

The Netherlands on top in the lower house

The Dutch team finished in the best position in the “consolation” tourney, claiming the 9th position – they beat Malta, which can still be proud as this is their best-ever placement at age-group tournaments.

For places 9-10th: Netherlands v Malta 13-9. **For places 11-12th:** France v Georgia 12-10 (9-9, pen: 3-1). **For places 13-14th:** Romania v Turkiye 5-7. **For places 15-16th:** Czech Republic v Slovakia 10-8.

Medal round (Sunday) – Final: 19.00 Serbia v Spain. **Bronze medal:** 17.30 Hungary v Greece. **For places 5-6th:** 16.00 Italy v Croatia. **For places 7-8th:** 14.30 Germany v Montenegro.

The Netherlands consoled themselves with a couple of wins and finished in the 9th place – after their disappointing loss in the crossovers to Germany (the only second ranked team in the prelims which couldn’t make the quarters). Their rival enjoyed perhaps the finest tournament a Maltese age-group team had ever had, but they ran out of steam once more midway through the second period, and the Dutch secured a calmer second half with a 5-0 rush after 2-3.

The other games offered more excitements – the clash of France and Georgie came down to the penalties, for example. Though the French led 9-6 in the fourth, Besarion Akhvlediani’s hat-trick in less than two minutes (and a penalty save from the Georgian goalie) set up the scene for a shootout. And as it sometimes happens, it was Akhvlediani who made a crucial miss in the fourth round and the French took the 11th place.

Romania and Turkiye produced a strange game – the Romanians took a 3-1 lead in eight minutes, only to concede 6 in the second period, so the Turkish led 4-7 at halftime. Then the second half saw a single goal, with 3:54 to go, Romania scored it, but that was too few to change the outcome.

The battle of the neighbours to avoid the bottom rank was as fierce as it could be. The Czechs led all the way against Slovakia, after 9-8 both teams had two man-up apiece, missed all, and 13 seconds from time Cenek Rames’ penalty secured the Czech victory.

Today was a rest day for the teams seeking the top positions – Sunday will bring the very best of action with Serbia and Spain being set to stage a brilliant showdown for the title.