

Olympic and world champions take giant step towards World Championship 2010 semifinal spots

Rome, Italy, October 4, 2010 – USA, Brazil, Serbia and Bulgaria all took a big step towards qualifying for the positions 1-4 semifinals of the FIVB Men's World Championship Italy 2010 by winning their opening third round matches on Monday. Olympic champions USA were in awesome form as they beat France 3-0 (25-16, 25-14, 25-23) while two-time defending world champions Brazil fought off the stern challenge of the Czech Republic in an outstanding five-setter 3-2 (25-20, 22-25, 23-25, 25-21, 15-8) in Rome. Meanwhile in Florence, Serbia beat Argentina 3-1 (25-15, 21-25, 25-22, 25-18) and Bulgaria were too good for Spain winning 3-1 (25-21, 27-25, 26-28, 25-18).

The third round consists of four pools of three teams with the winners of each pool advancing to the semifinals for 1-4, second place proceeding to the 5-8 semifinals and third place playing the 9-12 semifinals. USA leads Pool O ahead of France and Italy. Pool R is led by Brazil followed by the Czech Republic and Germany. In Florence, Serbia leads Pool P ahead of Argentina and Russia while Bulgaria leads Pool Q ahead of Spain and Cuba.

Pool O in Rome

USA beat France 3-0 (25-16, 25-14, 25-23)

Olympic champions USA overpowered France in straight sets to open their third round campaign in style at the Palalottomatica in the Italian capital. In what was an awesome display from the No. 3 ranked team in the world, Clayton Stanley scored 14 points including four blocks and four aces while Sean Rooney and David Lee both scored 11 points and Reid Priddy contributed 10. France, ranked 12th in the world, had no answer to USA's power and precision. Gerald Hardy-Dess brought home nine points for les Tricolours including five blocks, while Stephane Antiga also added nine points. The convincing win was USA's 13th in 20 matches against France and gives the 1986 world champions a very strong chance of finishing at least eighth in the tournament - depending on other results in the group - which would represent their best finish at the FIVB Men's World Championship since 1994 when they finished third. The Americans out-blocked France 17-7 with Lee compiling five blocks and Priddy contributing also four while also dominating the serving with a 5-1 advantage in serving aces. "Today we did not play well and did not manage to demonstrate our full potential," France's Guillaume Samica said. "When you reach this phase of the World Championship, you cannot afford to make mistakes. The United States played an incredible match, and we unfortunately had to succumb especially without two of our most important players like Henno and Rouzier."

Pool R in Rome

Brazil beat the Czech Republic 3-2 (25-20, 22-25, 23-25, 25-21, 15-8)

The evening match of the day in the Eternal city saw Brazil defeat the Czech Republic, for only the seventh time in 18 matches between the two countries, in a thriller. The loss snapped a four-game winning streak for the Czech Republic team who will play against Germany at 17:00 (local time) on Tuesday. The blocking of Brazil was impressive the whole night but it really improved during the last two sets when they rallied back from a one-set deficit. The No. 1 world-ranked team compiled 16 blocks against five. Murilo Endres was the match and the day's top scorer with 25 points including four blocks to lead four Brazilian players in double figures. Peter Platenik topped all the Czech players with 19 points. "I am sad like my players," Czech Republic coach Jan Sbodova said. "It was a very close match and we played at a very high level for the first three sets, then Brazil showed why they are one of the best teams in the world. It was very difficult to overcome the difference of three, four points in the fourth set with the spikes of Murillo and Dante. We still played well but they were better than us."

Pool P in Florence

Serbia beat Argentina 3-1 (25-15, 21-25, 25-22, 25-18)

Serbia, ranked fourth in the world, swept away Argentina, who are ranked five places lower in ninth, in a repeat of their 2010 World League victory, providing a spectacular victory to the fans at the Nelson Mandela Forum. Serbian captain Nikola Grbic and his teammates confirmed their ambitions to reach the semifinals with Ivan Miljkovic the best scorer with 20 points followed by Nikola Kovacevic with 12. Argentina, who had 40 errors in the four-set loss to Serbia's 24, were paced by the tournament's top scorer Facundo Conte, who scored 16 points and Federico Pereyra, who added 13. The win was Serbia's 14th in 18 matches against Argentina. "I am pretty satisfied because we won easily even if I think Argentina is the new revelation of this World Championship, together with the Czech Republic," Grbic said. "We have a lot of experience and this was the element that made the difference. I like Argentina's way of playing because it reminds me of Yugoslavia in Atlanta 1996."

Pool Q in Florence

Bulgaria beat Spain 3-1 (25-21, 27-25, 26-28, 25-18).

Bulgaria beat Spain for the 12th in 14 matches with a smashing victory over Spain who couldn't keep up with Silvano Prandi's men who were in outstanding form. Bulgaria's Todo Aleksiev scored a match-high 18 points with 16 spikes and two blocks, while Matey Kaziyski turned in 17 points with 16 spikes and an ace. Spain was led by Sergio Noda's 13 spikes and four blocks for 17 points, and teammate Iban Perez added 16 points with 14 spikes and two aces. Bulgaria held a 15-10 advantage in blocks, while Spain managed a 5-1 ace margin. "I knew that my players were nervous today. Their approach was tense and our level of playing was difficult to develop," Bulgaria coach Prandi said. "Bulgaria is stronger than us, no doubt but we can learn from stronger teams," Spain coach Julio Velasco said. "Bulgaria improved very much with Silvano, above all in blocking and that made the difference."

Match Schedule

Oct 5

Pool R (Rome): Germany-Czech Republic 17:00

Pool O (Rome): USA-Italy 21:00

Pool P (Florence): Russia-Serbia 17:00

Pool Q (Florence): Cuba-Spain 21:00

Oct 6

Pool R (Rome): Brazil-Germany 17:00.

Pool O (Rome): Italy-France 21:00

Pool P (Florence): Argentina-Russia 17:00.

Pool Q (Florence): Bulgaria-Cuba 21:00.

Highest Scorers By Day

Day 1: 28 points by Antonin Rouzier (FRA) in France's 3-2 win over the Czech Republic in Turin

Day 2: 27 points by Maxim Mikhaylov (RUS) in Russia's 3-1 win over Australia in Modena

Day 3: 28 points by Fernando Hernandez (CUB) in Cuba's 3-2 win over Brazil in Verona

Day 4: 24 points by Gyrgy Grozer (GER) in Germany's 3-0 win over Puerto Rico in Catania

Day 5: 30 points by Iban Perez (ESP) in Spain's 3-2 win over Russia in Catania

Day 6: 23 points by Ahmed Abdelhay (EGY) in Egypt's win against Spain in Catania

Day 7: 25 points by Murilo (BRA) in Brazil's win over the Czech Republic in Rome

Highest Set Score

34-32 (EGY v JPN in Pool A) (CUB v BRA in Pool B) Both matches played on September 27.

Tournament Top Scorers

112 Facundo Conte (ARG)

107 Clayton Stanley (USA)

106 Iban Perez (ESP)

97 Peter Platenik (CZE)

94 Vladimir Nikolov (BUL)

94 Jan Stokr (CZE)

Birthdays

Hubert Henno (FRA) turns 34 on Oct 6

Jochen Schops (GER) turns 27 on Oct 8

David Konecny (CZE) turns 28 on Oct 10

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Coming soon

The FIVB Women's World Championship Japan 2010 (October 29 - November 14, 2010)

The FIVB Club World Championships (December 14-21, 2010) in Doha, Qatar

FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships (June 17-26) Rome, Italy