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Water Polo Men, Day 7: Bronze Medal - CRO 10 ITA 8

FINA Communication Department

Olympic champion Croatia won a frustrating bronze-medal encounter 10-8 over outgoing world champion Italy. Fouls were king and a veritable revolving door of players and officials being sent from the match marred what could have been something wonderful. These two teams have been two of the best three teams in the world and deserve respect. They showed it to each other after the match. During action the teams wanted a fluid match but it was a staccato encounter of whistles and uncertainty.

Italy was in the match for much of the first quarter but tempers were frayed and Croatian head coach Ivica Tucak gained a yellow card after Amaurys Perez scored on extra when defended by two players. When Luka Bukic scored from the deep left after an extra-man period, one of the Croatian assistant coaches could not contain himself and he was red-carded from the match. With 11 seconds remaining, Fran Paskvalin scored on extra-man attack for 4-2.

Three unanswered goals had the match at 7-2 with Sukno netting his third on extra. Alex Giorgetti responded on extra at 1:15 and at 0:15 Jokovic converted an extra-man chance after a contentious turnover call.

The volcano erupted early in the third period when Sukno (CRO) and Perez (ITA) tangled and were red-carded. Soon after, Giorgetti converted extra for 8-4, meaning Italy could come back into the match. The goal was disputed by Busilje and he joined what was becoming quite a convention of excluded combatants. The delegate had to walk around and shift three players from the pool deck.

Jokovic ended five minutes of heated excitement but no goals when he converted extra for 9-4. Not long after, Christian Presciutti scored down the left line for 9-5 at the final break.

Maurizio Felugo converted a penalty foul for 9-6 early in the final quarter. Luka Loncar went for his third major foul and he became the fourth Croatian not to see out the match. Two Italians were finished.

Paulo Obradovic scored from the top and Paskvalan gained a third foul and Felugo converted the extra chance for 10-7.

Felugo, who had scored just four goals all championship and now two in the final quarter, tried an off-the-water shot against Josip Pavic to no effect, the end of the road for the Shanghai world champion.

Croatia and then Italy took timeouts onside the final minute with only Italy converting, through Christian Napolitano and 10-8.

Croatia adds another bronze to its collection of three gold, two silver and now two bronze medals, the second best at World Championships behind Hungary, who collected a 10th in the final. Croatia beat Italy for gold at the 2012 London Olympic Games and now has three consecutive bronze medals, a record.

In the three encounters previously between these teams, Italy was unbeaten with two wins and a draw. Now there is a loss.

Match 43: 20:45, Classification 3-4, CROATIA 10 ITALY 8

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

Referees: Georgios Stavridis (GRE), Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU)

Extra Man: CRO: 4/7 (4/14). ITA: 6/11 (6/16).

Pens: ITA: 1/1.

Teams:

CROATIA:

Josip Pavic, Luke Loncar (1), Ivan Milakovic, Fran Paskvalin (1), Maro Jokovic (3), Luka Bukic (1), Petar Muslim, Andro Busilje, Sandro Sukno (3), Niksa Dobud (1), Anđelo Setka, Paulo Obradovic (1), Marko Bijac.

Head Coach: Iвица Tucak.

ITALY: Stefano Tempesti, Amaurys Perez (1),

Niccolo Gitto, Pietro Figlioli, Alex Giorgetti (3), Maurizio Felugo (2),

Niccolo Figari, Valentino Gallo, Christian Presciutti (1), Deni

Fiorentini, Matteo Aicardi, Christian Napolitano (1), Marco Del Lungo.

Head Coach: Alessandro Campagna.

Match Report:

FLASH QUOTES:

Niksa Dobud (CRO):

“Our defence was on point. This bronze medal has a gold coating for us because we changed a lot of our players and this is a great start for the younger ones. It means a lot.”

Sandro Sukno (CRO):

“The exclusions and my red card were annoying, I can’t explain why I got them. The result would have been even better if I could have played the whole game. It’s frustrating. But we won even without the players we usually have. It was a great chance for the younger generation and they have a good future ahead of them.”

Niccolo Gitto (ITA):

“It has been a very tough game because Croatia is a great team. In the third quarter we thought that we had possibilities to win the match, but it hasn’t been possible. I feel bad because we wanted to win a medal, but the fourth place is not bad.”

Alex Giorgetti (ITA):

“I will always defend my team. After the semifinals I watched the face of disappointment in my teammates’ faces. We did not play in the semis 100 percent. We feel a lot of pressure but in the water we forget it.”

Maurizio Felugo (ITA):

“We are used to winning and giving joy to our fans, but to be among the top four was already a fantastic achievement.”

“We should and could have done better. We had some confusion and imperfections. At the end of the match some of the players were not brave enough to shoot.”
