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Olympic Hockey Qualifier Women, Manukau, Auckland

Match 13

Tuesday 23 March 2004

Spain 1 - 0 Japan

Lucia Lopez

PC 34m

Match Summary

Spain has become the sixth team to qualify for the Athens Olympics (and the first in this tournament) after defeating Japan. Spain's win means that they cannot finish any lower than second in Pool B, with the victory achieved through an ability to find a way to win tight matches. Neither team could gain control in the first half with a shortage of goal shots and penalty corners at both ends. Japan had the better of the match in the second half but Spain's habit of finding a winning goal from limited opportunities and then tightening their already compact defensive structure producing an Athens-bound result.

Japan is now faced with a high stakes battle with Korea tomorrow to decide the other automatic qualifying spot in the pool, but should need only a draw to progress to Athens (depending on the USA v ESP match). Matches between the teams in 2003 were split, with the last meeting at the Asian Cup in February resulting in a 4-3 win to Japan. Spain's next match is against USA tomorrow which, depending on the results from other pool matches, might have a significant bearing on the teams that qualify for the playoff matches.

Quotes

"I am surprised that we have qualified so early in the tournament. We still have one game to go. It has been easier than expected. We will have a little party tonight but then we will come out and try to win this tournament. We will play the normal way. We will not be experimenting or treating the next games as practice."

On the game: "I was happy with the first half. The second half was not as good. After we scored early, Japan pressed hard. I thought we didn't pass and control the ball as well as I wanted."

Pablo Usoz, ESP Coach

"We are very disappointed. We thought we could win today. We need to dribble more and pass less in the attacking 25. Too many passes. Our goal shooting was also off today. We are very disappointed with the umpiring at this tournament. Their penalty corner they score from should not have been given. The standard of umpiring has been very low."

On KOR (next match): "We need to win. We will be trying to win. We will give the players time to relax and some free time to be ready for the game."

Zenjiro Yasuda, JPN Coach

Stats

1 from 2	Penalty corners	0 from 4
0 from 0	Penalty strokes	0 from 0
0 from 3	Field goal shots	0 from 4

Penalty cards

Nil Nil

Next match

v USA
Wednesday 23 March – 2pm

v KOR
Wednesday 24 March – 12pm