legs to make it back to the Big Dance?

Analyst prediction:

Semi-Finals

Key players to watch:

Imran Patel, Samir Patel, Zuhair Kanji, Imtiaz Hatia.

Previous salaam cup success:

2005 - Champions  
2006 – Lost in Finals  
2007 – Did not play  
2008 - Quarter-Finals Loss

Grades:

Offence - B+

Defence - C

Goaltending - B-

Overall - B



**Team Preview:**

The future of team Pakistan ball hockey has decided to enter into their first Salaam Cup. It has been said that the talent doesn't look too promising with the Pakistani youth, but I guess this squad is on a mission to change the negative opinions of other Muslim teams.

The Saracens are ranked as the bottom end teams according to poor game play in the Jr. World Championship and tier 4.

**Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* A young team led by Salman Syed will be in for a rude awakening with an offense that has very few finishers. Although, there is great individual talent on this squad in Salman Syed, Sharaiz Khan & Akbar Jilani, they lack team play and chemistry, which will be a part of the teams downfall. The inexperience of competing on the big stage of the Salaam Cup will be a great challenge for Captain Salman Syed to make decisions in pressure situations. The leadership is a question mark due to the inexperience in the dressing room. This might be a growing pains tournament for the Saracens. Someone call Kirk Cameron!

*Defence:* Shazie Buttar and Ali Murtaza will be running the defence and will be logging a large amount of minutes. Shutting down talented forwards will be out of the question, but slowing down the opposing offense can be a viable option. Regardless of how the defence plays, former Bladerunner goalie Sameer Subedar will need to stand on his head and be outstanding in net in every game that he plays.

Analyst prediction:

First round playoff loss

Key players to watch:

Salman Syed, Sharaiz Khan, Akbar Jilani, Shazie Buttar and Ali Murtaza

Previous salaam cup success:

\*no Salaam Cup history\*

Grades:

Offence - C  
Defence – D  
Goaltending - C  
Overall - D



**FIGHTING CAMELS**

**Team Preview:**

Another expansion team making their debut in this year's Salaam Cup. A team consisting of I-Slam players that don't have much ball hockey experience, but have great upside. This team was built by Asim Gauhar, who has entered the team to just enjoy the weekend and hope to achieve the award for best dressed team (by the way, there is no such award).

**Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* The forwards do not have world class skill, but do have the heart and grit to pot a trickler if it presents itself. The offense will have a tough time keeping control of the play which will mean that the defence will be working hard in their zone. Top line forwards, Nadeem Hussain, Salman Mohiuddin & Irfan Hassan will provide the scoring, if any.

*Defence:* This defensive minded team has great leadership from defensemen Adnan Hashmi that can keep the team motivated and focused on fundamental hockey. Don't be surprised to see a 5-man zone play throughout the 30 minutes of gametime.

Analyst prediction:

First round playoff loss

Key players to watch:

Nadeem Hussain, Salaman Mohiuddin, Asim Gauhar, Adnan Hashmi & Irfan Hassan

Previous salaam cup success:

\*no Salaam Cup history\*

Grades:

Offence - D  
Defence - D  
Goaltending - C  
Overall - D



## MONTREAL ISLAMIQUE

### **Team Preview:**

This year's team is has a similar roster to last years except that they will be without star defenseman Zuheb Sheikh who's gone overseas to study Islam and Ilyas Rashid who is out for the year after having knee surgery; Hamed Sedeghi will likely move to defence but the team will be missing it's top two defensemen in Sheikh and Rashid which is a huge blow to its chances; Ahmed Aoude, Sedeghi, Zubair Wahid and Mohammad Ghamroui will likely serve as the team's top-4 instead. Rumours of Shaan Yusuf returning are being whispered in and around the tournament, but this is unlikely.

### **Scouting Report:**

*Offense:* The team will again be led by veteran Faisal Shahabuddin and his proven crew of Sophian Mian, Khurram Sher and Arssal Shahabuddin, but this year the player to watch is "Da Kid" - Nazir Lasania. Future star who, at 18 is already light years ahead of most at his age. This could be a coming out party for him after a good showing in last year's tournament

*Defence:* The defence for the Islamique has always been solid one on one defenders but this year's crop will have to improve on their transition game if they want to make it back to the finals. Many people who watched last year's finals against the Greenbirds felt hat if the Islamique had their "real" goalie in net, Les Montreal would've been inscribed in the Salaam Cup instead of the Greenbirds.

### **Analyst prediction:**

Semi Finals

**Key players to watch:** Faisal Shahabuddin, Nazir Lasania, Sophian Mian, Khurram Sher, Faheem Kotwal

### **Previous salaam cup success:**

2005 – Lost in Semis

2006 – Lost in Semis

2007 – Lost in Finals

2008 – Lost in Finals

Grades:

Offence - B

Defence - B

Goaltending - B

Overall - B



## BLADERUNNERS

### **Team Preview:**

The Bladerunners will be without Farhan Siddiqui and Kamran Siddiqui on defence who are unavailable as well as defenseman Shazie Buttar who left to start the Saracens. Forward Aamir Ahmed is also unavailable while forward Salman Syed and goaltender Sameer Subedar defected to the upstart Saracens team leaving Kamran Alvi as the goalie instead. Some new players are coming into the Bladerunners dressing room to fill the void but the experts have no idea as to how efficient this roster will be. The offense will rely on players such as Brian Beauvais, Salman Alvi and a whole bunch of unknowns. This will be a very interesting tournament for the Bladerunners as they will find out how they will do after significant losses to roster.

### *Analyst prediction:*

First Round Loss

### *Previous salaam cup success:*

2005 – First round loss

2006 – First round loss

2007 – First round loss

2008 – First round loss

Grades:

Offence - D

Defence - D

Goaltending - C

Overall – C



## SHAOLIN MONKS

### **Team Preview:**

The always dangerous Monks will be led upfront by the scoring duo of Hisham Ali and Taha Ali along with Naveed Sheraly, Erfan Bhanapatel (EBP) and Saqib Ali. They should have a strong offense and defence but goaltending with the aging yet experienced Kaz Akbar will remain the question mark. If we see the Kaz of old who once stopped 50 shots from a high octane Greenbirds offense (only to lose 1-0), then this team will go far

in the playoffs. It is possible that some players may have left to rejoin the ML Warriors who should be a strong foe leaving the Monks with a little less depth this year than last.

Analyst prediction:

Quarter- Finals

Previous salaam cup success:

2005 – Semi Finals Loss

2006 – Semi Finals Loss

2007 – Semi Finals Loss

2008 – Semi Finals Loss

Grades:

Offence - B

Defence - C

Goaltending - B

Overall – B



**Team Preview:**

Formerly the orange-tshirt wearing TPark team run by Talha Ahmad. This is a relatively young and inexperienced team but definitely has the passion to fuel them through the round robin and might even surprise a few teams. They are lead by Furqan Salam, Umair Awan and Wakaas Khan. This will be tournament where the men from Cambridge will experience a lot of bumps on the road, but if they stick together for a few years, they will definitely see improvements in years to come.

Analyst prediction:

First Round Loss

Previous salaam cup success:

2008 – First round loss

Grades:

Offence - C

Defence - D

Goaltending - B

Overall – D



## **DARK KNIGHTS**

### **Team Preview:**

Last year's "Black Knights" roster comes back with some notable losses and this leaves this team missing all of its stars and a shell of its former self. Forwards Gehad Al-Hundi, Yousuf Sowdagar and Shuaib Hussein have defected to the Dragons leaving the team without its primary offensive guns. Forwards Saqib Ali and Khalil Khokhar defected to the Shaolin Monks and Malton Slappers respectively and forward Ibrahim Hindy is unavailable leaving the team without its secondary scoring. Defenseman Ali Murtaza has defected to the Saracens while defensemen Nauman Abbasi and Zuhair Fancy are out with injuries. Goaltender Khalid Mufti is unavailable leaving goaltender Rahil Ahmed as its primary and only option in goal; the young tender will need to shine as the team in front of him will struggle. Newcomers include Salih Azmi and Yusuf Azmi who will try to stabilize the defense while forwards Ammal Esmatyer and Akbar Esmatyar may be able to help pick up some of the slack up front; forward Mohamed Khattab will also be expected to help chip in offensively for the Dark Knights.

### Analyst prediction:

First Round Loss

### Previous salaam cup success:

2005 – First round loss

2006 – First round loss

2007 – First round loss

2008 – First round loss

Grades:

Offence - C

Defence - C

Goaltending - C

Overall – C

*The end*