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Water polo: It is not a good idea to flout Brazil

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The legendary Croatian coach, Ratko Rudic, is the guarantee for exciting water polo matches by the Brazilian team in Budapest this summer. The Brazilian team (capable of achieving surprising results) will be in the same group with their rival from the continent, Canada during the 17th FINA World Championships, therefore in addition to the question of prestige the top 10 is at stake.

It was great luck regarding men's water polo in Brazil that on 2 October 2009 Rio de Janeiro won the opportunity to host the 2016 Summer Olympics. Being a host entails setting higher goals and standards in all disciplines, including those as well which are not necessarily among the strongest ones for the hosting country.

Water polo is one of these disciplines in Brazil, not that water polo doesn't have great history in South America: the Brazilian men's water polo team participated in the Games as early as 1920, then after a longer break they had great results in the Pan American Games in the 50s, 60s and in 2000s again after a short pause. Following many years of preparing and improving Brazil could take part in the Olympics in Rio 32 years after their last participation in 1984.

As for FINA World Championships: 1986, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2011 and 2015 mark the 6 years of their attendance, their best performance was demonstrated at the last one in Kazan where they finished 10th.



The new head coach played a key role in achieving such results lately. The Brazilian Federation could agree with Ratko Rudic - one of the most notable coaches of all times- in 2013 and the goal was to establish a team for the Olympics which is capable of performing well. Rudic, who is by the way an Olympic silver and World Championships bronze medallist- could lead the Yugoslavian, Italian and Croatian team to Olympic victory, being the only person to accomplish such success.

When he was appointed head coach of the South American team people were wondering if he could do a miracle or at least achieve some success with a team of shorter history in the sport and of not so extraordinary talents. Surprisingly enough, sometimes he was able to do so.

The first result making the public „raise eyebrows” was achieved in the 2015 World League Super Final in Bergamo where Brazil defeated Croatia 17-10 (!). Back then we did not know the motivation of both parties, still the result surprised many.

Kazan did not see the repeat of this miracle, but they were close: the Croatian team led by Ivica Tucak defeated them by one goal only (10-9) in the group match. They played a 9-9 draw with China but they were beaten 10-6 by Canada, then in the prelims they were defeated 7-3 by the US, they won 16-5 against South Africa and playing for the 9th place against Canada (again), after 7-7 they were knocked out by 5m penalties.

Rio brought about a huge surprise when the team, after beating Australia and Japan, defeated the world and European champion title holder, expectant of gold, Serbia in the third group match. In the quarterfinals, however, Croatia knocked them out immediately, in the end the team finished 7th after losing against Hungary and Spain.

Beside Rudic who else contributed greatly to their excellent performance of recent years? As a matter of fact, the team acquired the goalkeeper Slobodan Soro having played excellently in the Yugoslavian/Serbian team previously, Josip Vrlic, former center player of the Croatian team as well as Felipe Perrone, who was born in Rio but moved to Spain, he has been playing in the Brazilian team since 2015 and he has won a silver and a bronze medal in the World Championships as a member of the Spanish team. He is a real favourite of the audience, it is no exaggeration to say that he is one of the most talented players- which he has demonstrated in the Croatian Jug Dubrovnik, the team which won the Champions League of 2016 in Budapest.

Apparently he attaches nice memories to Hungary, he has a bunch of fans who are going to visit Hajós Swimming Stadium to see him this summer.

Through his network of contacts Ratko Rudic will take his team to several training camps in Europe, therefore the team will be preparing for the World Champs on the 'Old Continent'.

As a result of the draw in February Brazil is in group A at the 17. FINA WCH, the team of Rudic will fight Canada, Montenegro and Kazakhstan in group matches.

Brazil at FINA World Championships:

10th place (2015)

12th place (1986, 1991)

13th place (2001, 2003)

14th place (2011)