

## **Greece, Serbia, Montenegro win thrillers, Hungary fly to the semis**

**While Hungary was flying high to reach semis by thrashing the Germans, Greece, Serbia and Spain all won extremely tough battles. The Greeks beat Croatia by scoring four goals in the fourth, Serbia overcame Italy in a thriller, winning the shootout, while Spain withstood the pressure and ousted the home side with some brilliant defending in the second half.**

**Quarter-finals:** Germany v Hungary 1-22, Greece v Croatia 8-7, Italy v Serbia 11-12 (7-7, pen: 4-5), Montenegro v Spain 8-10. **For places 9-12<sup>th</sup>:** Netherlands v France 15-7, Malta v Georgia 10-7.

**Semi-finals (Friday):** 17.30 Hungary v Serbia, 19.00 Greece v Spain. For places 5-8<sup>th</sup>: 14.30: Germany v Italy. 16.00: Croatia v Montenegro.

Hungary kicked off the quarter-finals party in style – they demolished the German side with an overwhelming performance. The Germans scored the first goal after 36 seconds – and they could never hit the back of the net again. Hungary, on the other hand, staged the perfect storm, blasted 22 while killing all German attacks, even though the Germans took 30 shots. The Magyars gradually dismantled their rivals, scored 7 in the first half, 15 in the second, 9 alone in the final period.

While this match was painfully one-sided, the following ones couldn't have offered any more excitements. The clash of Greece and Croatia was as balanced as it could be, neither side could gain a two-goal advantage till the last minute. In the first half Greece did a bit better and led 4-3, but the Croats hit back in the third, though missed a penalty early on, they could score twice in 91 seconds shortly before the last break to go 4-5 up. Next was the Greeks' turn for two fast goals, after almost four minutes of intensive battling they netted two in 42 seconds – also to halt their scoreless run of 11:32 minutes. With 2:38 to go, Roberto Radic equalised from a penalty for 6-6. But again, the Greeks came up with a double, this time in 39 seconds to lead 8-6, for the first time by two and only 43 seconds were remaining. The Croats pulled one back with 0:33 on the clock, got back the ball for the last three seconds but couldn't create any danger after the time-out.

If one thought there was no way to have higher drama, Italy and Serbia managed to offer even more thrilling moments. It was a magnificent battle with the defences in the spotlight, it stood 3-3 at halftime, then the Italians jumped to a 5-3 lead before Vasilije Martinovic could convert a man-up 46 seconds before the last break. Martinovic opened the fourth with an action goal, then after three long minutes Nikola Kojic put the Serbs ahead once more for 5-6. Italy could break the ice after 6:12 minutes by Francesco Condemi, soon he missed a penalty but with 1:18 to go he stepped up to score an action goal for 7-6. The Serbs got a man-up in the next possession, Srdjan Baucalo put it away 52 seconds from time, it was even again. Italy also had a man-up in the last 29 seconds but couldn't make it – so the shootout decided the outcome. Both sides made a miss in the first five rounds, then Martinovic buried his one, while Peter Pajkovic could stop Condemi's shot, just like in the fourth period, to send the Serbs to the semis.

Last but not least, the home side clashed with Spain and early on they scored three in a row to go 3-1 up – but it turned out that this was their finest spell in this game. The Spaniards caught them up in the second, scored two after 4-3 to take the lead, though this time the hosts managed to equalise before the middle break. Then in the third Spain's defence tightened up, while an action goal and a nicely played man-up gave them a 5-7 lead deep into the second. The Montenegrins could pull one back 31 seconds from time (they were unable to make any harm in front for 7:29 minutes) – and after 1:27 minutes they went even for the last time at 7-7. Robert Lopez replied with an action goal, then the hosts missed a crucial man-up and Lopez hit another one for 7-9 with 4:13 remaining. Marko Mrsic converted a penalty and Montenegro had two possessions to go even while killing a man-down but couldn't create more danger and Hugo Castro's action goal put an end to the contest at 8-10. The home side had 2:10 minutes to create a miracle but after missing an extra in the next attack, it's all gone, so they had to settle for playing the 5<sup>th</sup> place only.