

Water Polo Women, Day 4: GRE 13 ITA 12 in penalty shootout

FINA Communication Department

Italy became the second champion to exit the women's championship when it was beaten 13-12 in a penalty shootout by world champion Greece. That means, European champion Italy became the second champion of the day set to depart Barcelona after World League champion China lost out to Netherlands earlier in the day.

The match was drawn 9-9 at fulltime and 10-10 after extra time. The match started badly for Italy when captain Tania Di Mario had her penalty shot blocked by Eleni Kouvdou who, it must be said, was a metre out of her cage when the whistle went. Goals were traded and Di Mario made amends for 2-1 with Greek captain Antigoni Roumpesi levelling. Bianconi scored a second to open the second quarter for 3-2 only for Greece to smash in three unanswered goals, including Roumpesi with a lob and Alexandra Asimaki collecting a second with probably the fastest rebound shot of the championship.

At 5-3, Greece was on the rampage until Arianna Garibotti made it 5-4 inside the final minute of the half. Christina Tsoukala scored her second for the 6-4 gap but Di Mario skipped a shot into the bottom right. Both teams took a timeout for no result within the exclusion period. However, a defensive error by goalkeeper Elena Gigli, trying to swat away a loose ball to the left of her goal was pounced on by Triantafyllia Manolioudaki who pushed it into the bottom right for what was a decisive 7-5 — the last goal of the period.

Psychologically, this was monumental to take a two-goal lead into the last period. The psychology was lost on Italy, who fired in four goals to one — two from Federica Radicchi to spark the revival — for 9-8 by 2:06. Greece made some critical errors while Italy held its nerve.

It calls for someone to stand up when needed and it was Manolioudaki who delivered the equalising shot at 0:31. Italy did not get a shot away, Greece went to a timeout at four seconds left and Roumpesi's spinning lob shot failed to find the goal, forcing the match to extra time. In the first period of extra time (three minutes), Giulia Emmolo scored off her left arm at 0:44 on extra (Asimaki ejected). Greece earned the extra-man attack, thanks to Asimaki, and Manolioudaki converted from the near-post position with 10 seconds remaining and 10-10.

In the second period of extra, both teams attacked for no success and Italy called a timeout at 1:34. Italy failed to get the shot away and Greece lost the ball. Italy gained a corner at 0:18. The ball was worked around and Garibotti shot high. Greece called a timeout at 0:02 but the pass and shot did not work, sending the match into a penalty shootout.

Elisa Queirolo hit the left upright in the first shot for Italy and then Roumpesi (GRE), Emmolo (ITA), Tsoukala (GRE), Di Mario (ITA) and Alkisti Avramidou (GRE) progressed the score to 13-12 in Greece's favour.

Garibotti (ITA) had her shot blocked and Margarita Plevritou (GRE) had her attempt spin left. Bianconi needed to score to stay in with a chance as Greece still had a shot in hand. The whistle went and she didn't. The game was over. Italy protested but the shot must be immediate and it never left her hand. Italy was out.

It meant Greece had overturned the 2012 European Championship final, which Italy won, and extended the winning run over the Setterosa to eight wins in nine matches.

Match 32: 21:30, Quarterfinal Qualification, ITALY 12 GREECE 13 in penalty shootout (FT: 9-9. ET: 1-1. Pens: 2-3)

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

Referees: Boris Margeta (SLO), Sergio Borrell (ESP).

Extra Man: ITA: ½. GRE 2/4

Pens: ITA:

Teams:

ITALY:

Elena Gigli, Francesca Pomeri, Arianna Garibotti (1), Federica Radicchi (2), Elisa Queirolo, Rosaria Aiello, Tania Di Mario (3), Roberta Bianconi (3), Giulia Emmolo (2), Valeria Palmieri, Aleksandra Cotti (1), Teresa Frassinetti, Loredana Sparano. Head Coach: Fabio Conti.

GREECE:

Eleni Kouvdou, Christina Tsoukala (3), Vasiliki Diamanopoulou, Ilektra Psouni, Margarita Plevritou, Alkisti Avramidou (1), Alexandra Asimaki (2), Antigoni Roumpesi (3), Christina Kotsia, Triantafyllia Manolioudaki (4), Eleftheria Plevritou, Alkistis Benekou, Chrysoula Diamantopoulou. Head Coach: Georgios Morfesis.

FLASH QUOTES:

Triantafyllia Manolioudaki (GRE):

“The beginning of the match was difficult, Italy is a good team, but that’s the way life goes sometimes. We believed in ourselves and the team worked very well. I am so glad, it’s my team, I am happy.”

Eleni Kouvdou (GRE):

“We’re very happy to be one of the eight best teams in the world. It was a difficult game, but I think that we’re a better team than Italy. I’m also very happy that I was helpful saving a penalty.”

Alexandra Asimaki (GRE):

“I think that we could have won easier. We lacked concentration and the Italian defence was very strong. We knew that we could win.”

Giulia Emmolo (ITA):

“We have worked so hard... for this. I don’t know what to say... Finally, we have been a team, and this is the most important thing now.”

Fabiana Sparano (ITA):

“Losing in this fashion is cruel. We played a high intensity game. Now we’ll fight for the ninth position.”

Fabio Conti (ITA Head Coach):

“We played with a strong team and we lined up the best players. We played well tactically. We made errors, it’s normal, but now we have to focus on 2016. We have to make the most and learn from the negative experience and keep improving.”
