

## No hiccups on the opening day

**The favourites delivered on the opening day in Podgorica at the men's U19 European Water Polo Championships, featuring many players who had already left their marks on the big stage earlier in Split.**

**Prelims, Round 1 – Group A:** Spain v Malta 15-9, Netherlands v Czech Republic 17-5. **Group B:** Croatia v Georgia 20-6, Italy v Slovakia 14-7. **Group C:** Greece v Romania 14-5, Serbia v Germany 15-9. **Group D:** Hungary v Turkey 15-2, Montenegro v France 14-5.

The first day saw no hiccups, though the opening match of the championships offered some unexpected excitements in the clash between Spain and Malta. The underdog side jumped to a 1-4 lead and the Spaniards had to dig deep to come back to 5-5 till halftime. However, they couldn't build any larger gap in the third, what's more, they needed a 3-0 run after 6-7 to lead again, though the Maltese managed to equalise for 9-9, early in the fourth. Here they ran out of gas while Spain staged a 6-0 surge to avoid any bigger embarrassment – thanks to Marc Valls and Abel Ramon who netted 5 goals apiece.

Hungary set the scoring record of the day, hitting 25 against Turkey – including a 10-goal rout in the final eight minutes –, while Greece's Nikolaos Gkillas scored 8 against Romania, out of his team's 14, the best individual effort on Sunday. He was part of the senior team finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in Split, now he, and some other young aces, are set to play leading roles in the season's last major age-group event.

The next day will probably bring more thrills as all matches which seem to be deciding the top spot in the respective groups are scheduled for the second round: Croatia will have a showdown with Italy, Spain clash with the Netherlands, Greece take on Serbia while host Montenegro face Hungary.