

Water Polo Women: Day 2: AUS 14 CHN 5

FINA Communication Department

Australia scored its 20th major championship victory over China with a stunning third-quarter effort that sent the opposition reeling and produced a real upset. By scoring six unanswered goals after being 5-4 behind at halftime, Australia stamped itself as a true contender for the crown in Barcelona. China went scoreless in the final quarter as well in what was a remarkable effort by Australia. In the FINA World League preliminary round in Auckland, New Zealand in May, Australia won the first encounter in penalty shootout after being tied at 11-11 (final score 15-13) and then trounced China 17-7 in the return match. Today's nine-goal margin echoes that result.

China won the FINA World League crown for the first time in Beijing last month and should have had the ascendancy for much of the encounter. However, the 3-1 opening quarter proved not enough.

Then came a scintillating third period in which Australia made it six in a row at major events over China and 20 of their 23 at World Championships.

The turning point was when Nicola Zagame scored on a hugely open counter attack for 5-5 and then superior defence led to a tidal wave of goals at the other end. Zoe Arancini made it 7-5 with a controversial goal that Chinese goalkeeper Jun Yang grabbed in what was determined as being behind the line. On the next Aussie Stingers attack, captain Bronwen Knox, playing in 249th international, shot under the arm of her defender, the ball turned sharply to the right off the water and into goal for 8-5. Zagame and Ash Southern finished the onslaught before the final break.

Southern added another at the top of the fourth, Isobel Bishop drilled two left-handed shots and Rowie Webster, who opened the scoring for Australia, closed it with a faltering shot from two metres.

Australia and China did not meet in Beijing last month, where China was first and Australia seventh. That was testament more to the quality of the tournament where anyone could have won but it was China, who lost its

first three matches, won the ones that counted.

Match 10: 10:50, Group B, AUSTRALIA 14 CHINA 5

Quarters: 1-3, 3-2, 6-0, 4-0

Referees: Mario Bianchi (ITA), Axel Bender (GER).

Extra Man: AUS: 3/4. CHN: 1/3

Teams:

AUSTRALIA: Lea Barta, Jayde Appel, Hannah Buckling, Holly Lincoln-Smith (1), Isobel Bishop (2), Bronwen Knox (1), Rowena Webster (2), Glencora McGhie (3), Zoe Arancini (1), Ashleigh Southern (2), Keesja Gofers, Nicola Zagame (2), Kelsey Wakefield. Head Coach: Greg McFadden.

CHINA: Jun Yang, Fei Teng, Ping Liu (2), Yujun Sun (1), Jin He, Yating Sun, Donglun Song, Lu Xu, Xiaohan Mei, Huanhuan Ma (1), Cong Zhang (1), Qun Xia, Ying Wang. Head Coach: Alexander Kleymentov.

FLASH QUOTES:

Nicola Zagame (AUS):

“We played well as a team, we had a lot of doubts at the beginning. The third quarter was the most important one because we came together as a team.”

Ashleigh Southern (AUS):

“I scored an awesome goal in the fourth quarter swimming the whole pool, because I had come from the bench and I was fresh. We have great expectations for the tournament because we are first in the group, but I prefer to focus on the next game. In Australia we have good facilities to train in the capital Canberra, but media coverage is still poor because other sports are more popular.”

Ma Huanhuan (CHN):

“We were winning at half time and then it has been a big surprise. The coach changed the team with too many young players.”

Sun Yujun (CHN):

“I feel disappointed. After the Olympic Games we changed a lot of players who aren't strong enough as they are too young.”
