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USA fly high, en route to Rio

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee Member (HUN)

The world champion and Olympic title-holder US team showed its best against Greece in the highlighted clash of Day 4. The Americans offered an amazing display of water polo and secured the top spot in Group A, as well as an easy match-up for the quarters so they are on their way to Rio. Favourites clinched easy wins in the other encounters but the pairings of the crucial QF round will only be determined on Friday, the final day of the prelims.

Game 1 – 12.40, Group B: France v Russia 2-10 (2-3, 0-0, 0-5, 0-2)

Referees: Steve Rotsart (USA), Nikolaos Boudramis (GRE)

FRANCE: Lorene Derenty, Estelle Milot, Lea Bachelier 1, Aurore Sacre, Louise Guillet 1, Geraldine Mahieu, Marie Barbieux, Marion Tardy, Adeline Sacre, Audrey Daule, Lucie Cesca, Michaela Jaskova, Morgane Chabrier. Head coach: Filippos Sakellis

RUSSIA: Anna Ustyukhina, Tatiana Zubkova, Ekaterina Prokofyeva, Elvina Karimova 2, Maria Borisova, Olga Gorbunova 2, Svetlana Kuzina 1, Anastasia Simanovich 1, Anna Timofeeva, Evgeniia Soboleva 2, Evgeniya Ivanova 2, Anna Grineva, Anna Karnaukh. Head coach: Alexander Gaidukov

Extramens

FRA: 0 for 6

RUS: 4 for 8

Penalties

none



Aurore Sacre (FRA, white cap) had a fine first half, then came Evgeniia Soboleva (behind) and the Russian rush – Credit,

all photos: P. Mesiano/Deepbluemedi/Inside

A strange game led up Day 4 in the beautiful city of Gouda: as expected, the Russian team was the dominant force in this match – during phases they wanted to dominate. And this wasn't the case from the beginning to the end. In a span of 3:10 minutes they jumped to a 0-3 lead and laid back. Not just a bit: their next goal came after an embarrassingly long time, in the third period, after 12:49 minutes. In the meantime the French fought bravely, scored twice in a span of 44 second late in the first for 2-3 and held that score throughout the second period. But the efforts needed for that – even against a giant losing focus temporarily – burnt their reserves as they remained scoreless for the last three periods. They wasted their last chance for going even at the beginning of the third when missed a 6 on 5, Ekaterina Soboleva scored from the center at the other end which re-switched the Russian machine. The second half produced a 0-7 rush for the favourites who understandably tried to save as much energy as possible for their Friday clash against Italy, which might determine the top spot in Group B.

Comment

Filippos Sakellis, head coach, France:

“The schedule is a bit weird, it’s not easy to play the last game yesterday and the first today, especially not against a team

like Russia, but all in all, I’m satisfied with the girls. They played well in the first half, then we had to start the rotation as

well as got tired which was visible, though we were unlucky in a couple of man-ups. Tomorrow we will have our own ‘final’

against Germany, we have to be ready for that match.”

Game 2 – 14.00, Group B: Italy v New Zealand 12-3 (5-0, 4-2, 1-1, 2-0)

Referees: Michael Baty (RSA), Jaume Teixido (ESP)

ITALY: Gulia Gorlero, Chiara Tabani 1, Arianna Garibotti 2, Elisa Queirolo 1, Federica Radicchi, Rosaria Aiello 1, Tania di Mario, Roberta Bianconi 1, Giulia Emmolo 3, Francesca Pomeri 1, Aleksandra Cotti, Teresa Frassinetti 3, Laura Teani.
Head coach: Fabio Conti

NEW ZEALAND: Jessica Mihcich, Nicole Lewis, Kelly Mason, Ricci Ferigo, Simone Lewis, Annabel Harman 2, Alexander Boyd, Caitlyn Lopes Da Silva, Emma Stoneman, Ema Carevic, Casie Bowry, Liana Dance 1, Antouki Youna.
Head coach: Angie Winstanley-Smith

Extramen

ITA: 3 for 10

NZL: 0 for 4

Penalties

ITA: 1 for 1

NZL: none



Always on hand... Arianna Garibotti netted two fine goals in this game

No headaches for Italy, they gave what was required to earn a clean win and leave enough reserve gas in the tank for the next two days which are going to decide their faith. The New Zealanders offered a balanced and disciplined performance after a weaker opening period as they managed to remain inside the 10-goal margin.

Comments

Fabio Conti, head coach, Italy:

“Today only the points mattered. Our minds are already on the game tomorrow which is still not crucial but important.”

Angie Winstanley-Smith, head coach, New Zealand:

“We’re getting better, I think it’s clear for everyone how much we’ve improved in this game. We kept going and things went into our way – 7-3 in the last three quarters against the third best team in Kazan, a traditionally professional nation. To have that, I think the girls just showed everybody that with a good preparation and competitive games we won’t be too far away.”

Game 3 – 15.20, Group A: United States v Greece 15-7 (6-2, 4-2, 1-1, 4-2)

Referees: Adrian Alexandrescu (ROU), Alessandro Severo (ITA)

USA: Samantha Hill, Madeline Musselman, Melissa Seidemann, Rachel Fattal 1, Caroline Clark 2, Margaret Steffens 3, Courtney Mathewson, Kiley Neushul 5, Aria Fischer 1, Kaleigh Gilchrist, Makenzie Fischer 3, Kameryn Craig 1, Ashleigh Johnson. Head coach: Adam Krikorian

GREECE: Eleni Kouvdou, Christina Tsoukala 1, Nikoleta Eleftheriadou, Vasiliki Diamantopoulou, Margarita Plevritou, Alkisi Avramidou 1, Alexandra Asimaki 1, Antigoni Roumpesi 1, Christina Kotsia, Triantafyllia Manolioudaki 2, Eleftheria Plevritou, Eleni Xenaki 1, Chrysoula Diamantopoulou. Head coach: Athanasios Kechagias

Extramen

USA: 5 for 7

GRE: 3 for 9

Penalties

USA: 1 for 1

GRE: none



One from the 15 beautiful goals: Maggie Steffens (USA, in cap no. 8) and her team mates enjoyed an exceptional day

“Don’t stop here” said on of the US players as they lined up for the restart of play in the 6th minute. Not even the first period ended and they were already 6-2 up in the match for the top spot. Greece offered a couple of impressive performances against Spain and Canada – but they were nowhere close to their rivals. Nor on the scoreboard and not in the pool either. Note, hard to pick any team in the world which could have stopped the Americans when they are reaching this unique level.

It was water polo in its prime, the Steffens&Co. seemed to walk on water as they scored from all possible situation, man-up, counter, action, drive-in. Any angle, any time. The brave women of Hellas tried to withstand the pressure but it was demoralising that whenever they scored, the response came immediately. Together with the bad news that the world champions didn’t stop, according to the request: by halftime they led 10-4 and soon it was 11-4 at the beginning of the third.



A hard task: effective defence – Melissa Seidemann (USA, left) marks Alexandra Asimaki – was also a key part of the easy

A slight slowdown followed, understandably, but in the closing period they went on producing a couple of more brilliant goals – and stopped at 15, a rarity when top sides clash. Kiley Neushul netted 5, but Maggie Steffens's play was also amazing. With the win, the US team secured the top spot in the group and a quarter-final with the winner of the France v Germany match. There they won't need walking on the water, swimming and playing should be enough to book their well-deserved place in Rio.

Comments

Adam Krikorian, head coach, USA:

“When this team plays the way it can, that's beautiful water polo. I mean, regardless of the score, it's fun to watch. Even for

me. I'm almost like a by-stander, a civilian watching the game and just letting it go. That was the first half today. Though

I'm a bit surprised as I have a lot of respect towards the Greeks, the way they played in this tournament and I think they are

still a very dangerous team and will get better in the following games. So I'm surprised by the difference of the score –

Athanasios Kechagias, head coach, Greece:

“We played with the strongest team of the world. They were better, no doubt, our defence didn’t work well today. We have

to learn the lessons from this match.”

Game 4 – 16.40, Group A: Japan v Canada 7-15 (2-1, 3-5, 0-5, 2-4)

Referees: Benjamin Mercier (FRA), John Waldow (NZL)

JAPAN: Mivra Rikako, Sakanoue Chiaki, Inaba Akari 2, Maganiyama Shino 1, Nakata Moe, Takahashi Oyaka, Nakano Yumi 1, Hashiguchi Mitsuki 2, Hosoya Kana 1, Mori Tsuhasa, Jokumoto Marina, Suzuki Kotori, Aoki Miyun. Head coach: Kato Hideo

CANADA: Jessica Gaudreault, Krystina Alogbo 2, Katrina Monton, Emma Wright 2, Monika Eggens 5, Kelly McKee, Joelle Bekhazi, Axelle Crevier 2, Carmen Eggens 1, Christine Robinson 1, Hanna Yelizarova 2, Dominique Perreault, Nicola Colterjohn. Head coach: David Paradelo

Extramén

JPN: 1 for 5

CAN: 3 for 6

Penalties

none



Oh, what happened in the second half?... A young Japanese fan during the match

For a while even an upset was in the air as the Japanese led 3-1 early in the second – and still found the way back after Canada netted four connecting goals in a span of 1:43 minutes for 3-5. At halftime they trailed only 5-6 so it looked like an open game but finally the North Americans took control and with a 0-5 swept in the third they put things into order. Monika Eggens stood out with 5 goals as the Canadians secured their spot in the quarter-finals.

Comment

David Paradello, head coach, Canada:

“We missed a lot of opportunities in the first half and we put them inside the net in the second. It was a kind of two-goal

scenes in the first two periods, if you don't score this side and the other team does the other side, you can pretty much keep

the other team in the game. It was good to see the team recovering from the bad game yesterday, we can build on the second

half.”

Game 5 – 18.30, Group B: Netherlands v Germany 16-3 (3-0, 5-1, 4-2, 4-0)

Referees: Natacha Florestano (BRA), Marie-Claude Deslières (CAN)

NETHERLANDS: Laura Aarts, Miloushka Smit 2, Dagmar Genee, Catharina van der Sloot 2, Amarens Genee 3, Nomi Stomphorst 1, Marloes Nijhuis 3, Vivian Sevenich, Maud Megens, Isabella van Toorn 1, Lieke Klaassen 3, Leonie van der Molen 1, Debby Willemsz. Head coach: Arno Havenga

GERMANY: Felicitas Saurusajtis, Belen Vosseberg, Nadja Kreis, Bianca Seyfert, Claudia Blomenkamp 2, Sina van der Bosch, Anja Seyfert, Jamie Verebelyi, Jenifer Stiefel, Nadine Hartwig, Carmen Gelse 1, Anika Ebell, Liselotte Hurrelmann. Head coach: Milos Sekulic

Extramen

NED: 7 for 14

GER: 2 for 11

Penalties

NED: 1 for 1

GER: none



Miloushka Smit was again a great leader of the Dutch team

The Dutch win was never in danger – unlike the players’ health. At least at some stages the sides clashed a bit more bitterly than seemed reasonable in a game like this. Thanks God, nothing bad happened – Bianca Seyfert’s slightly injured hand was quickly administered by the first aid-providers –, the match got back to a fine track to the delight of the crowd as they could watch some entertaining goals, too.

Comments

Arno Havenga, head coach, Netherlands:

“A game to be played. It was sometimes tougher than expected but fortunately no one has been injured. We have one more

similar match, then we’ll be ready for the big game in the quarters.”

Milos Sekulic, head coach, Germany

“The last two days the Dutch played 8-8 draws in succession so we let them win to please their crowd... OK, now seriously

conceded 25 or more goals, now we get over with 16, we fought, we defended well so for us this was a really good game. I

feel the girls are ready to play a really even game with France tomorrow for the place in the quarters.”

Game 6 – 20.00, Group A: Spain v South Africa 22-2 (5-0, 6-0, 4-1, 7-1)

Referees: Svetlana Dreval (RUS), Yosuke Kajiwara (JPN)

SPAIN: Laura Ester, Marta Bach, Anna Espar 5, Beatriz Ortiz 2, Matilde Ortiz, Jennifer Pareja 4, Paula Leiton, Pilar Pena, Judith Forca 5, Roser Tarrago 4, Maica Garcia 2, Laura Lopez, Patricia Herrera. Head coach: Miguel Oca

SOUTH AFRICA: Rebecca Thomas, Amber Penny, Kieren Paley, Emma Hardham, Cary Wessels, Christine Abrahamse, Amy Keevy, Alex van der Valt, Megan Parkes, Amica Hallendorf, Kelsey White 2, Lauren Nixon. Head coach: Samuel Gareth

Extramen

ESP: 4 for 5

RSA: 0 for 1

Penalties:

none



Anna Espar was busy in the back and also in front, she scored 5 goals

Regaining confidence after a couple of bitter losses to Greece and USA, that were Spain's main goal in this match. They did a clean job, the key players could feel the taste of scoring some fine goals – Anni Espar and Judith Forca scored 5 apiece – and they could also practice of a couple of tactical moves while gearing up for the game against Canada for the third place in the group.

Comments

Miguel Oca, head coach, Spain:

“We used this game to prepare for tomorrow and especially the day after.”

Samuel Gareth, head coach, South Africa:

“We tried to play like we did against Greece but our game yesterday against Japan didn’t play out as we expected and that

was a setback for the team. We saw the signs today. And playing four games in four days are not easy for a team like ours,

even the better ones look a bit tired. We wished to stay within 10-12 goals but we didn’t have too much power left.”

