

## Spain, Croatia, Serbia and Hungary go to the quarters

**After winning the big matches in the previous round, Spain, Croatia, Serbia and Hungary all added easy victories on the final day of the prelims to keep their perfect records and book their respective berths in the quarter-finals.**

**Prelims, Round 3 – Group A:** Spain v Czech Republic 23-5, Netherlands v Malta 8-7. **Ranking:** 1. ESP 9, 2. NED 6, 3. MLT 3, 4. CZE 0. **Group B:** Croatia v Slovakia 21-6, Italy v Georgia 15-8. **Ranking:** 1. CRO 9, 2. ITA 6, 3. GEO 3, 4. SVK 0. **Group C:** Greece v Germany 13-4, Serbia v Romania 14-6. **Ranking:** 1. SRB 9, 2. GRE 6, 3. GER 3, 4. ROU 0. **Group D:** Hungary v France 13-6, Montenegro v Turkiye 16-5. **Ranking:** 1. HUN 9, 2. MNE 6, 3. FRA 3, 4. TUR 0. **Crossovers, Wednesday:** 14.30 NED v GER, 16.00 GRE v MLT, 17.30 ITA v FRA, 19.00 MNE v GEO. **For places 13-16<sup>th</sup>:** 10.00 CZE v ROU, 11.30 SVK v TUR  
**Quarter-finals (Thursday):** HUN v NED/GER, SRB v ITA/FRA, CRO v GRE/MLT, ESP v MNE/GEO

The last round in the prelims didn't bring any surprise. Malta was on the verge to cause a minor sensation, but the Netherlands came back from 1-4 down and in a huge battle they could edge out their rivals by a single goal to finish second in Group A. Malta, after pushing the Spaniards to their limits on the opening day, had another great game where they held on for a draw at the beginning of the last period once more, but the Dutch scored the winner.

This was the only close contest in this round, all other matches turned into lopsided encounters after a while. Spain thrashed the Czechs in Group A, the Croats did the same with the Slovaks while Italy downed Georgia, though they had some headaches in the first half (8-6), before a 6-1 rush in the second secured a fine win for them.

Serbia had no problems to sink Romania, and the Greeks beat the Germans with ease too, despite playing the earliest game. Hungary also had to return in the morning, some 14hrs after beating the host Montenegrins soundly – but a 4-0 storm in less than five minutes against the French quickly put this game on the expected path. Montenegro bounced back with a clean win over Turkiye and face Georgia in the crossovers on Wednesday.

The four group-winners enjoy a rest day as they qualified directly to the quarters – unlike at the 'big' Europeans, where the senior sides play every second day, here, in this 8-day tournament this is a real benefit for those finishing atop in the prelims.