

## Champions China and Italy fail to make quarterfinals

FINA Communication Department

There can only be one winner and even champions have to fall by the wayside some time. This was the case during quarterfinal qualification matches on the fourth day of the FINA Women's Water Polo World Championships at the Bernat Picornell Pool. In the final match of the night, European champion Italy bowed out in controversial fashion, losing a penalty shootout 13-12 to world champion Greece.

China, fresh from a heroic World League Super Final victory in Beijing, was toppled by Netherlands, 2008 Olympic champion. In a must-win match for the Dutch women's water polo programme, the women in orange emerged triumphant 11-10, a three-goal burst by Lieke Klaassen late in the match proving the difference. The hat-trick took her total to 16 for the championship, proving her worth to the team and the programme. A loss today could have had brutal ramifications back home.

In 2009, World League champion Montenegro arrived in Rome as the recently crowned king and also missed the top eight. The Dutch were in raptures, as if they had already won the title, while China struggled with the moment and will now head home to rethink their future.

The last match of the day also saw drama and excitement missing from some other encounters, as was the nature of this year's championship where the bottom eight fly home halfway through. European champion Italy came from behind to lead in the final stages against Greece but the world champion levelled and forced the match to extra time. Both teams scored in the first period but not in the second. Italy missed three shots and Greece scored three for the victory.

The controversial part was where Roberta Bianconi failed to shoot when the whistle sounded for the final shot, gifting the match to Greece.

Other matches went to form with Russia dispatching South Africa 22-3, Australia downing Uzbekistan 25-2, Spain bundling out New Zealand 18-6, Olympic champion United States of America beat Brazil 14-3, Canada defeated Kazakhstan 14-8 and Hungary had the better of Great Britain 14-5.

Most interest on Monday in quarterfinals, probably focuses on the clash between Olympic finalists USA and Spain.

### **Monday programme:**

15:30 RUS vs CAN

17:00 AUS vs GRE

20:15 ESP vs USA

21:45 NED vs HUN

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