

Water Polo Men: Day 5: CRO 7 AUS 6 in extra time (FT: 5-5. ET: 2-1)

FINA Communication Department

The Aussie Sharks prowled, snapped at Olympic champion Croatia and nearly celebrated with a feast before losing a thrilling 7-6 extra-time, quarterfinal at Bernat Picornell Pool this evening. Croatia clawed back into the game after being 4-2 and 5-3 down against Australia early in the final quarter to level the match at 5-5 and force extra time. It might not have gone to extra time had Australia's championship highest goal scorer Richard Campbell not hit the right upright on extra-man attack with 18 seconds left from two metres.

Campbell was the target for Croatia, managing to shut him down all match until he finally broke through on his ninth attempt from eight metres to reply to Andro Buslje's perfect conversion of extra, 24 seconds earlier in the first period of extra time.

After a double exclusion and then a second Australian exclusion, Petar Muslim delighted his country when he accepted the rebound off a Sandro Sukno shot to score for 7-6 at 0:54.

Australia went to a timeout inside the final minute and Campbell's pass to William Miller arrived after he drove towards goal. Australia regained the ball after a blocked Croatian effort and Australia took another timeout, which appeared to be an illegal call since it had already had three timeouts. Croatia protested, but Australia went back on attack and gained an exclusion on Anđelo Setka, who threw the ball to halfway. As the seconds ticked down, the ball was passed up but no shot came and Croatia was through to the semifinals.

It was the sort of result Australia dares to think about with Australia's Croatian head coach Elvis Fatovic nearly delivering a killer blow against his countrymen. The match was tight throughout.

Paulo Obradovic opened for Croatia on extra after four minutes and Miller levelled 50 seconds from the quarter, sending the ball into the top right.

Sandro Sukno scored on the first attack of the second quarter and more than six minutes later Aiden Roach, son of a famous Australian rugby league football international, slotted it in from the top on extra.

Aaron Younger was the sole scorer of the third period just after the extra-man time. Croatia did not take a shot after a timeout ploy when strike force Campbell gained his second major foul.

Miller incredibly made it 4-2 with a shot from the top into the bottom left on the first attack of the fourth period. Maro Jokovic breathed life into the stunned crowd when he scored from deep right after a counter where the Aussie Sharks were caught napping.

Australian captain Rhys Howden responded with a rifle shot from seven metres for another two-goal lead and one of the Croatian assistant coaches was red-carded.

Jokovic drilled one from the top and at 2:01, Luka Loncar had the easiest goal of his career from point blank after an unusual situation where the referee called an Australian ball and walked downfield with his left arm outstretched, sending the Sharks on attack. He changed his direction, lowered his arm and the Sharks were stranded. The goal stood despite protests from Australia. In the last 100 seconds Australia had two extra-man situations, which were perfectly executed until the final execution, including Campbell's heart stopper.

It was the fifth consecutive win for Croatia at major events, including the 2012 World League and Olympic Games with the latter an 11-6 margin.

In the extra-man count, the true figures show Croatia converting 4/11 and Australia 1/8.

{youtube}ofPyru2808U{/youtube}

Match 34: 17:00, Quarterfinal, CROATIA 7 AUSTRALIA 6 in extra time (FT: 5-5. ET: 2-1)

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

Referees: Sergio Borrell (ESP), Mario Bianchi (ITA).

Extra Man: CRO: 4/6. AUS: 1/3

Pens:

Teams:

CROATIA:

Josip Pavic, Luke Loncar (1), Ivan Milakovic, Fran Paskuvalin, Maro Jokovic (2), Luka Bukic, Petar Muslim (1), Andro Buslje (1), Sandro Sukno (1), Niksa Dobud, Andelo Setka, Paul Obradovic (1), Marko Bijac.
Head Coach: Ivica Tucak.

AUSTRALIA: Joel Dennerley, Richard Campbell (1), Matthew Martin, John Cotterill, Nathan Power, Jarrod Gilchrist, Aidan Roach (1), Aaron Younger (1), Joel Swift, Tyler Martin, Rhys Howden (1), William Miller (2), James Clark. Head Coach: Elvis Fatovic.

FLASH QUOTES:

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Paulo Obradovic (CRO):

"I'm very tired and physically exhausted. We did not play well, in the end we pulled forward and got back into the game. We will now concentrate on the next game."

Maro Jokovic (CRO):

"Physically this was a very difficult game. We were very nervous, and fell behind by two goals and drew before the extra time. We need to work on our defence."

Ivica Tucak (CRO Head Coach):

"We expected this to be a difficult game, but in the end it was as expected."

Petar Muslim (CRO):

"We played shockingly in this game, but all that matters is that we are through to the semifinals."

Josip Pavic (CRO):

"We were not on our usual level, but we have more experience than the Australian team so this made the difference today."

Richard Campbell (AUS):

"Right now I'm very tired, exhausted, and very disappointed. It has been a very even game as always in this point of the championship, but they have more experience and this helped them. I could have scored the victory goal, but I wasn't lucky enough and I'm very sad."
