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EXPERT'S EYE DAY 14 - USA retain gold in women's water polo

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WATER POLO

Italy's dream of beating the United States and win the gold medal proved to be an impossible dream.

Too strong American team showed no weaknesses and, well led by coach Adam Krikorian, was superior in all.

Opposed to such a team Italy's team, with coach Fabio Conti at the helm, tried to react in any way however, yesterday, the Italian strikers were not so sharp while the defense was a little lose.

Add the not so fortunate day of the goalkeeper Giulia Gorlero, 9 saves on 21 shots, and a missed penalty from Roberta Bianconi; all this explains the final result of 12-5, with a hefty goal difference, - 7.



The US were superior physically, technically and tactically and, perhaps, in terms of team spirit, which also the Italians possess to a high extent.

The American team played almost the entire encounter with the good door Ashleigh Johnson, No. 13, African-American, 11 saves out of 16 shots directed at her.

Both teams had to be happy with their respective medal which they celebrated in jubilation.

Since the women's water polo has entered the Olympic program, in Sydney in 2000, the United States have always managed to get on the podium: in addition to the two gold medals won in the last two editions, they have also won two silver medals (Sydney 2000 and Beijing 2008) and one bronze (Athens 2004).

The US roster in Rio featured only two players among those who had won the title in London in 2012, Maggie Steffens and Kami Craig.

Before Rio Italy won one medal, a gold in Athens 2004. The only survivor of that team was the captain Tania Di Mario, 37, also yesterday one of the best of the Italian side and author of a splendid goal from the long distance, a "golazo" as they say it here; the last goal for Italy in the match at 28 seconds from the end, and also the last in Di Mario's 18-year long and brilliant international career, in which she accumulated 378 caps.

The final for the bronze medal between Hungary and Russia was both intense and thrilling. The regular time ended on a tie on a high score, 12-12. Nearly half of the Russians goals (5) were made by the number 2, Nadezhda Glyzina.

Penalty shootouts were required; they were painful for Hungary, who missed its seventh throw while Russia converted it, gaining a 7-6 win on penalties, for a cumulative total of 19 goals to 18. The Russian jubilation was countered by the tears and the despair of the Hungarians.

In the classification matches, for the 5th and 6th places the confrontation was between two teams who had made the podium in London 2012, Australia and Spain; they were respectively bronze and silver medalists four years ago.

It was a balanced match which ended with a narrow win of the Iberians, 12-10, mostly thanks to 7 goals scored (out of 9 shots, 77.8 percent efficiency) by its number 10, the powerful center Roser Tarrago. For the 7th and 8th China overwhelmed Brazil, scoring the double of its opponents' goals, 10 to 5.

Results of Finals

For 7th and 8th place: Brazil-China 5-10 (2: 2, 0: 2, 0: 2, 3: 4)
For 5th and 6th place: Australia- Spain 10-12 (5: 4, 2: 3; 1: 3, 2: 2)
For 3rd and 4th place: Hungary-Russia 18-19 after penalty shootouts; 12-12 (3: 3, 3: 4, 3: 1, 3: 4); penalties 6: 7
For 1st and 2nd place: United States - Italy 12-5 (4: 1, 1: 2; 4: 1, 3: 1)

Final Standings

- 1 United States, gold medal
- 2 Italy, silver medalist
- 3 Russia, bronze medalist
- 4 Hungary
- 5 Spain
- 6 Australia
- 7 China
- 8 Brazil

SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

In yesterday's team final Russia's overwhelming superiority was reconfirmed. The Russian swimmers were head and shoulders above the rest. Then came, in this order, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Ukrainians, with Italy in fifth place, their best ever result at the Olympics in this event.



Team Russia

The competition ended with no surprises - which hardly occur in this discipline - and the ranking of the preliminary day was confirmed.

Gold for Russia, reigning World and European Championships, whose swimmers performed close to perfection, with 99,133 points, and retained the Olympic title with a cumulative score of 196.1439.

China was second with 192.9841 points (97.3667 in the free exercise), confirming the silver medal won in London 2012 (they had won silver also at last year's World Cup).

Bronze medal for Japan, with 189.2056 points (95,433 in the free); the Japanese took the third place also at the World Cup in 2015.

Ukraine was fourth to less than a point, with points 188.6080 (95.1667) ahead of Italy, 183.3809.

DIVING

In the preliminaries of the last diving event, the men's 10m platform there were some highly spectacular dives. Expect more in today's final.

Even the 18th and last qualifier, Steele Johnson (USA), achieved a high score, 403.75 points.

Tom Daley (GBR) topped the field with 571.85 points, sending a strong warning to his rivals Bo Qiu (China) and David Boudia (USA), who shared the podium with him at London 2012.

Qiu, Aisen Chen (China) and Boudia have made dives worthy of a final, and their individual scores was the evidence: 564, 545 and 496 points respectively.
