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Water Polo Women, Day 6: ESP 13 HUN 12

FINA Communication Department

For the first time in World Championship history, Spain has beaten Hungary and what a match it was — 13-12 for a shot at the gold medal on Friday night at Bernat Picornell Pool. Five times before Spain has felt the backhand of Hungary but last year that all changed when Spain toppled Hungary in the Olympic Games semifinals.

Spain did it again tonight, with Laura Lopez delivering the two needed to come from behind to win in the final quarter. Earlier Anna Espar had done her part with four strikes. In fact, all the team, even the two goalkeepers, did their part in an historic match in front of an adoring home crowd.

Hungary was world champion in Rome 1994 and Montreal 2005 and silver medallist in Fukuoka 2001, but will hope to add a bronze to its collection when it faces Russia.

Spain opened the scoring and Hungary levelled at 1-1, 2-2 and 4-4 before making Spain play catch-up at 5-5 and 6-6. Spain went 7-6 ahead and Hungary had to level at 7-7 and 8-7 before shooting to 9-8. Laura Lopez levelled at 9-9 from the deep left short of halftime.

What a contrast this match was from the previous semifinal. The 4000-plus crowd had plenty to cheer about and was in joyous mood at halftime.

Immediately after the restart, the festivities were dampened when Barbara Bujka, with a scoop shot at centre forward; Dora Antal from a penalty strike and Rita Keszthelyi, from the top, lifted the score to 12-9.

Mixed emotions came next when Maica Garcia scored from centre forward and then Roser Tarrago had her penalty attempt blocked by Flora Bolonyai, who had been given a three-minute break in the middle of the first quarter by head coach Andras Meresz.

Hungary took a timeout for no tactical

success and then Anna Espar scored her fourth goal — to goal with the three she netted in the first quarter — to narrow the margin to one just before the final break.

Lopez might get the call from the Vatican and possible sainthood for her efforts, netting twice midway through the final quarter, the first with a huge bouncer from the deep left on extra and then soon after with another extra-man score from point-blank range for a 13-12 lead.

Hungary had no joy from a timeout at 2:56 and Spain called one at 0:45 for a similar non-result.

Hungary had the last play and Dora Antal was charged with the final shot as the last second arrived. It smashed into the crossbar with much venom but no cigar, as they say.

{youtube}Yw9GHD0pKC8{/youtube}

Match 40: 21:45, Semifinal Round 1-4, SPAIN 13 HUNGARY 12

Quarters: 5-5, 4-4, 2-3, 2-0

Referees: Amber Drury (USA), Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU).

Extra Man: ESP: 6/13 (6/19). HUN: 3/8 (3/13)

Pens: ESP: 0/1. HUN: 1/1.

Teams:

SPAIN: Laura Ester, Marta Bach, Anna Espar (4), Roser Tarrago (1), Matilda Ortiz (1), Jennifer Pareja (2), Lorena Miranda, Pilar Pena (1), Andrea Blas, Ona Meseguer, Maica Garcia (1), Laura Lopez (3), Patricia Herrera. Head Coach: Miguel Oca.
HUNGARY: Flora Bolonyai, Anna Illes, Dora Antal (4), Dora Kisteleki (2), Gabriella Szucs (2), Orsolya Takacs, Ibolya Miskolczi, Rita Keszthelyi (2), Ildiko Toth, Barbara Bujka (2), Krisztina Garda, Kata Menczinger, Orsolya Kaso. Head Coach: Andras Meresz.

FLASH QUOTES:

Laura Ester (ESP):

“Our defence was really aggressive and that helped me on my position as goalkeeper. This final will be different from the London Olympics because playing at home is really different. It is amazing how all the supporters have been encouraging us all the way, they pushed us a lot. We want to win for them also.”

Roser Tarrago (ESP):

“It hasn’t been our best game, but we had to go on and defend in order to win. Now, the final against Australia will be even more incredible than the game today. This victory would have been impossible to achieve without our fans.”

Dora Kisteleki (AUS):

“Spain is a very good team. Last period has been really hard for us with many minutes with one player less. We have to forget this game and concentrate on getting the bronze medal.”

Andras Meresz (AUS Head Coach):

“First of all, congratulations to Spain and especially to my friend Miki. They played a fantastic game today. My team wasn’t bad anyway, after the 9-12 we stopped attacking properly and we couldn’t make it.”
