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Hungary and Montenegro to battle for men's gold medal

FINA Communication Department

Multiple Olympic champion Hungary and Montenegro will do battle for the FINA Men's Water Polo World Championships at the Bernat Picornell Pool on Saturday. A reshaped Hungary, a far cry from the triple Olympic champions of the new millennium, pushed London Olympic champion Croatia out of title contention with an 11-10 victory built on better extra-man statistics and the stopping power of goalkeeper Viktor Nagy. The first semifinal produced an upset according to many pundits, except

anyone related to Hungary. The Hungarians, under new head coach Tibor Benedek, himself one of the world's most decorated athletes, grabbed the lead in the second quarter, took the match to 10-7 early in the fourth, watched Croatia level at 10-10 and then celebrated when Denes Varga scored the winner at 1:58.

It was a return to the glory days for the Hungarians and the man with more gold medals than anyone in the history of the game, Tamas Kasas, visited his countrymen in the changing rooms afterwards. Also watching on was the coaching maestro and architect of those three gold medals from 2000, Denes Kemeny.

In the second medal semifinal, Montenegro hammered outgoing world champion Italy into submission with a stunning 10-8 victory engineered on a 3-0 opening burst that became 5-1 at halftime and 9-4 by the final break.

You could smell the fear in the Italian camp as Montenegro shunned the form of the Italian team with its five wins, while Montenegro started the championship with a 6-4 loss to Greece.

It was a tournament of toppled champions and Montenegro wanted Italy to join the rest out of the limelight, although Italy will have a chance for some consolation of a lower podium finish when facing Croatia.

In the round of 5-8 semifinals, there was high drama in the clash between Serbia and Spain. The home team won 14-13 in sudden death penalty shootout after the match was tied at 6-6 at fulltime, 8-8 after extra time and 11-11 after the first rotation of five attempts each. The winning goal by Xavier Garcia came on the sixth shot of sudden death.

In the other 5-8 semifinal, Greece had the better of the high-flying Australia 11-9.

Saturday's final classification round:

15:00 For 7th & 8th Game 41 AUS vs SRB
16:30 For 3rd & 4th Game 43 CRO vs ITA
20:45 For 5th & 6th Game 42 GRE vs ESP
22:15 For 1st & 2nd Game 44 HUN vs MNE
