

Japan forces a thriller against Hungary but the home side survives, faces Montenegro

Croatia took control in second half amid some tension
Results & Teams

Game 17, 15.15 – For places 5-8: Croatia v United States 10-7

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

Referees: Balazs Szekely (HUN), Juan Carlos Colominas (ESP)

CROATIA

Marco Bijac (GK, not entered), Ivan Marcelic (8/15, 53%) – Hrvoje Benic (1/2), Loren Fatovic (0/2), Ivan Krapic (1/1), Lovre Milos (2/3), Ivan Buljubasic (1/1), Ante Vukicevic (0/1), Andro Buslje (1/3), Andrija Basic (0/1), Josip Vrlcic (1/1), Anđelo Setka (1/2), Javier Garcia (2/7). Head coach: Ivica Tucak

UNITED STATES

Baron McQuin (GK, not entered), Alexander Wolf (11/21, 52%) – Johnathan Hooper (0/0), Marko Vavic (0/1), Alexander Obert (0/0), Benjamin Hallock (1/2), Luca Cupido (2/5), Hannes Daube (0/4) Alex Roelse (0/3), Alexander Bowen (2/2), Chancellor Ramirez (0/3), Jesse Smith (0/1), Maxwell Irving (2/3). Head coach: Dejan Udovicic

Goals/Shots

CRO: 10/27

USA: 7/25

Extramen

CRO: 3/12

USA: 4/9

Penalties

None

Best player of the game

Javier Garcia (CRO)

Report

It took some time for the Croats to get back their rhythm as they were part of an extremely tiring battle a day before against Hungary and for a world champion team it wasn't easy to find the motivation to play for the 5-8th places. Let's say they needed two quarters to get accustomed to this unusual situation: after taking a 3-2 lead they remained scoreless in the entire second period so the game stood 3-3 at half-time.

Further 3:31 gone when they took the lead once more with a nice action goal from Andelo Setka, then came a fine double from Lovre Milos in a span of 43 seconds, both at equal strength, good for a 6-3 lead. The fourth period saw desperate attempts from the Americans to come closer but they were unable to push it below two. The Croats struggled with their man-ups in the first three periods – just like they did a day earlier when they were 3 for 12 against Hungary –, they netted only 1 in 9 now but raised their level in the fourth and made 3/3, keeping the US in safe distance.

Though the bitterness didn't go easily after the narrowly lost quarterfinals, there were some tensions in and around the pool – fifth game in as many days also took its toll on physical condition and mental toughness –, consequently red cards were flying over the place, one player had to go respectively and the Croatian head coach and the US assistant coach talked enough to deserve the dismissal. Still, no big issues happened, the game ended on piece, the Croats restored some pride and took revenge on the Americans for the loss in the prelims – while the US claimed three great wins in the prelims and seemed to be set for a great showing here, instead they had to settle for playing for the 7th place.

Aussies win the scoring festival against the Kazakhs
Results & Teams

Game 18, 16.45 – For places 5-8: Australia v Kazakhstan 15-11

Quarters: 4-1 , 5-4 , 4-2 , 2-4

Referees: Ivan Rakovic (SRB), Dejan Adzic (MNE)

AUSTRALIA

Anthony Hrysanthos (9/16, 56%), Nicholas Porter (GK2, 0/4, 0%) – Richard Campbell (3/5), Blake Edward (0/0), Joseph Kayes (1/2), Nathan Power (2/2), Nickolas Elphick (0/1), Aidan Roach (1/2), Aaron Younger (3/4), Andrew Ford (3/3), Timothy Putt (1/2), Lachlan Hollis (0/0), Nicholas Brooks (1/2). Head coach: Elvis Fatovic

KAZAKHSTAN

Valeriy Shlemoy (9/24, 38%), Pavel Lipilin (GK2, not entered) – Yevgeniy Medvedev (2/3), Ruslan Akhmetov (0/0), Roman Pilipenko (0/2), Miras Aubakirov (0/0), Alexey Shmider (0/4), Murat Shakenov (2/4), Alexandr Godoyanyuk (2/4), Rustam Ukumanov (2/6), Mikhail Ruday (2/3), Ravil Manafov (0/1), Yulian Verdesh (1/2). Head coach: Nemanja Knezevic

Goals/shots

AUS: 15/24

KAZ: 11/30

Extramen

AUS: 4/7

KAZ: 2/8

Penalties

AUS: 0/1

KAZ: none

Best player of the game

Richard Campbell (AUS)

Report

The final score-line somewhat tells the story: while the Aussies scored 11 for Japan but remained below 10 in the other three games (netted only 4 against Spaniards), while the Kazakhs were far from double-digits (5-4-3-6 in the previous four matches), this time it was a 26-goal spectacular scoring show. Offences worked well, especially the Aussies who didn't leave too much room for belief for the Kazakhs to repeat their win from last year from the same stage of the Super Final.

They took a commanding 4-1 lead in the first period – the lonely Kazakh goal came from a lucky bounce as the ball went in from the goalie's head. The Asians got a bit closer in the second at 5-3 but in 31 seconds the gap jumped to four and there was no way back from that point.

The remaining time was mainly devoted to scoring, defences weren't as tight as previously, among the Aussies Richard Campbell, Aaron Younger and Andrew Ford all hinted a triple as their team equalled the Croats' scoring record here in this tourney – poor Kazakhs, they conceded 15 Day 1 as well.

Hungary had to stage a comeback to prevail against the Japanese fighters
Results & Teams

Game 19, 18.15 – Semi-final: Hungary v Japan 11-9

Quarters: 2-1, 0-4, 7-3 , 2-1

Referees: German Moller (ARG), Alex Stankevich (USA)

HUNGARY

Viktor Nagy (6/10, 60%), Gergely Kardos (8/13, 62%) – Daniel Angyal (1/1), Krisztián Manhercz (1/7), Gergo Zalánki (2/9), Marton Vamos (2/4), Tamas Mezei (0/0), David Jansik (0/1), Gergo Kovacs (0/0), Balazs Erdelyi (1/2), Bence Batori (2/5), Krisztián Bed? (2/2), Zoltán Pohl (0/0). Head coach: Tamas Marcz

JAPAN

Tanamura Katsuyuki (16/27, 59%), Fukushima Tomoyoshi (GK2, not entered) – Adachi Seiya (1/6), Koppu Harukiirario (0/2), Shiga Mitsuaki (0/3), Yoshida Takuma (2/2), Suzuki Toi (0/0), Miyazawa Takumu (0/0) Takata Mitsuru (0/0), Arai Atsushi (0/0), Inaba Yusuke (1/5), Okawa Keigo (2/5), Araki Kenta (3/3). Head coach: Omoto Yoji

Goals/Shots

HUN: 11/34

JPN: 9/30

Extramens

HUN: 4/9

JPN: 2/11

Penalties

HUN: none

JPN: 1/2

Best player of the game

Marton Vamos (HUN)

Report

It all started like two days ago when Hungary earned a multiple-goal win against the Japanese: Gergely Kardos stopped a penalty and Gergo Zalanki buried an extra – though the hosts needed 3:39 minutes to open the scoring. Though the hosts seemed to struggle a bit in front, with another blast from Zalanki they led 2-1 after eight minutes.

Perhaps the home players thought that it was going to be a similar story, a bit harder but without too much tension – and their focus wasn't at the top while the Japanese stayed on the wave they had begun to ride a day earlier while overcoming the USA. They didn't have a big streak, just scored once, then again a bit later, and again and again. They played aggressively in offence, created some fine chances and all of them while the Magyars couldn't put the ball away from a series of opportunities – Tanamura Katsuyuki posted a series of fine saves – and couldn't really feed their big centre-forwards either. Stunning as it was: a 0-4 quarter for Japan (towards the end Viktor Nagy, coming in as an emergency, showed a great head-save to prevent their rivals from going 2-6 up) and the host side started to feel the same what the Americans had gone through in the quarters.

It took exactly 10:00 minutes for the hosts to overcome their difficulties – no goal during this phase – but then they responded in a very Hungarian way. Bence Batori's brilliant action goal opened the sack – even though Araki Kenta netted a man-up, then came two in 37 seconds and some big noise came from the stands. Japan could reply twice to keep at least the two-goal cushion but deep into the third came some crucial moments when Batori blasted a man-up goal, then Krisztian Manhercz stole the ball at the half-way line, set up a 2 on 0 counter and Balazs Erdelyi equalised – this two arrived in a span of 22 seconds, it stood 8-8 with 1:41 to go. Still, it was a kind of miracle that a Hungarian crowd were on the tip of their feet after Hungary came back to equal against Japan late in a match's third period... Soon they were louder as Marton Vamos found some space to let his rocket-like shot fly so the hosts regained the lead before the last break.

They could have doubled it but Tanamura pushed the ball to the crossbar in a man-down (he had 16 saves in the game!) while at the other end Araki Kenta scored his third from the centre. it was a perfect backhanded shot in anybody's language, a kind of proof that the hosts of the next Olympics on the right track to learn this sport.

Still, experience, strength prevailed and better physics too. The Japanese seemed to run out of gas after playing two such games as this one and the QF against the US in 22 hours: they couldn't maintain the same intensity in attack, more and more possessions ended in 30sec-expiring and they couldn't sell their drives so

effectively to the referees. They earned 9 man-ups in three periods but only one in the decisive part, and that landed on the post – it was their last real chance to go equal after Krisztian Bedo took back the lead for Hungary in a typical Magyar way (chipped over the ball with a great wrist shot from a 5m freethrow in a man-up). Next came another great action goal, a one-timer from Marton Vamos which closed down the match: Hungary broke two goals clear for the first time in the game, with 74 seconds from time and kept it as Japan missed its last man-up in the dying seconds.

The crowd celebrated the home team for making the final again after last year's World Championships but also gave a big hand to the Japanese players for their tremendous efforts.

Quotes

Tamas Marcz, head coach, Hungary

“That was a really hard match because the Japanese team was very well organised and they played their best game I think. We did not expect this match to be as close as it became. They had a very special style, they are even extremely aggressive in offence, maybe a bit too much and perhaps that should be judged a bit differently. Anyway, after the second period we tried to change our tactic and approach, my players were upset and doubled their efforts, managed to execute the game plan more effectively and that immediately appeared on the scoreboard. After all, we are very happy now. I know, this Hungarian team is very young and we need more experience in the future but I hope we can win tomorrow.”

Omoto Yoji, head coach, Japan:

"We were preparing for the game with a very strong defence, and that was going well during the first half, but in the second half the Hungarian attacks were much better and that was all what we could do against them! I'm so proud because it was the first time we played a semi-final in a major FINA competition, and that should be always difficult, especially against a team like Hungary! But this is a very good experience before the 2020 Tokyo Games, which is very important for us!"

19 year-old Radovic sinks Spain with 4 goals, sends Montenegro to the final
Results & Teams

Game 20, 19.45 – Semi-final: Spain v Montenegro 8-10

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

Referees: Arkadiy Voevodin (RUS), Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU)

SPAIN

Daniel Lopez (7/17, 41%), Eduardo Lorrio (GK2, not entered) – Alberto Munarriz (2/4), Alvaro Granados (0/1), Miguel Del (0/0), Sergi Cabanas (1/2), Marc Larumbe (0/1), Francisco Fernandez (0/0), Albert Espanol (0/4), Roger Tahull (1/3), Felipe Perrone (3/7), Blai Mallarach (1/3), Alejandro Bustos (0/0). Head coach: Daniel Martin

MONTENEGRO

Dejan Lazovic (7/15, 47%), Slaven Kandic (1/2, 50%) – Drasko Brguljan (0/1), Bojan Banicevic (0/0), Marko Petkovic (0/2), Stefan Vidovic (0/0), Duro Radovic (4/4), Mladan Janovic (2/2), Bogdan Durdic (2/3), Aleksandar Ivovic (2/4), Sasa Misic (0/2), Dragan Draskovic (0/1), Vladan Spaic (0/0). Head coach: Vladimir Gojkovic

Goals/shots

ESP: 8/26

MNE: 10/21

Extramen

ESP: 3/11

MNE: 3/13

Penalties

ESP: 1/1

MNE: 1/1

Best player of the game:

Duro Radovic (MNE)

Report

It was a chasing game right from the beginning: Spain could never go ahead, for a while they could equalise from time to time but Montenegro outpowered them in the third and didn't leave any serious chance for its rivals to have a say at the end.

After little more than two minutes, Mladan Janovic opened the scoring from his 'trademark' 5m free-throw but Sergi Cabanas could put away Spain's second man-up. Sasa Misic delivered a penalty a bit later and Alexander Ivovic buried it for 1-2, this Alberto Munarriz equalised with a fine action goal but 78 seconds before the end of the first Montenegrin leftie Duro Radovic netted a brilliant goal, securing a 2-3 lead after eight minutes.

Spain had a better spell in the first part of the second period, Roger Tahull levelled the score again from the centre and they could shut out their opponents for a longer period but couldn't take the lead as they missed a 6 on 5 and after five long minutes Janovic converted an extra. Felipe Perrone softly netted a penalty for 4-4 21 seconds later, but once more the Montenegrins had the last laugh though Bogdan Durdic didn't have a hard job while putting away a 6 on 4 for 4-5.

Things began to turn worse for Spain early in the second. Radovic netted a cheeky one from almost zero angle while playing in man-up, at the other end Dejan Lazovic produced back-to-back stops in a man-down and soon Radovic finished another extra (a bit over 20sec) to widen the gap to three goals. While we saw three straight man-up goals from Montenegro, the Spaniards struggled with their 6 on 5s, missed two before Mallarach could pull one back from the third with 2:25 to go in this quarter.

Spain could have earned some psychological advantage as they managed to kill a man-down, then had a fine counter-attack chance some 30sec before the end of this quarter but the attacker swam alongside the ball, the Montenegrins recovered it and Radovic had enough time to give a sensational assist to Ivovic who sent the ball home from close – the possible 6-7 gone, the Spaniards could see a way worse line of numbers on the scoreboard: 5-8, 0:06 to go.

Still, they put together what they had and staged a long surge: Perrone pulled one back from a 5m shot, then they managed to survive a 6 on 4, but missed their next shot and Radovic, who else?, netted his fourth for 6-

9, with 4:50 to go.

Their next 6 on 5 went down the drain because of a bad pass, soon Tahull wasted a centre-shot opportunity, but Munarriz could find the back of the net from another extra, 7-9, 2:32 remained. And 58 seconds later they got close after Perrone could put away a goal from another man-up. But their moment was killed immediately as Bogdan Durdic listened to his coach's command ("Shoot!") and his bouncer hit the top-left corner of the cage – with 70 seconds to go it was 8-10, so virtually over. The Spaniards tried to force quick shots but none of them were on target – Montenegro won its 5th game here so fully deserved to book its place in the final. This is going to be their first gold medal match in the World League since they played back-to-back finals in 2009 and 2010 – they will clash with Hungary whom they already beat here on Day 2 with a great 5-0 rush in the last 12 minutes after going 7-9 down.

Quotes

Vladimir Gojkovic, head coach, Montenegro:

"It was a tough game like every semi-final, but the key of our success was the defence which was working well. In the second half we were controlling the game and finally we won. Tomorrow another very important game is coming, I hope the arena will be full and we can play a beautiful match! Of course I hope we can beat Hungary again, but its going to be more difficult than in our first match in the prelims."

David Martin, head coach, Spain:

"This game was very difficult. Montenegro is the top team here I think so this match was really hard for us. Unfortunately there was a 3-goal difference after three periods and we could not score enough in the fourth. Now we have to focus on the match with Japan. We know playing against them is difficult as well and our team is very tired as we need to play six games in six days but I hope we will take the bronze medal tomorrow."

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee

Hungary is chasing its first World League title since 2004 – after that year only the former Yugoslavian states could clinch this trophy. Serbia came first 11 times in 13 years, the missing two went to Montenegro in 2009 and to Croatia in 2012. In this season, Montenegro ousted the Serbs in the qualification and now they are the ones who can maintain the Southern Slavonians' streak as they will clash with the host Magyars in the final. The Hungarians overcame an extreme challenge from Japan to win a thrilling semi-final while Montenegro kept the game under control against Spain and can play for the gold for the first time since 2010.



Tanamura came up with 16 saves in the Japanese goal

In the first semi-final, at halftime, only the showmaker could generate some noise in the Duna Arena otherwise the crowd was frozen in silence as Japan staged a brilliant 0-4 second period against Hungary and took a stunning 2-5 lead after two periods. The Magyars missed all their chances during this phase, the Japanese goalie did a great job - then the world championship silver medallists responded spectacularly and produced a 7-goal period, though the Japanese were still in the game at 9-8. They levelled once, had a chance to go even at 10-9 but at the end experience prevailed and Hungary closed down the game for a 11-9 win and a place in the final, for the first time since 2014.

Before this competition day the second SF looked to be more exciting but comparing the two encounters, the Montenegrins' victory came a bit easier – at least they didn't have to overcome such headaches as their Saturday rival. They built this convincing win step-by-step, in the third they managed to take a three-goal lead and even the Spaniards reduced it to one late in the fourth, they didn't have a realistic chance to force a shootout and a great goal in the last minute secured the Montenerins' place in the final, for the first time in eight years.



The Montenegrin defence worked really well

In the first game of Day 5 Croatia hit back for its surprising defeat in the prelims to the United States and restored some pride by beating the Americans convincingly. Though there was not a lot at stake but the post-game symptoms after the bitter losses in the quarters (the Croats were edged out by Hungary in a shootout while the group winning US team suffered a shocking defeat against fourth placed and winless Japan) – one

player from both teams were expelled with a red card and Croatian head coach Ivica Tucak was also sent away from the bench, just like the US assistant coach. There were some tensions, still, the world champions dominated the second half and their victory was never in danger.



The duet of Jesse Smith (USA) and Josip Vrlc – not really fitting for artistic swimming, rather for a tough water polo contest - Credit: Jozsef Szaka

The Aussies joined them soon to set up a fine match for the 5th place on Saturday - they did a clean job against Kazakhstan. The Sharks took firm control right from the beginning and didn't let the Kazakhs think of something similar what had happened last year when they upended the Aussies in the same phase of this tournament. The boys from Down Under went 4-1 up in the opening period and never looked back - maintained a 4-5 goal lead through the game which turned into a scoring festival, stopping at 26 in total.

Day 5

(click on the games for detailed stats and play-by-play descriptions - game reports and picture gallery further below)

Semi-finals

[Hungary v Japan 11-9](#) [1]

[Spain v Montenegro 8-10](#) [2]

For places 5-8

[Croatia v United States 10-7](#) [3]

[Australia v Kazakhstan 15-11](#) [4]

Final day schedule

15.15 United States v Kazakhstan (*Places 7-8*)

16.45 Croatia v Australia (*Places 5-6*)

18.15 Japan v Spain (*Bronze medal*)

19.45 Hungary v Montenegro (*World League Final*)
