

The Greatest Ritual of Sports



SUPER SUSIE: Australia's Susie O'Neill is jubilant after clinching gold in the ladies' 200 metres freestyle yesterday. -AFP photo

Exciting escape act

HOCKEY

SYDNEY, Sept 19: Hosts Australia twice recovered from the brink to hold former champions India to a rousing 2-2 draw in the Olympic men's hockey here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Unfancied Poland, however, created the biggest upset of the tournament with a 4-1 win over gold medal contenders Spain.

The Poles, returning to Olympic hockey after 20 years, rode on a two-goal burst early in the first half to stun the Atlanta silver-medallists in Group B.

In the day's other match, Jorge Lombi struck a penalty corner four minutes before the final whistle to help Argentina snatch a 2-2 draw against South Korea.

The results left both India and Australia at the top of Group B with four points each from two matches.

Poland were third, with three points, one more than South Korea, Argentina and Spain who were trailing behind with a solitary point.

The top two teams will qualify for the semifinals after the round-robin league.

Both India and Australia treated the capacity crowd at the 15,000-seater State Hockey

Centre to a fast, thrilling encounter that turned violent at times.

Australia's James Elmer was given a yellow card and a five-minute suspension after a rough tackle on India's Baljit Saini.

Indian star Dhanraj Pillay had to receive on-field treatment when he was struck on the back of the neck in the second-half.

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Robert Grzeszczak deflected a pass from the right in the 15th minute, and when the game resumed again, Piotr Mikula latched on to a long hit from the centre to drive past veteran Spanish goalkeeper Ramon Jufresa.

Rafal Grotowski and Mikula added to the tally on either side of the break, before Xavier Arnaud pulled one back for Spain midway through the second half.

Spain, who denied Poland any penalty corners, put themselves in a hole by failing to convert any of their 11.

"People may have been surprised at the result, but I was not," said Polish manager Piotr Zgagacz.

Indian coach Vasudevan

Bhaskaran, who had earlier aimed to take a point off the Australians, said the draw disappointed him.

"Taking the lead twice and then failing to hang onto it means the defence went wrong somewhere," he said.

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