



• 2014 CEV VOLLEYBALL EUROPEAN LEAGUE •

23RD – 26TH JULY 2014

MEN'S FINALS IN THESSALONIKI (GRE) &
BUDVA (MNE)

16TH – 19TH JULY 2014

WOMEN'S FINALS IN BURSA (TUR) &
RÜSSELSHEIM (GER)

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• HISTORY IN THE MAKING AS MONTENEGRO SEIZES EUROPEAN LEAGUE CROWN •

Greece and Montenegro came back strong after losing their first semi-final matches with pre-favourite Slovenia and the Former Y.R. of Macedonia respectively to ultimately make the last stage of the 2014 CEV Volleyball European League – Men. The competition was joined by 10 teams who played a series of home and away matches with the top two of each preliminary pool then progressing to the semis where Greece and Montenegro had the upper hand with a strong come back in the second match. They both qualified for the final stage of the European League for the first time in their history, thereby making sure the 2014 edition of this competition would crown a first-time winner.

In the first round of the finals played at Evosmos sports hall in Thessaloniki, the hosts of Greece were only two points away from recording a home victory as the score stood at 23 all in the fourth set, but Montenegro completed their fabulous comeback from 1:2 in sets to score the next couple of rallies and display a terrific performance in the tie-break that followed. This way Montenegro travelled back home with the edge stemming from a 3:2 away victory (25-18, 22-25, 19-25, 25-23, 15-6) confidently going into the return match taking place in Budva.



Greece's head coach Sotirios Drikos was definitely not happy with his team's performance in the first set of the home match with Montenegro

The second set followed the same plot but this time it was Greece's turn to lead the way. As they were inspired by the 2,000 fans in attendance, the local heroes scored a series of straight points thereby moving the score from 10:7 up to 16:12. Anytime Montenegro attempted a comeback, it was home star Mitar Tzourits who took his side by the hand to keep control of the game. Still the guests were able to cut their gap to one point at 21:20 but again Greece's team captain finished every rally in the best way and the set ended at 25-22 Greece's way on a service error by Bozidar Cuk.



The players of Montenegro celebrate their 3:2 away victory in the first round of the 2014 European League finals

After a close start, the guests of Montenegro opened the gap moving the score to 13:10 in their favour and never looked back thereby pocketing the first set by the score of 25-18. The players around head coach Slobodan Boskan – a former Olympic and European champion – did not make any mistake in attack and finished the first set with excellent figures, whereas only 44% of the spikes killed by Greece were successful.



Greece's team captain Mitar Tzourits anchored his side to a provisional 2:1 lead

The home side claimed an early lead in the third set (9:6) and at this stage Boskan decided to opt for a different setter-opposite combination, calling Simo Dabovic and Milos Culafic from the bench. They both helped their team fight back to 17:16; an ace by Menelaos Kokkinakis made it 19:16 for Greece and then two unforced errors by Montenegro widened Greece's lead to 21:16. It did not take that long until the home side cashed the third set by 25-19.

Montenegro set the pace of the game right from the start of the fourth set but Greece eventually managed to tie the score at 20 all. Both teams successfully side-out up to 23 all and at this stage Greece was only two points away from a home victory. Montenegro's team captain Vojin Cacic left his mark on the match as he finished the set at 25-23 with a terrific spike and an ace to call for the tie-break.



Vojin Cacic helped Montenegro come back from behind and call for a tie-break

Montenegro continued to play with the same intensity also in the deciding fifth set where the serves by Gojko Cuk literally "killed" Greece's defence line and claimed a 4:0 run for the guests. The home heroes ran out of fuel and similarly to what had happened in the first round of the semi-final with Slovenia could no longer find their way back into the game and a one-sided tie-break ended at 15-6 for Montenegro.



Time to celebrate for Montenegro – with their superstar Milos Culafic in the foreground (#18) – after their terrific come-from-behind victory in Thessaloniki

"I am very satisfied and pleased because tonight we won against a great team," Montenegro's head coach Slobodan Boskan said. "I think Greece played very well in the second, third and also in the fourth set, but there we came back

strong and we kept a good rhythm also in the tie-break. We made one step forward but the story is far from being fully written."

Only three days later it was a historic night for Montenegro as the men's national team won the first gold medal in a major international competition since the country's independence in 2006. The 12 players around former Olympic and European champion Slobodan Boskan seized the title of the 2014 CEV Volleyball European League by backing up their 3:2 away victory in Thessaloniki with a terrific and very solid performance to down Greece 3:1 (22-25, 25-18, 25-18, 25-21) and lift the trophy in what was only their second appearance in the competition thereby also getting the right to join the next edition of the FIVB World League.



Mitar Tzourits set the tone for a possible comeback by Greece in the first set of the return match in Budva

The teams started off very aggressive and determined to seize their chance, as Montenegro wanted to write history whilst Greece needed to score a victory to go for an eventual golden set. The first set was very close up to 15 all where Greece scored three consecutive points to break away first. Montenegro started their chase and eventually leveled it up at 22 all and even had the chance to take the lead but could not capitalize on it. Greece did not waste



Bozidar Cuk spikes through the block by Greece's setter Dmytro Filipov



the opportunity and cashed the first set by scoring three in a row for the final 22-25.

The second set followed a similar pattern but this time around Montenegro could exploit excellent serving by their superstar Milos Culafic who stood beyond the service line for seven straight rallies. This streak was eventually stopped by Greece's team captain Mitar Tzourits at 17:12 but the home heroes could hold on to their advantage making it 22:14. Their lead stood at eight points also a few moments later (23:15) and the final outcome of this set was no longer to be questioned, with the players of Montenegro wrapping it up at 25-18.

Montenegro claimed and could keep a two-three point lead for most of the third set going up 3:1, 7:4 and 8:5 at the first technical time-out and this margin of three points was still there as the second mandatory stop was called (16:13). The home side did not lose composure, widened their lead to 22:17 and brought the set to an end at 25-18 for their provisional 2:1 lead in the match.



Gojko Cuk (#4) and Simo Dabovic stop an attack by Greece's wing spiker Menelaos Kokkinakis

The home side only needed another set to write history but Greece was off to a good start in the fourth leading 4:2 and 6:3; Culafic eventually stopped Greece's positive series making it 9 all and the home side then took the lead for the first time in the set at 11:10. Greece fought back to draw level at 11 but Montenegro responded by scoring four straight points and the advantage of the home side reached its maximum at 19:13. Some 1,000 fans at Mediteranski Sportski Centar were getting ready for the party and even though Greece reduced a bit their gap (20:18), it could not prevent Montenegro from crowning their European League campaign with a 3:1 win (25-21).

Top scorer Milos Culafic (20 points) was presented with the award for the MVP of the finals by CEV Vice President Jan Hronek.



CEV Vice President Jan Hronek awards the MVP of the 2014 European League finals, Montenegro's home star Milos Culafic

"I just ran out of fuel and could no longer play at the level I showed in the early stages of the match," said Greece's team captain Mitar Tzourits. "We are a young team and we did our best. We have to move on. Congratulations to the team of Montenegro who deserved this victory and the title."



Greece's team captain Mitar Tzourits receives the trophy for the runners-up of the 2014 European League presented by CEV Vice President Jan Hronek and Cvetko Pajkovic, President of the Volleyball Federation of Montenegro



"It was a very tough game where we started bad and lost the first set," commented the captain of the home team, Vojin Cacic. "However, we were able to come back after this poor start. Maybe we felt a little bit the pressure and we also expected that they would not play as good as they did. After losing the first set, we improved our game and played almost without mistakes until the end. We stopped Tzourits and we won the European League."



Team Montenegro, winners of the 2014 CEV Volleyball European League – Men

• RESULTS 2014 CEV VOLLEYBALL EUROPEAN LEAGUE - MEN •

SEMI-FINALS

Date	Teams	Sets	Result per set (points)					Total points
			1	2	3	4	5	
10.07.14 (H)	FORMER Y.R. of MACEDONIA vs MONTENEGRO	3:1	25:23	25:22	21:25	25:20	-	96:90
16.07.14 (A)	MONTENEGRO vs FORMER Y.R. of MACEDONIA	3:1	25:21	13:25	25:22	25:23	-	88:91





Golden Set: 15:10 for MONTENEGRO

Date	Teams	Sets	Result per set (points)					Total points
			1	2	3	4	5	
12.07.14 (H)	GREECE vs SLOVENIA	2:3	25:19	26:28	22:25	25:23	11:15	109:110
16.07.14 (A)	SLOVENIA vs GREECE	1:3	21:25	18:25	25:22	22:25	-	86:97

FINAL

Date	Teams	Sets	Result per set (points)					Total points
			1	2	3	4	5	
23.07.14 (H)	GREECE vs MONTENEGRO	2:3	18:25	25:22	25:19	23:25	6:15	97:106
26.07.14 (A)	MONTENEGRO vs GREECE	3:1	22:25	25:18	25:18	25:21	-	97:82

FINAL STANDING

1	MONTENEGRO	MNE	
2	GREECE	GRE	
3	FORMER Y.R. of MACEDONIA	MKD	
	SLOVENIA	SLO	

• TEAMS •

MONTENEGRO (MNE)

No.	Name	Club
1	MINIC, Aleksandar	Budvanska Rivijera BUDVA (MNE)
2	DABOVIC, Simo	PAOK THESSALONIKI (GRE)
3	BABIC, Luka	Buducnost PODGORICA (MNE)
4	CUK, Gojko	CHAUMONT VB 52 (FRA)
5	STRUGAR, Rajko	NIS Vojvodina NOVI SAD (SRB)
6	CACIC, Vojin (C)	Budvanska Rivijera BUDVA (MNE)
8	LAKCEVIC, Nikola (L)	Buducnost PODGORICA (MNE)
10	RADUNOVIC, Balsa	Panaxaiki PATRAS (GRE)
11	CUK, Bozidar	Ethnikos ALEXANDROUPOLIS (GRE)
16	VUKASINOVIC, Marko (L)	Buducnost PODGORICA (MNE)
17	JECMENICA, Ivan	Budvanska Rivijera BUDVA (MNE)
18	CULAFIC, Milos	Budvanska Rivijera BUDVA (MNE)

Head Coach: Slobodan BOSKAN (MNE)

GREECE (GRE)

No.	Name	Club
2	TZOURITS, Mitar (C)	Halkbank ANKARA (TUR)
5	FILIPPOV, Dmytro	Olympiacos PIRAEUS (GRE)
9	KOKKINAKIS, Menelaos	Olympiacos PIRAEUS (GRE)
10	PROTOPSALTIS, Athanasios	Panathinaikos ATHENS (GRE)
11	TZIOUMAKAS, Georgios	Sir Safety PERUGIA (ITA)
12	EFRAIMIDIS, Nikitas (L)	G.S. LAMIAS (GRE)
13	TAKOURIDIS, Ioannis	Olympiacos PIRAEUS (GRE)
14	PELEKODAS, Panagiotis	Olympiacos PIRAEUS (GRE)
15	KOUMENTAKIS, Rafail	Ethnikos ALEXANDROUPOLIS (GRE)
17	DALAKOURAS, Anestis	Ethnikos ALEXANDROUPOLIS (GRE)
18	KANELLOS, Gerasimos	Gas Pamvochaikos VRAHATI (GRE)
22	ANGELOPOULOS, Nikolaos	Anorthosis FAMAGUSTA (CYP)

Head Coach: Sotirios DRIKOS (GRE)

FORMER Y.R. of MACEDONIA (MKD)

No.	Name	Club
1	ANGELOVSKI, Darko (L)	Vardar SKOPJE (MKD)
2	GJORGIEV, Gjorgi	Marek Union-Ivkoni DUPNITSA (BUL)
4	GJORGIEV, Nikola (C)	PARIS Volley (FRA)
5	MILEV, Vlado	SCM CRAIOVA (ROU)
6	DESPOTOVSKI, Filip	Dinamo BUCURESTI (ROU)
8	LJAFTOV, Aleksandar	South Gas Sports AL BASRA (IRQ)
9	SIMOVSKI, Jovica	GFC AJACCIO Volleyball (FRA)
10	KLOPCHESKI, Risto	Vardar SKOPJE (MKD)
13	NIKOLOV, Risto	Studenti TIRANA (ALB)
15	KARANOVIKJ, Vuk	Lentopalloseura Etta OULU (FIN)
17	GJORGJEVSKI, Zoran	Skendija TETOVO (MKD)
18	MIHAILOV, Vase (L)	Tirana TIRANA (ALB)

Head Coach: Zarko RISTOSKI (MKD)

SLOVENIA (SLO)

No.	Name	Club
3	PLANINC, Jan	OK MTB MARIBOR (SLO)
5	SKET, Alen	Casa MODENA (ITA)
6	GASPARINI, Mitja	Calzedonia VERONA (ITA)
8	PLOT, Miha (L)	ACH Volley LJUBLJANA (SLO)
10	MIJATOVIC, Dane	Salonit ANHOVO KANAL (SLO)
11	KONCILJA, Danijel	Salonit ANHOVO KANAL (SLO)
14	POKERSNIK, Jan	ACH Volley LJUBLJANA (SLO)
16	ROPRET, Gregor	Hypo Tirol INNSBRUCK (AUT)
17	URNAUT, Tine (C)	Arkas IZMIR (TUR)
18	CEBULJ, Klemen	CMC RAVENNA (ITA)
19	JEREB, Matija	Salonit ANHOVO KANAL (SLO)
20	PAVLOVIC, Uros	Pomgrad MURSKA SOBOTA (SLO)

Head Coach: Luka SLABE (SLO)

• TEAM PICTURES •



Team Montenegro



Team Greece