

## **Sad end for a great tournament: after disqualifications, Uruguay finishes first**

Game 24, 13.30 – Final: Malta v Iran - halted, teams disqualified  
Report

In the final match of the FINA World Men's Water Polo Development Trophy, contested by Malta and Iran, 33 seconds from time seven players were excluded with red cards: two from Malta and five from Iran.

Then players of both teams were engaged to a fight outside of the water where more and more players and officials were involved – at least more than three from each team –, thus the referees cancelled the game. As a result of this violence outside of the water and unsportsmanlike conduct from both teams, police had to be called to guarantee the safety of at least one of the teams.

The Commission of the FINA TWPC has decided the following:

- both teams have been disqualified from this match which shall result in exclusion from the final result of the tournament;

This decision was based on the FINA WP Rules, Appendix C, 6.1:

### **“OFFENCES COMMITTED BY TEAMS**

6.1 If more than three members of the same team, including team officials, commit offences sanctioned in accordance with Articles 3, 4 or 5 in the same match, that team shall be sanctioned with disqualification from that match and a minimum suspension from the next match in the tournament. (...)”

As a consequence, the previously lower ranked sides of the tournament shall advance to the next available positions.

Game 23, 12.10 – Bronze medal: Saudi Arabia v Uruguay 5-11  
Results & Teams

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

Referees: Peter Balzan (MLT), Anton Korolyev (AUT)

### **SAUDI ARABIA**

Hussein Jazany, Yaser Alzahrani, Mohammed Gamal, Malik Mokhtar, Naif Almontashiri, Ayman Alaryani 1, Hassan Kalfout, Khaled Alharbi 1, Hattan Olayan 2, Bader Aldaughter, Hamed Alnefaiei 1, Mohammed

Alhelal, Omar Shavahili.

Head coach: Pino Dragjevic

## **URUGUAY**

Alfonso Rodriguez, Martin Fernandez, Ramiro Garcia 2, Inti Sanguinet 1, Pablo Brugnini 4, Diego Dominguez, Santiago San Martin 2, Facundo Canepa 1, Nicolas Paseyro, Daniel Queipo 1, Nicolas Falco, Gaston del Campo, Joaquin Perez.

Head coach: Jorge Remersaro

### **Extramens**

Saudi Arabia: 1 for 4

Uruguay: 4 for 12

### **Penalties**

None

### **Report**

The closing day's only one-sided match saw Uruguay taking a commanding lead right in the first period. They netted two fast goals in a span of 46 seconds and by the end of the first quarter they were 1-4 up. The second period was a bit calmer, Brugnini scored for 1-5, the Saudis pulled one back and the scoring part was done for this phase – the 'Urus' missed three man-ups in succession but they could afford it as their rivals weren't really threatening in front.

The third began with two Latin American hits, the MVP of the tournament, the skilled and smart Santiago San Martin netted his second goal, in 70 seconds Garcia added one more for 2-7, it seemed to have been decided. The Uruguayans might have felt more comforted than necessary and soon they found the Saudis coming way too close at 5-7. But their momentum was gone soon when Brugnini lobbed the ball in from 9m for 5-8, then he added a fine back-handed shot to finish the game with four goals and two more arrived in the closing minutes, ensuring jubilant celebrations around the Uruguayan bench.

Game 22, 10.50 – Places 5-6th: Tunisia v Austria 10-10 – pen: 2-3

Results & Teams

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

Referees: Jeremy Cheng (SGP), Nestor Guerra (PER)

## **TUNISIA**

Aymen Kedidi, Mehdi Ferjani, Nadim Fekih, Taha Ben Slimane, Karim Ghomrasni 4, Nadhem Essaied 1, N. Ben Hajkhelifa, Salim Bouallegue, Chihab Ben Hajkhelifa, Bechir Chouikha 4, Adem Fellah 1, Mohamed Khalfet, Amanallah Sghaier.

Head coach: Moez Yangui

## **AUSTRIA**

Salkan Samardzic, Onur Celebic 2, Mario Todorovic 2, Tobias Lang 1, Toni Vidovic 1, Eldin Ribic, Ian

Sommer, Albert Schmidt, Johannes Gratzl 3, Nikolaus Polak, Florian Lukas 1, Filip Popic

Head coach: Barnabas Steinmetz

### **Extramen**

Tunisia: 2 for 5

Austria: 3 for 6

### **Penalties**

Tunisia: 2 for 2

Austria: nil

### **Report**

After penalties decided the previous match, another shootout followed, rocking the schedule of the final session a bit. At this level it's quite unusual for the athletes to play six matches in as many days and that took its toll on the players – it's about expect the unexpected at any moment.

It was mirrored in this match which offered a handful of twists. The Austrians took the better start and went 1-2 ahead but the Saudis caught on a wave late in the first and continued in the second to earn a 4-2 lead. But they couldn't build on that on the long term as they wasted a couple of fine opportunities while the Austrians gained momentum early in the third, when they netted two fine action goals, between the two the Tunisians missed a clean 2 on 1. This time the Austrians couldn't capitalise on this, Chouikha equalised from a counter, the Europeans missed a man-up and Ghomrasni put Tunisia ahead once more at 6-5. It stood even before the last break, however, as Austria's giant, Johannes Gratzl rocketed the ball to the net from an extra.

Again, a better spell for the Austrians gave them a seemingly calming lead, they denied two Tunisian man-ups, Lang scored from a nice combination, Celebic added another one 40 seconds later from an individual action for 6-8. But there came the Tunisians, almost from nowhere to score three in a span of 1:32 minutes. Austria had some luck to equalise as the ball sailed through the line from a dying attack, but a penalty 57 seconds from time put Tunisia ahead once more. But the Europeans had a last chance and Gratzl's blast did the damage for the third time in the game to bring the sides even with 28 seconds to go.

The Africans couldn't do much so this match was also decided by the penalties. It was the goalies' party, Kedidi and Samardzic came up with a couple of great stops but the Austrians had one more, three, securing his team the fifth place.

Game 21, 9.30 – Places 7-8th: Peru v Singapore 8-8 – pen: 5-3

Results & Teams

Quarters: 2-3, 3-3, 1-2, 2-0

Referees: Mourad Jenhani (TUN), Hassan Aljabri (KSA)

### **PERU**

Sebastian Bravo, Nick Pizarro, Sebastian Pastor, German Rodriguez, Eduardo Grandez 1, Diego Guevara, Nicolas Villar 1, Rodrigo Pachero 1, Sebastian Morales, Diego Villar 3, Rodrigo Rojas 1, Sebastian Dancourt 1, Adriano Zunino.

Head coach: Rafael Valdes

## **SINGAPORE**

Jit An Darren Lee, Cheng-Kang Lee, Jia-Ooi Yee, Jing Lun Chow 2, Wei Loong Bryan Ong 2, Samuel Moses Yu, Kunyang Chiam, Wan Loong Ang 1, Junjie Yu 1, Zhen Wei Teo 2, En Rui Glen Lim, Kai Yu-Jun Olafson, Kai Yang Lee

Head coach: Thin Cheong Lee

### **Extramens**

Peru: 2 for 6

Singapore: 0 for 3

### **Penalites**

None

### **Report**

The first game of the last day ended in the first penalty shootout of the tournament. It crowned an exciting match which saw the Peruvians fighting to their last breath. Though they led 2-1 deep into the first period, Singapore hit back and netted four goals in a row to go 2-5 up in the second. The Latin Americans responded well, their two skilled players, Diego Villar and Rodrigo Rojas netted three goals combined to put Peru on even just 56 seconds before the middle break, but Ong's fine bouncing shot returned the lead to the Asians.

And the margin was doubled before the last period as Singapore scored two action goals after 6-6, so they were 6-8 up with eight minutes to go.

An early goal in the fourth gave hope to Peru and with 3:36 to go it was even once more, Pachero's fine shot found the back of the net for 8-8. Singapore had two man-ups in the remaining minutes but missed both so the 7<sup>th</sup> place was decided by a shootout. Peru buried all their attempts, Singapore missed the third one, prompting wild celebrations at the Latin Americans' bench.

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee

**When the coach of Uruguay was tossed to the pool by his players, no one would have guessed that this actually happened to the trophy-winning team's boss. That time, at the end of the bronze medal match, it was just a great sign of the special value of this tournament. Because it has a special value for those teams who take part.**

That was also brilliantly highlighted by the triumphing yells of the Peruvian players while walking in the corridor of the locker-rooms – they had clinched the 7<sup>th</sup> place in a thriller against Singapore. Or by the height of the jumps of the Austrians at their bench at the very moment when their fifth shooter buried the decisive penalty in the shootout against Tunisia which earned them the 5<sup>th</sup> place (as it turned out to be a win earning them the bronze medal). Or by the joy of the Uruguayans who simply threw their coach to the pool – usually it happens after the finals of water polo tournaments, here the feeling of claiming the bronze medal sent them to the seventh heaven, and their coach to the water.

However, it turned out later that this had happened to the coach of the team finally being awarded the gold medal.

It was all about tensions which erupted towards the end of the final between Malta and Iran. Malta led 8-6, the last goal came 44 seconds from time and decided the outcome... Eleven seconds later players started provoking each other – who told what, who began the whole... that part of the story might never be recovered in full. Red cards were shown for two Maltese and five Iranian players but those who had been excluded earlier began a mainly verbal fight outside the pool. While the coaches tried to order their players to refrain from making further insults on each other, witnessing the dry-land happenings first the complete Iranian team left the pool and rushed towards the scene then the Maltese players also came out from the water to defend their mates. There were no punches or serious physical violence, the participants just yelled on each other amidst some pushing. Anyway, that should not be part of any water polo games which are supposed to be decided in the pool and not out of it.

The referees had to cancel the match 33 seconds from time and the FINA Technical Water Polo Committee's Commission couldn't do anything else than applying the relevant rule which sanctions disciplinary matters in case more than three members of a team commit serious misconduct during a game. (See the decision in the match report.) That meant that both finalists had been disqualified and Uruguay was awarded the trophy.

In fact, they clinched the gold with ease – as the bronze medal game was the only one-sided encounter of the last session. Uruguay took a commanding lead in the first period and they managed to maintain this 3-4 goals margin until the middle of the last period: there the Saudis had one last surge but after 5-7 the Latin Americans scored a demoralising goal which was followed by three more to secure the bronze medal for them.

The matches for the lower placements produced some extra excitements as both ended in a penalty-shootout. Austria and Tunisia were entangled into battle being full with ups and downs. The last period saw some great twists, the Austrians went 6-8 ahead, the Africans replied with three connecting hits, then a lucky goal helped the European side to go even once more. The last minute saw a goal apiece, the Austrians equalised 28 seconds from time, then their goalie came up with three saves in the shootout.

Peru managed to come back from 2-5 down in the second period and from 6-8 down in the fourth against Singapore to force the shootout. They shut out the Asians in the entire last quarter while netting two goals – here one save was enough to make the difference and it came from the Peruvian keeper.

*Though, to finish this story in the spirit of sport, we have to add that after an hour or so, the Iranian players reappeared the scene, walked to the Maltese players and shook hands with them – both teams seemed to close down this unnecessary chapter in the only way acceptable. Too bad that peace came far later than it should have.*



*A rare scene: all medallists in one picture – a kind of happy ending*

**The final rankings of the FINA World Men's Water Polo Development Trophy is as follows:**

1. Uruguay
2. Saudi Arabia
3. Austria
4. Tunisia
5. Peru
6. Singapore

*Malta and Iran have been disqualified.*



*MVP of the tournament: Santiago San Martin of Uruguay with FINA TWPC Member Alan Balfanbayev*

**Individual awards**

***Top scorer***

Diego Villar (Peru) with 19 goals

***Most Valuable Player***

Santiago San Martin (Uruguay)

***Best goalkeeper***

Alfonso Rodriguez (Uruguay)

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