

Shocking Villa Cortese, but the Italia Cup is theirs

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After more than two hours of excitement, the celebration. The Mc-Carnaghi Villa Cortese Team have now gone down in history, by winning their first Italian trophy, and thereby qualifying for the Champions League. And they did it in the most spectacular of ways, by beating, at the very end, Foppa Pedretti Bergamo, who, at 18-14 in the third set, seemed beaten, but who brought Lucia Bosetti onto the court, and began to show their class, battling to the last point. Tai Aguero, who played a decisive role in the victory, was judged to be the “most valuable player” and the best attacker in the final. “The Cat” (as Tai Aguero is known) had promised she would scratch, and incredibly she did, scoring 34 points off 84 balls (almost half of those scored by the whole team!). It was Tai who saved the match, when Secolo (16%) and Cruz (30%) failed in the attack, and when, on the other side, Del Core (23 extremely hard points, with 6 blocks) rose to the occasion for Foppa. But the statistics are not so important, what counted was that Mc-Carnaghi demonstrated for the umpteenth time that they are one of the great teams in Italian Volleyball, ready to win even more important trophies than the one in Rimini. As the motto on the commemorative T-shirts says: “Veni vidi Villa”.

THE MATCH – It was exciting to see the 105 Stadium almost completely sold out, with more than 4500 spectators. The match started with a tit for tat by the two eagerly awaited protagonists, Tai Aguero and Francesca Piccinini. The level of play was high from the very start. Villa attacked with Durisic, Cruz found it hard to get into her stride, and an error of hers, together with a lucky ace by Piccinini, led to Foppa's first break, at 5-8. On Furst's serve, Villa's pass fell outside the court (6-10), Del Core blocked Secolo, 7-12, and at the second technical break, Bergamo was still 4 points ahead. A mistake by Merlo enabled Mc-Carnaghi to recover to 14-16, then Aguero lobbed, bringing the scores even closer (18-19). At 19-20, a touch by Tai, after the attack by Piccinini, was whistled by the referee and sent Villa into a fury; Abbondanza was quick to call a time-out. When the match restarted, Secolo guessed the block on Ortolani, and the teams were drawing, at 22-22. In the point by point finale, enthusiasm rose as a thrilling comeback was taking shape; the absolute star was Tai Aguero, with three attacks in a row, bringing the score to 25-23. The cheering of the hundreds of Villa fans in Rimini became deafening.

Foppa reacted angrily at the beginning of the second set; Furst made a quick attack, to bring the score to 3-6, Durisic responded with the same move. Bergamo lacked the support of the block and the points of Ortolani (only 9), and Mc-Carnaghi took advantage to draw level, at 9-9; Arrighetti then made a quick attack, to bring the score

up to 14-16. Berg's serve was decisive again; a 3-0 break, with one ace, and it was 17-17. Agüero attacked twice against the block (19-18), and Piccinini responded, blow for blow (21-21). At 22-22, Villa gave a phenomenal performance to take the second set: attack by Agüero, block by Anzanello on Del Core, and Agüero (the star).

But when you're up against Bergamo, the game is never over, and Mc-Carnaghi couldn't just rest on their laurels. The third set began, and it was immediately 5-2, with two attacks by Anzanello; Micelli was forced to call a time-out. Durisic was relentless as she blocked Del Core (7-4), Anzanello could not be restrained in her attack, and Piccinini made a mistake, bringing the score to 13-9. Lucia Bosetti came on and scored the point (15-11), and then made a play against ... Secolo's head (16-13); but then, Anzanello brought her team back to a 4-point lead. At 18-14, Bergamo became serious. Arrighetti, Piccinini and Bosetti began their comeback. Berg quickly decided on her usual solution: ball to Agüero for 19-17, then 20-18. But a great block by Del Core on Durisic crowned her run-up, and the Neapolitan smasher brought her team into the lead (20-21). The time-out called by Abbondanza was not enough; the pass went out off Furst (Cardullo ended with 38% scoring rate). Bergamo performed miracles in blocking and in defence, and the German centre-court player obtained four set points. Agüero stopped the first two, Durisic blocked the third, but Del Core showed her great class and, despite a difficult pass, scored the winning point (23-25), thereby opening up the match.

Mc-Carnaghi felt the blow, and started behind in the fourth set, 0-3. The recovery was immediate (6-6), but again Del Core scored (6-8), and Lo Bianco showed her magic to bring the score to 7-9. On the other side, Tai Agüero was still there, but alone, and at 12-12 came a devastating break for Foppa: 0-7, with an ace by Furst, and three points by Del Core. Pinese substituted Berg, and Nicora, Cruz; Anzanello's team managed to recover some points (16-20), but Bergamo was already out of reach, and Lucia Bosetti concluded with an ace: 17-25.

THE TIE BREAK – The decisive set began with a winning lob by Agüero, but at 4-4, the unthinkable occurred: two consecutive blocks, by Furst and Del Core, against the opposite hitter gave Bergamo their first break. In the subsequent exchange, Tai was again blocked twice, but it was Bergamo that made the mistake in the end (5-6), before Berg stopped Del Core to equal the scores. Sara Anzanello was instrumental in Villa's attempts to break away, first 9-7, and then 11-9. Agüero brought the score to 13-10, but Bosetti and Piccinini immediately made up two points. Abbondanza called a time-out; on restarting, Bergamo defended badly against Agüero, and Cruz played a dip, for 14-12. The first match point was stopped impeccably by Furst; on the second, Agüero had three balls to bring the match to a conclusion: Foppa Pedretti desperately saved two, the third went against the block, and then out, and there was an explosion of joy by the Mc-Carnaghi team:

Mc-Carnaghi Villa Cortese-Foppa Pedretti Bergamo 3-2 (25-23, 25-22, 23-25, 17-25, 15-13)

VILLA: Anzanello 18, Nicora, Berg 2, Lanzini (L), Pinese, Hasalikova, Secolo 7, Cardullo (L), Luciani, Agüero 34, Cruz 9, C. Bosetti, Durisic 9. Coach: Abbondanza.

BERGAMO: Ortolani 9, Fanzini, Serena, Gujska, Carrara (L), Furst 15, Merlo, L. Bosetti 9, Piccinini 20, Arrighetti 9, Lo Bianco 3, Del Core 23, Zambelli, Coach: Micelli.

Referees: Luca Sobrero and Fabrizio Padoan.

Spectators: 4550.

Semi-finals

Scavolini Pesaro-Foppa Pedretti Bergamo 0-3 (21-25, 22-25, 16-25)

Mc-Carnaghi Villa Cortese-Monte Schiavo Banca Marche Jesi 3-0 (25-18, 25-20, 25-21)

Final

Mc-Carnaghi Villa Cortese-Foppa Pedretti Bergamo 3-2 (25-23, 25-22, 23-25, 17-25, 15-13)

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