

Water Polo Men, Day 5: MNE 9 SRB 8

FINA Communication Department

The unthinkable happened when World League champion and Olympic bronze medallist Serbia was outplayed by neighbour Montenegro 9-8, scoring 70 seconds from time to advance to Thursday's semifinals. For Serbia, silver medallist at Shanghai two years ago and winner in Rome two years before that, it will be a rare trip to the round of 5-8, not having played outside the top four since independence from Montenegro in time for the 2007 World Championships.

Montenegro was here for victory and nothing else, scoring the opening goal, losing the lead and drawing level at 4-4 and 6-6 at halftime. Mladan Janovic, with his third goal, gave Montenegro a 7-6 advantage midway through the third period. By the final break, Stefan Mitrovic saw to it that Serbia led, scoring twice in just over a minute.

This set up a classic final quarter in which Filip Klikovac levelled on the first attack. Mladan Janovic could have taken sent Montenegro to the front at 5:24 but his penalty shot was blocked by Gojko Pijetlovic.

Both teams took a timeout for no result on the scoreboard. Then came the miracle moment when one of the championship's standout players, Aleksandar Ivovic assaulted the goal from eight metres for 9-8.

Serbia's Andrija Prlainovic was the antihero when he took the last two shots for Serbia in a desperate bid to force extra time. The first went over the top and the second was taken after a period excitement that all came down to three seconds.

First Vjekoslav Paskovic was ejected and then Mladan Janovic was sent for throwing the ball away. Serbia had three seconds to equalise. Sadly, Prlainovic's shot failed to find the net and the Montenegrin celebrations started with the bench players launching themselves into the pool.

The two countries won the 2005 gold medal as a combined nation and have now played 13 matches at major championships with Serbia winning eight, drawing one and losing four.

The true extra-man statistics are: MNE: 3/12 and SRB: 2/13.

Match 35: 20:15, Quarterfinal, MONTENEGRO 9 SERBIA 8

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

Referees: Daniel Flahive (AUS), Boris Margeta (SLO).

Extra Man: MNE: 3/5. SRB: 2/5.

Pens: MNE: 1/1. SRB: 1/1.

Teams:

MONTENEGRO:

Zdravko Radic, Drasko Brguljan, Vjekoslav Paskovic, Antonio Petrovic, Darko Brguljan (1), Ugo Crousillat, Mladan Janovic (3), Nikola Janovic

(2), Aleksandar Ivovic (2), Sasa Misic, Filip Klikovac (1), Predrag Jokic, Milos Scepanovic. Head Coach: Ranko Perovic.

SERBIA: Branislav

Mitrovic, Dusan Mandic (1), Zivko Gocic (1), Vanja Udovicic, Milos Cuk, Dusko Pijetlovic (1), Slobodan Nikic (1), Milan Aleksic (1), Nikola Radjen, Filip Filipovic (1), Andrea Prlainovic, Stefan Mitrovic (2), Gojko Pijetlovic. Head Coach: Dejan Savic.

{youtube}c3Cxyg4CEq8{/youtube}

FLASH QUOTES:

Aleksandar Ivovic (MNE):

“I’m overjoyed — this is our long-awaited revenge on Serbia. This is a very important win for us. We have changed our tactics since the Olympics and we are hopeful for the finals.”

Antonio Petrovich (MNE):

“We’re really happy. We beat a big team that always achieves medals in the competitions, so it makes us feel so good. We knew that playing against Serbia it would be difficult, but we were better.”

Mladan Janovic (MNE):

“We were preparing ourselves for this game and the better team won.”

Nikola Janovic (MNE):

“It was very difficult, Serbia is a great team and we congratulate them on a great game. I think we played better under pressure and were able to win. I’m proud of my team and this is the happiest moment in my career.”

Zivko Gocic (SRB):

“It’s been a very tough and physical game, we knew it was going to be very difficult.

We had a lot of chances but we weren’t calm enough on the key moments, we had very good moments that we could not finish. The match has been decided by very tiny differences and we did one mistake at the end. Congratulation to Montenegro, they played really well and we just wish them good luck.”

Stefan Mitrovic (SRB):

“This is the first time in many years that we have not entered the semifinals, but they definitely deserve this win and are a worthy team. We came here to fight for our team and our nation, we wanted more but this is just the start of another cycle of tournaments and we are preparing to win a medal in Rio.”

Dejan Savic (SRB Head Coach):

“Congratulation to Montenegro. We expected a different game, but we fell behind in the fourth quarter.”
