

Hungary-Croatia and Montenegro-Italy set for men's semifinals

FINA Communication Department

Hungary will play Olympic champion Croatia and Montenegro will face Italy in Thursday's semifinals of the FINA Men's Water Polo World Championships at the Bernat Picornell Pool. It was a day of drama in the quarterfinals today as each team had to battle for the right to contest the semifinals. Hungary came through the opening match, turning a 3-2 halftime lead to 5-3 at the final break and 9-3 at full time, thanks to a better extra-man scoring statistic.

Croatia was two goals down to Australia — 5-3 — with four minutes remaining to force the 5-5 draw and go to extra time, drawing the first period 1-1 and winning the last 1-0. Australia missed a classic victory when Richard Campbell fired a wide open two-metre shot into the upright 18 seconds from regulation time and then Australia fumbled the last-gasp chance to level to enforce a penalty shootout. Croatia had survived by the skin of its teeth despite the fact that Australia used an illegal fourth timeout with one of the earlier breaks not recorded by the secretary.

Montenegro upstaged World League champion and Olympic bronze medallist Serbia 9-8 with a goal 70 seconds from the final buzzer. Serbia was the heavy favourite but Montenegro battled all game to level and then win the match in the final quarter. Aleksandar Ivovic was the hero with his second goal of the match and 15th for the championship. It will be the first time Serbia has not played for a medal at this level. Montenegro was third in this year's World League and seventh in Shanghai two years ago.

In the final match of the night, Italy opened the scoring, fended off Spain twice — 2-2 and 3-3 — and won the match on the strength of a single Pietro Figlioli goal in the second half for 4-3.

It was a passionate match played in front of about 5000 spectators in which one player gained an injured eyebrow and there were plenty of other stoppages for accidental dangerous contact.

The round of 5-8 now comprises a competition of epic proportions considering all four teams have played at their highest level for much of the championship and all would be disappointed at not shooting for medals.

Thursday's semifinals:

Round 5-8:

15:30 37. GRE vs AUS

17:00 38. SRB vs ESP

Round 1-4:

20:15 39. HUN vs CRO

21:45 40. MNE vs ITA
