

Japan shocks USA, Hungary strikes back to Croatia in shootout, Montenegro, Spain advance with ease

Despite a 'shark-attack', Montenegro easily beats Kazakhstan
Results & Teams

Game 13, 15.15 – Quarterfinal: Montenegro v Kazakhstan 14-6

Quarters: 5-2 , 2-2 , 5-1 , 2-1

Referees: Balazs Szekely (HUN), Alex Stankevich (USA)

MONTENEGRO

Dejan Lazovic (5 saves/10 shots), Slaven Kandic (1/2, 50%) – Drasko Brguljan (2/5), Bojan Banicevic (0/2), Marko Petkovic (0/1), Stefan Vidovic (1/3), Duro Radovic (0/0), Mladan Janovic (2/4), Bogdan Durdic (2/2), Aleksandar Ivovic (3/6), Sasa Misic (1/1), Dragan Draskovic (1/2), Vladan Spaic (2/3). Head coach: Vladimir Gojkovic

KAZAKHSTAN

Valeriy Shlemoy (8/22, 36%), Pavel Lipilin (GK2, not entered) – Yevgeniy Medvedev (0/0), Ruslan Akhmetov (0/0), Roman Pilipenko (0/0), Miras Aubakirov (1/2), Alexey Shmider (0/0), Murat Shakenov (1/4), Alexandr Godoyanyuk (0/1), Rustam Ukumanov (2/5), Mikhail Ruday (2/4), Ravil Manafov (0/1), Yulian Verdesh (0/0). Head coach: Nemanja Knezevic

Goals/shots

MNE: 14/31

KAZ: 6/18

Extramen

MNE: 4/11

KAZ: 0/10

Penalties

MNE: 2/2

KAZ: none

Best player of the game

Drasko Brguljan (MNE)

Report

It seemed to be an easy task for Montenegro – and they did their job to win the match without any problem. The start is usually important to pave the way in this kind of matches and the Montenegrins didn't let their rivals think of forcing a bigger fight. After a relatively slow start the favourite side netted three connecting goals in 1:44 minutes, soon it was 5-1 still in the first period, so everything looked to be settled.

The remaining three periods were the same, the Montenegrins dominated the game but not pushed too hard – there are two more games to play, and they could afford conserving some energy as the Kazakhs looked a bit being worn out in their fourth match in as many days. However, the goal of the game – perhaps of the day – came from their side, when Rustam Ukumanov sank under water, chased the goalkeeper who held the ball ready to pass it to start their attack... Then the shark jumped out of the water, attacked him, stole the ball and put into the empty net – a great move, though was enough to bring the score to 6-3, shortly before the middle break. At halftime it stood 7-4 but the Montenegrins hit two in 35 seconds for 9-4 before the game would have heated up. The second half mirrored even more the difference between reserves and skills: the Montenegrins won these periods 7-2 and secured their place in the semi-finals without any hassle.

Spain did the damage in the last period

Results & Teams

Game 14, 16.45 – Quarterfinal: Australia v Spain 4-9

Quarters: 2-1, 0-1, 0-2, 2-5

Referees: Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU), Robert Tiozzo (CRO)

AUSTRALIA

Anthony Hrysanthos (11 saves/20 shots, 55%), Nicholas Porter (GK2, not entered) – Richard Campbell (1/6), Blake Edward (0/3), Joseph Kayes (1/4), Nathan Power (0/1), Nickolas Elphick (0/0), Aidan Roach (0/1), Aaron Younger (0/3), Andrew Ford (0/1), Timothy Putt (0/0), Lachlan Hollis (1/2), Nicholas Brooks (1/1). Head coach: Elvis Fatovic

SPAIN

Daniel Lopez (12/16, 75%), Eduardo Lorrio (GK2, not entered) – Alberto Munarriz (1/4), Alvaro Granados (0/3), Miguel Del (0/2), Sergi Cabanas (0/0), Marc Larumbe (1/1), Francisco Fernandez (1/1), Albert Espanol (2/5), Roger Tahull (2/3), Felipe Perrone (0/2), Blai Mallarach (1/3), Alejandro Bustos (1/1). Head coach: Daniel Martin

Goals/shots

AUS: 4/26

ESP: 9/27

Extramen

AUS: 2 for 10

ESP: 2 for 8

Penalties

AUS: none

ESP: 2/2

Best player of the game:

Albert Espanol (ESP)

Report

The first period was devoted to action goals and missed man-ups. In the first, the Aussies did a better job, two fine shots from the centre by Joseph Kayes then Richard Campbell gave them a 2-1 lead as Alberto Munarriz sent a great shot under the cross-bar between the two. The teams struggled a bit with the extras, both missed two apiece and the Aussies maintained this trend in the second, the last pass was caught by the defenders but Anthony Hrysanthos also made a save in Spain's next 6 on 5s. However, Roger Tahull could beat him, again from action (from the centre) to make it 2-2 – and Aussies missed their 4th man-up in the dying seconds so they remained scoreless in this quarter.

Hrysanthos opened the third with three saves, including one in a man-down (the teams were 0 for 9 at this stage) but Dani Lopez was equal to him while stopping the outside shots. The man-up misery was halted by Blai Mallarach whose deflected shot found the back of the net in the middle of the third (time-wise it wasn't a man-up goal either as it hit the net in the 24th second of the possession). 59 seconds later Francisco Fernandez's fine action shot also sneaked in and in this game 2-4 seemed to be a commanding lead. Especially if we take into consideration that the Aussies last goal came late in the first – and the third also passed without another one as they missed a 6 on 4 in the closing moments (0 for 6 they stood), so their silence in offence stood at 18:59 minutes.

It went on in the fourth, the 7th 6 on 5 also gone without creating any fine opportunity which also credited the Spanish defence which did a tremendous job. When they netted finally one, by Lachlan Hollis, Spain was already three goals up as Albert Espanol converted a penalty. Still, despite a drought of 20:57 minutes, Nicholas Brooks scored a minute later, from another man-up so it was 4-5. And they had a possession to go even but couldn't score again, what's more, Felipe Perrone escaped for his usual counter, earned a penalty and Espanol delivered again for 4-6.

Soon it was over: another fast counter set up a good chance for Marc Larumbe who made the most of it – in a span of 46 seconds the gap was back to three again (4-7) with 3:06 to go. The Aussies' bright spell never returned, another missed 6 on 5 here, Alejandro Bustos' centre-goal there for 4-8, and a buried extra at the end just to show they were able to score one at last – experience and the more effective defensive work (2-7 was the partial result in the second half) made the difference in this match, sending Spain to the semis.

Quotes

David Martin, head coach, Spain

„I think this match was not too easy for us, because the Australian team always play really hard. We had a very serious fight in the water. The first half was so important for the team, because Australia could not shoot more than two goals and then we could extend our advantage. Now the team is very tired and we know that we have to play tomorrow with Montenegro which is the best team at the moment I think. Still, we will see what is going to happen tomorrow.”

Elvis Fatovic, head coach, Australia:

"We started the game well, our defence was working good and strong, our goalkeeper was playing well, he had many good saves but the second half was totally different. The main problem were that we couldn't score in the extra-man situations. We didn't shoot, we were slow, then we missed many important chances, but the main reason was that we were tired – this is something I was a bit worried about beforehand as we are not as well prepared physically at this stage as our European rivals. I believe we can play the next game much better, like in the first game. We'll learn from this and hope we will better in the next competition!"

Hungary took revenge over Croatia, shootout win sends them to the semis
Results & Teams

Game 15, 18.15 – Quarterfinal: Hungary v Croatia 6-6 – pen: 4-2

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

Referees: Juan Carlos Colominas (ESP), Daniel Flahive (AUS)

HUNGARY

Viktor Nagy (14/19, 74%, pen: 1/3), Gergely Kardos (GK2, not entered) – Daniel Angyal (1/3), Krisztián Manhercz (0/1), Gergo Zalánki (2/3), Marton Vamos (1/2), Tamas Mezei (0/1), David Jansik (0/0), Gergo Kovacs (0/2), Balazs Erdelyi (0/2), Bence Batori (0/2), Krisztián Bed? (2/3), Zoltán Pohl (0/0). Head coach: Tamas Marcz

CROATIA

Marco Bijac (7/13, 54%, pen: 0/2), Ivan Marcelic (GK2, pen: 0/2) – Hrvoje Benic (0/6), Loren Fatovic (0/2), Ivan Krpic (1/1), Lovre Milos (2/3), Ivan Buljubasic (0/0), Ante Vukicevic (1/5), Andro Buslje (1/4), Andrija Basic (0/1), Josip Vrlcic (1/3), Anđelo Setka (0/1), Javier Garcia (0/4). Head coach: Ivica Tucak

Goals/Shots

HUN: 6/23

CRO: 6/34

Extramen

HUN: 1/7

CRO: 3/12

Penalties

None

Best player of the game

Viktor Nagy (HUN)

Report

Eleven months after a thrilling gold medal game at the 2017 FINA World Championships in Budapest, the

two finalists were back to clash once again, this time in the Duna Arena (and not the Margaret Island), for a place in the semis of the Super Final. The host side looked for a better start than last July when they went 0-4 down in eight minutes and even though they came back to 4-4, the Croats prevailed at the end.

Based on the first period, this they achieved as it stood 1-1. It was a tremendous fight right from the beginning, two man-ups were missed at both ends before the Croats converted their third through Lovre Milos but Gergo Zalanki's left did the damage again despite being marked heavily.

The Croats missed another man-up early in the third but soon Ivan Krapic netted a nice one from the centre while the hosts missed a 6 on 4 as Bijac knew guessed the right side at Bence Bathori's shot. The visitors did a fine job in guarding the centre-forward so the Magyars' attacks weren't too threatening, while the Croats earned one man-up after the other – though missed all, the third through a 2m line violation. The post killed the fourth – a bit unusually the world champs stood 1 for 7 already in the second period –, and even though the hosts also missed their next one but the left-handed rocketeers helped, this time Marton Vamos' blast from action pushed the Hungarians back to even, with 0:47 to go. Viktor Nagy came up with a huge save in the last man-down of the first half to keep the game at level (2-2).

After some massive swimming and a couple of saves from Bijac Hungary drew first blood in the third, from a counter, rather a re-counter Krisztian Bedo netted a 4 on 3, but soon a bad pass from Viktor Nagy set up the Croats for a re-counter and Milos equalised (3-3). The fifth man-up from the Magyars ended in a fine a goal, by Daniel Angyal from close range, and soon they had another opportunity after a time-out to break two goals clear. Though it was a bit overplayed but Zalanki was on target at the (very) end, it stood 5-3 with 3:50 from time in the third. Viktor Nagy denied Javier Garcia with a big save in a man-down. Hungary had two more possession but Mezei was buried in the centre while the Croats managed to score from a one-passer 6 on 5 with 0:09 on the clock, to halve their deficit before the last break (5-4).

A bit unusual scene led up the fourth as the centre-forward Krisztian Bedo could gain half-metre on his defender and managed to put away the ball from the counter but the replay came immediately, Andro Buslje's ball bounced in from a blocking hand, it was back-to-back goals for the Croats in extras. Hungary missed their next, Gergo Kovacs hit the cross bar, then Zalanki made some room for a shot but hit the post, still, Nagy delivered a save at the other end. The fight was enormous in the pool as the players weren't the freshest on the fourth day. After some lung-testing swimming and stopped shots Ivica Tucak called for a time-out with 2:48 to go. It worked after all, with some luck as the Croats recovered the ball after two shots, earned a man-up and Vukicevic sent the ball home for 6-6, with 1:33 to go. After an 'empty' possession for the Magyars (they couldn't score in the last 6:54 minutes), the Croats regained the ball after a controversial corner-shot call, so Hungary had only 3 seconds after their last time-out – thus the game ended in a shootout.

The Croats had a second 'roulette-play' in three days after they lost one to Spain on Day 2, while the Hungarians had some bad memories from this kind of outcome as they went down against Montenegro at the Rio Olympics.

Croatia made the first miss in round 3, Xavi Garcia hit the cross-bar, then – while the Magyar shooters were 4/4, Viktor Nagy stopped Loren Fatovic's shot to send Hungary to the semis while the world champs had to settle for the lower ranks, for the first time in the history of the World League Super Finals.

Quotes

Tamas Marcz, head coach, Hungary:

“It goes without saying that it’s not possible to wear out the Croats and gain a multiple-goal win over them. To beat them you must focus till the very last second, you have to score from your last chance, be hungrier in the shootout and have a goalie who can cause some fear for them. Everyone gave some extra and I’m really proud that this young team could take this big step as the Croatian team was an outstanding opponent once more.”

Mile Smodlaka, assistant coach, Croatia

“Of course we are disappointed as we were very close. We missed a lot of man-ups and this is not the way to win matches. Of course, this is not the end of the world, we won’t collapse because of this defeat, we are in the middle of our European Championships preparations, we left three key players at home. Still, we hoped to reach the semis, now we go for the lower bracket, it won’t be easy to fire up the guys but we try to achieve that.”

Japan's heroic efforts end in best-ever result at major FINA events
Results & Teams

Game 16, 19.45 – Quarterfinal: Japan v United States 11-10

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

Referees: Arkadiy Voevodin (RUS), German Moller (ARG)

JAPAN

Tanamura Katsuyuki (11/21, 52%), Fukushima Tomoyoshi (GK2, not entered) – Adachi Seiya (2/5), Koppu Harukiirario (1/1), Shiga Mitsuaki (1/6), Yoshida Takuma (0/2), Suzuki Toi (0/0), Miyazawa Takumu (0/0) Takata Mitsuru (0/0), Arai Atsushi (2/3), Inaba Yusuke (2/6), Okawa Keigo (2/4), Araki Kenta (1/3). Head coach: Omoto Yoji

UNITED STATES

Baron McQuin (9/19, 47%), Alexander Wolf (2/3, 66%) – Johnathan Hooper (1/2), Marko Vavic (0/0), Alexander Obert (1/2), Benjamin Hallock (4/8), Luca Cupido (2/5), Hannes Daube (0/2) Alex Roelse (0/0), Alexander Bowen (1/4), Chancellor Ramirez (0/0), Jesse Smith (0/0), Maxwell Irving (1/2). Head coach: Dejan Udovicic

Goals/shots

JPN: 11/35

USA: 10/28

Extramen

JPN: 4/16

USA: 2/11

Penalties

JPN: none

USA: 1/1

Best player of the game

Tanamura Katsuyuki (JPN)

Report

Arriving with three wins including downing Spain and Croatia, the US team seemed to be the outstanding favourite against Japan which had nothing but defeats in the prelims. However, a quick double from the Asians gave a kind of unexpected opening for the match and soon the Americans found themselves in the middle a dogfight. When they seemed to have overcome their headaches, Japan always found the way to hit back, come back – then to get in the driving seat late in the third and all the way in the fourth.

After going 2-0 down, the US managed to respond with three connecting goals and went for more in the second when they gained a two-goal advantage at 3-5. The Japanese came back for the first time, netting two in 58 seconds and held on for 6-6 until halftime. The US needed three man-ups to score once while the Japanese made their 6 on 5 for 7-7, then Tanamura Katsuyuki posted a huge save in a man-down. Though the Japanese also missed a man-up but with 0:29sec to go in the third, luck took their side as Araki Kenta could push in a rebound in an extra and Japan led once more (8-7).

And the writing was on the wall for the US as the fourth began with a similarly fortunate goal for Japan, again, they could put away their 6 on 5 after the ball fell into the hand of Koppu Harukiirario from the cross-bar and he sent it back to the net for a 9-7 lead.

An exclusion-penalty combo helped the Americans to come closer, then they had a fine opportunity from the centre but Tanamura stopped the shot and from the ensuing counter Arai Atsushi reset the two-goal gap with 5:33 to go. The US boys tried to gear up once more, tightened their muscles and in 51 seconds levelled the score, first Bowen sent the ball home from a dying man-up then Benjamin Hallock netted a 5m free-throw, so it stood 10-all with exactly four minutes remaining.

A relatively long time but only one goal was scored, again by the Japanese. They were third time lucky, really: after two more great saves from Tanamura, Adachi Seya let the ball fly from a man-up and it got a deflection on a blocking hand, enough to beat the substitute goalie somehow. The US had 1:49min to force at least the shootout and they had a couple of great chances but their players simply missed the goal. Hallock could launch one from the centre, it went wide, with 0:22 remaining Bowen could fire from an extra but it went high and the Japanese could celebrate a stunning win and their best ever performance in major FINA events.

Quotes

Omoto Yoji, head coach, Japan

"This situation isn't unknown for us, because last year we already beat USA. Here in the previous three games we didn't have the chance to show what we know in reality. But now we improved our performance and proved we have a place here among these teams! Our defence was the key, everybody gave 100%! We are very happy now and also very happy that we can play against Hungary because they are the best! We will try to do the best against them, we will see how far we can go."

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee

One of the most shocking results in recent day's water polo: Japan made the semis by beating the group-winner US team and reached the FINA World League Super Final's semis coming from the 4th place after the prelims. The Asian heroes will face Hungary, the hosts won a tremendous battle over

world champion Croatia, edging out their arch-rivals in a penalty shootout, taking some revenge for last year's defeat in the 2017 World Championships final. The other two quarters were lop-sided contests, Montenegro beat Kazakhstan with ease while the Spaniards upended Australia in the second half.

Montenegro was the first team reaching the semifinals as they beat Kazakhstan with ease, as expected. The Montenegrins ruled the game right from the beginning, took a commanding 5-2 lead in the first period, maintained that gap until half-time and knocked out their rivals in the second half. The partial results are telling the story: the first half was 7-4, the second was 7-2, no surprise, no tension - a convincing and comfortable win for Montenegro.



A rare scene: the Kazakhs set to score - Credit: Jozsef Szaka

Spain was next to join the top four. Australia had the better start and in the first half it was an even affair, stood 2-2 while the man-ups didn't work at either sides. Spain began to gear up in the second half and while shutting out their rivals for 20:57 minutes, they gained a three-goal lead. Though the Aussies managed to come back to 4-5 but experience and better condition made the difference in the finish, Spain scored the last four goals and passed this test easily.



A view from above: a Croatian goal, shot from outside – and the catwalk (Credit: Istvan Derencsenyi)

The third game brought the most thrilling contest of the day – which is expected at any time when Hungary

and Croatia clash. It was a tremendous fight between last year's world champion and the runner-up side, the defences did a huge job, killing man-downs were superb at both ends. In a highly tactical match Hungary took the upper hand in the second half breaking two goals clear and they held on until early in the fourth but the Croats staged a better finish to save the game into a penalty shootout. However, the Magyars were more precise, converted all four shots while the Croats had a miss then Viktor Nagy delivered a save (see the big picture) to close the match down (the Croats lost their second shootout in three days). It means that Hungary returns to the World League semis for the first time since 2014, while Croatia had to settle for the games played for 5-8th place – this happens to them for the very first time in history (when they qualified for the Super Final, always made the semis at least).



Marton Vamos celebrates his goal – the lefties delivered for Hungary

Well, if we said the third was a thriller, then it also applied to the fourth match – which was a kind of unexpected result, despite the fact that Japan already did the trick by beating the US last year at the World Championships. Still, this time the US side looked very strong, claimed three straight wins while Japan had three defeats. But this wasn't mirrored in the pool, it was a balanced match and with some luck in front and some heroic efforts in the back the Japanes could hold on for a win.



The Japanese won their first game here in Budapest – it was a shocker, indeed

Quarterfinals

15.15 Montenegro v Kazakhstan 14-6

16.45 Australia v Spain 4-9

18.15 Hungary v Croatia 6-6, pen: 4-2

19.45 Japan v United States v 11-10

Day 5, Schedule

For places 5-8

15.15 Croatia v United States

16.45 Australia v Kazakhstan

Semi-finals

18.15 Hungary v Japan

19.45 Montenegro v Spain
