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Water Polo Women: Day 7: Gold Medal: ESP 8 AUS 6

FINA Communication Department

Spain completed the business it did not quite finish last year at the London Olympic Games by defeating Australia 8-6 in the gold-medal final. It was silver behind United States of America in London while Australia claimed bronze. Tonight it was a well-deserved gold as the best team at these championships and now the top nation on the planet for women's water polo. It was victory for head coach Miki Oca and his resolve and faith in his players, led by the indefatigable Jennifer Pareja, voted the championship's Most Valuable Player.

Throw is a startling 11-save effort by goalkeeper Laura Ester and she was undoubtedly the best in her class in Barcelona.

Spain was confident from the start and managed to out-defend the Aussie Stingers who looked nervous and times and never got into high-scoring mode. Spain led 2-1 at the quarter and 4-2 before 5-3 at halftime.

It was a tight third quarter as Spain kept shutting up shop. Maica Garcia pushed the margin out to an impossible three goals on extra and then Holly Lincoln-Smith fired in a 5m shot by backhand. Spain drew a penalty and Aussie Stingers head coach Greg McFadden saw red — the referee's red card. A Spanish assistant coach was red-carded and head coach Miki Oca yellow carded. Pareja converted for 8-5.

Lincoln-Smith had a penalty attempt blocked by Ester, both teams took a timeout and the only consolation came Australia's way at 0:01 through Isabel Bishop on extra for 8-6.

Australia lost star Rowena Webster on three majors before the third break and others followed in a match where both teams received 15 major fouls apiece.

The Spanish defence proved the winner, disrupting Australia at every stage of the match.

It was Spain's best performance by far — seventh at Melbourne 2007. Australia won in 1986 and finished with the silver at Melbourne.

{youtube}no2Xl-cbyyU{/youtube}

Match 44: 22:15, Classification 1-2 (Gold Medal), AUSTRALIA 6 SPAIN 8

Quarters: 1-2, 2-3, 1-1, 2-2
Referees: Radoslaw Koryzna (POL), Axel Bender (GER).
Extra Man: AUS: 4/10 (4/14)
Pens: AUS: 0/1. ESP: 1/1

Teams:

AUSTRALIA:

Lea Barta, Jayde Appel, Hannah Buckling, Holly Lincoln-Smith, Isobel Bishop, Bronwen Knox, Rowena Webster (1), Glencora McGhie (1), Zoe Arancini (1), Ashleigh Southern (1), Keesja Gofers, Nicola Zagame, Kelsey Wakefield. Head Coach: Greg McFadden.

SPAIN: Laura Ester,

Marta Bach, Anna Espar, Roser Tarrago (1), Matilda Ortiz, Jennifer Pareja (1), Lorena Miranda, Pilar Pena, Andrea Blas (1), Ona Meseguer, Maica Garcia (1), Laura Lopez (2), Patricia Herrera. Head Coach: Miguel Oca.

FLASH QUOTES:

Roser Tarrago (ESP):

“Winning in front of 4000 people is indescribable. It is incredible, that support made us push hard to win. We could not lose again in the finals like the Olympics so we just had to win today, there was no other option.”

Maica Garcia (ESP):

"I have no words to describe the feeling, a perfect championship, I have the best team. We have had the game under control all the time, without getting nervous and we controlled the defence all the way. After that, scoring goals as needed, we've done a good job. When there were three minutes left I realised we were champions already. After the whistle you feel that your heart is about to stop, you look at your teammates, and feel that there is a connection between us, laughing, crying, a very nice mix of feelings."

Marta Bach (ESP):

"I can't believe that we won at a home game. We are world champions and that is amazing. A year ago we wouldn't have thought that we would get this far; everybody has this dream but it does not always come true. In the game we played really tough and Laura (Ester) has been amazing, she deserves to be the best goal keeper of the competition."

Lea Barta and Nicola Zagame (AUS):

"We got our chances on the game, but we simply didn't put the ball in the net. We are happy with our defence. We practised it and it worked pretty well. We are a young team. It would've been good to get the gold medal, but we are very happy with the silver medal."

Rowena Webster (AUS):

"It was tough game and we had the crowd against us. We had our opportunities but we missed out on them. We won bronze at the Olympics and silver here so we are now ready to fight for gold at the next competition."
