

Germany edges out the Netherlands

The favourites, Greece, Italy and Montenegro all bagged 5-goal wins in the crossover matches, while in the most dramatic contest Germany scored the last two goals to beat the Netherlands 11-10 – this was the only game where a team ranked third in the prelims ousted a second seeded one.

Crossover matches: Netherlands v Germany 10-11, Greece v Malta 8-3, Italy v France 10-5, Montenegro v Georgia 13-8. **For places 13-16th:** Czech Republic v Romania 7-16, Slovakia v Turkiye 9-13

Quarter-finals: 14.30 Germany v Hungary, 16.00 Greece v Croatia, 17.30 Italy v Serbia, 19.00 Montenegro v Spain. **For places 9-12th:** 10.00 Netherlands v France, 11.30 Malta v Georgia

No real hiccups occurred in the matches played for the quarter-final berths. The big favourites all bagged five-goal victories, and they reached the target in almost identical ways.

Greece joined the circle of those sides which found surprisingly hard to down Malta. Spain and the Netherlands all struggled a bit before taking the upper hand in the final period in the prelims – now the Greeks had to come back from 0-2 down in the first, then had a goalless second period and deep into the third still led only 4-3. However, the Maltese ran out of gas at this stage and could not score in the last 13:42 minutes of the match while the Greeks added four more to set up a mouth-watering QF with Croatia.

The French also held on till half-time, trailed only 3-2 against Italy, then the Settebello Jr. staged a 4-0 run in the third, and after 7-2 there was no way back for their rivals. Italy's reward is a do-or-die match with Serbia – a must-see match for all water polo fans.

Montenegro also needed some time to break the Georgians' resistance. Again, only a single goal separated the sides at halftime (4-3), and it was still 6-4 late in the third when the hosts netted two in a span of 37 seconds and that did the damage. Next is Spain for them – a huge challenge for sure.

In the toughest clash of the day the Germans came back from three goals down to beat the Netherlands. Midway through the second period the Dutch led 6-3, but the Germans kept on fighting and late in the third they caught them up at 8-8. The Dutch killed a man-down early in the fourth, then their goalie Sander Berkenbosch stopped a penalty with 4:21 to go. It was a tremendous fight, and they seemed to take the psychologic edge when Mart van der Weijden netted a man-up 2:48 minutes from time for 10-9. However, Mark Dyck replied from action 18 seconds later, then the Dutch had a man-up after a time-out with 1:29 on the clock, missed it and Luk Jaeschke scored another action goal 42 seconds before the end. The Netherlands got a last man-up 18 seconds from time but missed that one too – so the Germans made it to the best eight and face the mighty Hungarians.

In the matches staged for the lower-ranks, Romania, led by leftie Andrei-Radu Neamtu who blasted 8 goals – he also had some fine games in Split in the senior side – blew away the Czechs, and Turkiye left no chance for the Slovaks.

