

Water Polo Men, Day 5: ITA 4 ESP 3

FINA Communication Department

Memories of the 1992 Olympic gold-medal match were rekindled when Italy beat Spain 4-3 in the quarterfinal clash at Bernat Picornell Pool. The final day of the water polo competition was played here and Italy needed many periods of extra time to overcome Spain. Italy did not need extra time tonight but could only score once in the second half for the low-scoring victory that sent it into the semifinals against Montenegro.

The first two periods were squared and they weren't without incident. The biggest was when two players were ejected on a double exclusion with heads being used and staging posts. During the altercation, Alberto Munarriz emerged with bleeding above the left eye and needed serious medical work poolside, not returning to the bench until late in the third quarter. The surgery was done by long-term Spanish team doctor Albert Estiarte, brother of six-time Olympian Manuel Estiarte.

Spanish head coach Rafael Aguilar was shown the yellow card for not returning to his bench as he was still protesting the alleged punch to Munarriz.

Italy opened the scoring and goals were swapped to 3-3 three minutes from halftime when Guillermo Molina scored, urging the near-maximum crowd of 4000 to cheer loudly, which it did.

Pietro Figlioli, with a recorded shot of 86.7km/h at these championships, tried to improve on that with a penalty score at the start of the third period.

Both teams had their chances in the period with the goals sprayed. Temperatures heated up when Italy's Niccolo Gitto went face to face with Spanish goalkeeper Inaki Aguilar in a war of words after the three-quarter-time buzzer.

The final period was a match-up between two tiring teams, struggling to the death, trying to gain any advantage and using brawn more than brain in a modern gladiatorial contest. The closest anyone came to beating a goalkeeper was Niccolo Figari with a “banana” shot, which hit the crossbar.

Spain could only garner one from 11 on extra-man attack and Italy failed to convert from eight.

Italy wore black armbands as a mark of respect to the 40 victims of a bus crash south of Rome on Monday. It was the second salute to fallen people following a minute’s silence last week for victims of the Spanish train crash.

Italian head coach Alessandro Campagna scored the winning goal in 1992 in the Olympic gold-medal match in which mayhem erupted on the side of the pool after the extended extra-time clash. Also collecting golds that day were the two assistants on the team bench tonight — goalkeeper Francesco Attolico and Amedeo Pomilio.

It was the 11th match between the two at World Championships with Spain leading 6-5. Spain had won the previous five encounters.

Match 36: 21:45, Quarterfinal, SPAIN 3 ITALY 4

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

Referees: Georgios Stavridis (GRE), Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU).

Extra Man: ESP: 1/7. ITA: 0/1.

Pens: ESP: 1/1. ITA: 1/1.

Teams:

SPAIN: Inake Aguilar, Alberto Munarriz, Ruben Do Lera, Ricard Alarcon, Guillermo Molina (1), Marc Minguell, Balazs Sziranyi, Albert Espanol (1), Xavier Valles, Felipe Perrone (1), Pere Estrany, Xavier Garcia, Daniel Lopez. Head Coach: Rafael Aguilar.

ITALY: Stefano Tempesti, Amaurys Perez, Niccolo Gitto, Pietro Figlioli (2), Alex Georgetti (1), Maurizio Felugo, Niccolo Figari (1), Valentino Gallo, Christian Presciutti, Deni Fiorentini, Matteo Aicardi, Christian Napolitano, Marco Del Lungo. Head Coach: Alessandro Campagna.

FLASH QUOTES:

Niccolo Gitto (ITA):

“We played a good game against the home team and we were very happy with the result. The match was very intense and balanced. The next game against Montenegro is going to be very difficult as they just defeated Serbia.”

Matteo Aicardi (ITA):

“We’ve found it very difficult to play with most of the crowd supporting Spain. We are very strong but our next rival is fearfully impressive.”

Amaurys Perez (ITA):

“The Spanish supporters were very intense, but we didn’t mind as we are a very united team.”

Alessandro Campagna (ITA Head Coach):

“21 years ago we would’ve celebrated today’s victory, but now it’s not the same and we need to concentrate for the next game against Montenegro. The game was good but extremely difficult, we adapted to the rivals’ tactics playing perfectly in the third and fourth quarters. Montenegro defeated Serbia today and this deserves respect, but we still need to remember that we are a strong team.”

Guillermo Molina (ESP):

“It was a really hard match. We have suffered a lot throughout; it has been a tactical game. Italy wasn't as tired as us, but I'm proud of the team. I'm disappointed about losing in front of our supporters, but we have to remember who we have been defeated by; Italy is the current silver Olympic medallist.”

Alberto Munarriz (ESP):

“Italy plays very hard, almost reaching the limits, some of our players have even got blood injuries. It's been a very intense and physical match, with strong defence. A game with very few goals that has been decided by just little details.”

Xavier Valles (ESP):

“We did everything we could in front our fans. It is always a pleasure to play here in the Picornells. This time we couldn't win, it is a shame but we have a great group of players. Now I can say that I'm retiring, this is the last championship I'm playing, I'll try to enjoy the last game against Serbia.”

Marc Minguell (ESP):

“It has been a match of defence where we have both been quite good, both goalkeepers were great and there have been few goals. A penalty goal has decided the match in the third quarter... I don't know if it has been a clear penalty, but we cannot talk about the referees. We have competed to the maximum level.”

Inaki Aguilar (ESP):

“They have a great defence, knowing how to stop our key players, and they have a great goalkeeper. We know it is a contact sport, and that's it. We wanted to be in the semifinals, but it could not be possible and it's a letdown for us.”
