

# U.S. Tops Canada For H.K. Plate Title

by Ed Hagerty

**Hong Kong**  
**March 26-27, 1988**

For the second time in three years, the national teams of the U.S. and Canada travelled nearly 7000 miles to battle each other for the Plate Championship of the Cathay Pacific/Hong Kong Bank Invitation Sevens. And, as in 1986, when they prevailed 24-18, the United States' domination of their North American rival continued as they defeated Canada, 20-12, for the 1988 Plate title.

The quality of the Championship match drew recognition from a wide variety of people for the improvement in and high caliber of the North American sevens game. It also marked the emergence of 22-year-old American wing Barry Williams as a true world class sevens performer. Williams' brilliant runs (including two tries in the final) and hard-hitting defense led many to concur that he was the tournament's most exciting performer.

#### Format

Twenty-four teams were entered in the competition, divided into eight, 3-team pools. At the conclusion of Saturday's pool round, the top team from each pool went into the Cup competition, the second-place team to the Plate, and the third-place team to the Bowl.

#### U. S. Prelims

In Saturday's 1st pool match, the Eagles beat Thailand, 24-4, and then went down in the last seconds of play (14-12) to an Irish Wolfhound team composed of Irish and English internationals.

On Sunday the Eagles beat Spain, 12-6, in the Plate quarter-finals and then edged by Tonga, 10-6, in the semifinals.



The U. S. Eagles celebrate in Hong Kong following their victory over Canada in the 1988 Plate Championship. (Photo - Hagerty)

#### Canada Prelims

Canada started their pool play like a house on fire, beating Brunei, 34-0. Against Argentina, however, they adopted a conservative game plan and were relegated to the Pool competition as a result of a 12-9 loss.

On Sunday, Canada looked formidable as they posted impressive victories over Korea (30-10) and Western Samoa (18-6) to reach the Plate final.

#### Plate Final

##### U.S. 20, Canada 12

Based on their cohesive play and margins of victory in preliminary matches, the more experienced Canadian side was the logical choice for a hard fought but comfortable victory. And play during the first three minutes seemed to support this the-

ory as the United States, featuring four rookie Eagles (Mark Williams, Mike Siano, Jim Wilkinson and Kevin Higgins), was backed up deep in their own end under a relentless Canadian attack.

The Eagles defended heroically, however, and at the 3½-minute mark launched a counterattack that resulted in a spectacular try by wing Barry Williams. From a scrum at their own fifteen, the ball went from Tom Smith to Charlie Wilkinson to Barry Williams who set sail for the line. Williams beat Canada's world-class sprinter Pat Palmer for the corner touchdown and Mark Williams' sideline conversion gave the Eagles a 6-0 lead.

Momentum had shifted to the Eagles and in the ninth minute, Barry Williams made another long and spectacular run to Canada's 2-meter line where he was finally knocked into touch. Former college football standout Mike Siano secured possession at the ensuing lineout and dove over for the Eagles' second try. Mark Williams' conversion failed (10-0).

In injury time Barry Williams made yet another break from the Eagle 40, shrugged off a tackle and passed to scrumhalf Tom Smith. Smith created space and fired a football pass back to Barry Williams on the outside. Williams roared down the sideline and hurdled over the desperation tackle of Canada's Mark Wyatt for a corner flag try (14-0) which brought 30,000 spectators to their feet for a standing ovation.

#### Second Half

The Eagles' domination continued, as a minute into the second half Mark Williams got the ball from set play near midfield. He broke a tackle, and made a nice run before touching down between the posts. Mark Williams converted his own try, giving the Eagles an almost insurmountable 20-0 lead with 8 minutes remaining.

As had happened in their previous matches against Tonga and Spain, however, the Eagles seemed content to play conservatively and sit on their lead, allowing Canada back into the game.

Gareth Rees, Canada's outstanding flyhalf, went 50 yards for a try during the third minute and then fullback Mark Wyatt scored on a 55-yard effort three minutes later. Wyatt converted both (20-12).

Canada attacked furiously as time wound down and had several apparent tries called back. The Eagles, particularly Kevin Higgins, defended staunchly and were able to hold off Canada until the final whistle, giving them a 20-12 victory and the 1988 Plate Championship.

#### Tom Smith

Talking about the Eagle win over Canada, captain Tom Smith said: "Barry Williams had to be the man-of-the-match for

his two outstanding tries today and he must also have been considered as one of the best players in the tournament.

"Because of the way he was playing, we changed our strategy in the final to get the ball to Barry whenever possible.

"But basically we were well prepared and had a simple game plan, breaking things down into the set plays: kickoffs, scrums and lineouts.

"We really concentrated the first two minutes of each half — slowed the sets down, held the mark and waited until everything was perfect."

Smith continued: "We were very fortunate; everything worked for us. We had a great bunch of guys who went along 100% with our decisions. Nobody questioned anything and the team got better and better with each game we played.

#### Gord McKinnon

Canadian captain Gord McKinnon gave full credit to the Eagles but questioned the officiating:

"I think that some of those tries should have been given. And it probably would have changed the shape of the game. But at the same time, we missed a lot of silly tackles, and some of our passes were going astray.

"The whole team is very disappointed, but the fact is that the Eagles won and we lost."

U. S.	Canada
J. Wilkinson	1 McKinnon
Higgins	2 Rees
Siano	3 Ennis
Smith	4 Hubich
C. Wilkinson	5 Wyatt
M. Williams	6 Stuart
B. Williams	7 Palmer
Referee:	Bob Fordham (Australia)



Eagle rookie sensation Mike Siano grabs a lineout vs. Canada in the Plate Championship. (Photo - Hagerty)

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**PRELIMINARY GAME SUMMATIONS**

**I**

**United States 24,  
Thailand 4**

Hong Kong rookie Kevin Higgins made two nice runs to account for both of the Eagles first-half tries in their opening match against an outsized Thailand side. Both came on kickoff taps controlled by Mike Siano and both were converted by Mark Williams. Thailand's lone try made the halftime score, 12-4.

Barry Williams took the second-half kickoff at his own 15 and went all the way for the Eagles' third try. Mark Williams scored the final Eagle try on a solo effort from midfield. Mark also added two conversions to bring the final tally to 24-4.

<b>U. S.</b>	<b>Thailand</b>
Poquette	1 Chucheap
Higgins	2 Chiewcharn
Siano	3 Prommase
Smith	4 Tanim
M. Williams	5 Poj
LaPorta	6 Yongslip
B. Williams	7 Thirapong

Referee: Tay

**II**

**United States 12,  
Irish Wolfhounds 14**

Down 10-0 at the half on tries by Irish internationals Paul Dean and Phillip Danaher, the gritty Eagles surged back, courtesy of 60-meter tries by Mike Siano and Barry Williams. Mark Williams' 2 conversions gave the Eagles a 12-10 lead but a last second coast-to-coast try by England wing David Trick gave the Wolfhounds the win (14-12) and passage into the Cup round.

The Wolfhounds were annihilated by the All Blacks (36-0) in the Cup quarterfinals while the U.S. went on to win the Plate.

<b>U. S.</b>	<b>Wolfhounds</b>
J. Wilkinson	1 Matthews
Higgins	2 Irwin
Siano	3 Gibson
Smith	4 Dean
C. Wilkinson	5 Barnes
M. Williams	6 Danaher
B. Williams	7 Trick

Referee: Fordham

**III**

**United States 12,  
Spain 6**

In a tightly contested Plate quarterfinal, Spain jumped out to an early lead on a converted try (6-0). A nice effort by Barry Williams, converted by Tom Smith, levelled the score in the



**Eagle captain Tom Smith moves in to tackle Irish international Philip Danaher of the Wolfhounds. The Wolfhounds won 14-12 on a last second try. (Photo - Hagerty)**

third minute (6-6).

The Eagles went ahead for good when Steve La Porta initiated a 70-meter break, passed to Siano who made a sizeable gain, and then took a return pass for the try. Smith's angled conversion gave the Eagles a 12-6 lead which they nursed through the second half.

<b>U. S.</b>	<b>Spain</b>
Poquette	1 Egido
Higgins	2 C. Diaz
Siano	3 Malo
Smith	4 J. Diaz
C. Wilkinson	5 Puertas
La Porta	6 Rivero
B. Williams	7 Torres

Referee: Fleming

**IV**

**United States 10,  
Tonga 6**

The Eagles fought their way into the Plate final with a 10-6 win over a tough Tongan side. The only score in the first half was a corner try by Barry Williams (4-0).

The Eagles extended their lead to 10-0 one minute into the second spell when Siano drew a defender and sent Jim Wilkinson across from close-in for a try which Tommy Smith converted.

The Eagles again adopted a

conservative style of play and Tonga replied with a converted try in the 6th minute to bring the final score to 10-6.

<b>U. S.</b>	<b>Tonga</b>
J. Wilkinson	1 Tupou
Higgins	2 Atiola
Siano	3 Manisela
Smith	4 Vunipola
C. Wilkinson	5 Fielea
M. Williams	6 Latu
B. Williams	7 Hifo

**POST SCRIPT Selections**

Prior to the tournament, several U. S. "experts" confided that they had little faith in the 1988 Eagles since six of nine squad members were rookies. They felt that our two top Eagle performers, Gary Lambert and Brian Vizard, should have been drafted onto the team despite the fact that both declined invitations to attend the mandatory Eagle 7s camp in Phoenix.

Any sevens team in the world would have welcomed Lambert and Vizard, but granting special dispensations would have destroyed the faith of current or future Eagle candidates in the objectivity of our selection system.

Lawrence Taylor has to report

came to the selectors' attention via his performances at the ITT Championships and Eagle 7s camp.

Providing a legitimate and logical fast track for top flight athletes to the U.S. Sevens scene, is another reason for preserving the integrity of our selection system.

**Don Reardon**

Don Reardon, one of the United States' top-rated referees, was invited by the Hong Kong RFU to officiate at this year's 7s tournament.

Commenting on the event, Reardon said: "I was very impressed with the event's organization and efficiency, everything ran like clockwork. But it's the crowd, the environment which really makes Hong Kong unique."

"Being in Hong Kong representing the U.S. as a referee in front of cheering U.S. supporters was a great thrill."

Reardon was given a regular rotation of games, including the Plate final between Taiwan and the Dubai Exiles. But the game he found most challenging was the All Black/Irish Wolfhounds hookup in the Cup quarterfinal. Reardon found the All Blacks' demeanor to be much different than that of top clubs or rep sides he's refereed in the States. Said Reardon: "With the All Blacks there's a feeling that no prisoners will be taken. It's 100% commitment, 100% business."

"With U. S. players rugby's still a game, a sport. But with the New Zealanders, national pride is at stake and a deeper meaning is carried onto the field. They'll do anything to gain an advantage."

**1988 Hong Kong 7s  
Individual Scoring Summary  
Plate Division**

Name	Team	Tries	Conv.	Pen.	Tot Pts
Mark Wyatt	Canada	1	14	1	35
Barry Williams	U. S.	6	-	-	24
Mark Williams	U. S.	2	8	-	24
Scott Hubich	Canada	5	-	-	20
Park Nae-Jin	Korea	5	-	-	20
John Ah Kuoi	Western Samoa	4	-	-	16
Paula Tupou	Tonga	4	-	-	16
Andrew Heaman	Canada	3	-	-	12
Ian Stuart	Canada	3	-	-	12
Kentaru Tsuchiya	Japan	3	-	-	12
Tupo Faamasino	Western Samoa	1	4	-	12
Asaeli Amone	Tonga	1	3	-	10



**Barry Williams breaks away for a try against Spain in the Eagles' 12-6 victory. Williams, who scored six tries, was the Eagles' Most Valuable Player. (Photo-Hagerty)**

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# Australia: 1988 Hong Kong 7s Champion

by Ed Hagerty

## Hong Kong March 26-27, 1988

Australia's Wallabies, featuring a stunning performance by speedy wing David Campese, won a tightly-contested Cup final (13-12) against the favored All Blacks to take their fifth Hong Kong Sevens title.

Having witnessed the 4 preliminary matches of both teams, it was the opinion of many that the All Blacks' speed, aggressiveness and intimidation tactics would give them a clear edge over the equally fast, slick-handling Aussies. However, Scottish referee Jim Fleming asserted himself early on to stop the rough stuff and a majority of the penalties went against the All Blacks who were seeking their third straight Hong Kong title. As a matter of fact, Australia's winning margin came on a Michael Lynagh penalty kick after All-Black flyhalf Frano Botica was called for obstructing Lynagh.

The game started off with Australia showing some purposeful aggression of their own, dominating territorially for the first three or four minutes. Speedster Acura Niuquila, a Fijian import who was the weekend's leading try scorer (8), distributed the ball beautifully for Australia, and after a Campese break it was Niuquila's pass to scrumhalf Brad Burke which set up the first try. Lynagh's conversion was off the



New Zealand (left) and Australia prepare for a scrum in the Hong Kong 7s Championship. The Wallabies won 13-12. (Photo-Hagerty)

mark (4-0).

Toward the end of the half, New Zealand's John Schuster shot thru a gap to score a try which Botica converted. Solid defense by both sides kept a lid on further scoring and New Zealand went into the break with a 6-4 lead.

### Second Half

The Aussies returned to their controlled passing game when play resumed, biding their time

and looking for an opening. It came four minutes into the ten-minute half, after the All Blacks were called for yet another infraction. A tap penalty was taken at midfield, spun to Campese who made the break and used his superior speed to outdistance the cover defense.

Lynagh converted (10-6) and his penalty kick, following Botica's obstruction, extended Australia's lead to 13-6.

New Zealand rocket Terry Wright brought the All Blacks to within a point with an injury time try which he converted (13-12), but it was too little, too late.

As Australian captain Michael Lynagh accepted the trophy from Hong Kong Bank Taipan, William Purvis, the Royal Police band struck up Waltzing Matilda and 30,000 spectators who had converged on Hong Kong from all corners of the globe joined in. A great ending to a great weekend of rugby.

### Bob Dwyer

Commenting on the game, Australia's new coach Bob Dwyer said: "The lads were full of confidence; we knew all along that we could beat them. The All Blacks were a little shaky early on because it was us they were playing. They hate playing Australia and always have."

### Australia's Prelims

To reach the finals, Australia beat the Dubai Exiles (46-4) and Japan (32-0) in Saturday's pool play.

In Sunday's quarter-final, they gave a 36-0 lesson to newcomer Italy, a team which played surprisingly well, making it to the Cup Round on their first trip to Hong Kong.

Australia's 18-6 semi-final win over perennially strong Fiji, was

sweet revenge as the big, fast island team had eliminated Australia in the 1987 semifinal. Wallaby scoring against Fiji came on tries by Acura Niuquila (2), Julian Gardner, Brad Burke and a Michael Lynagh conversion.

### New Zealand's Prelims

In their pool matches the All Blacks registered wins over a scrappy Taipei side, 28-6, (which eventually went on to win the Bowl Competition), and then knocked off Spain (36-0).

In their quarter and semifinal games the All Blacks made short work of the Irish Wolfhounds (34-0), representing Ireland, and the Penguins (16-0), representing England. The Wolfhounds and Penguins, along with the French Barbarians, are the only sides among the 24 invited to Hong Kong which are not national teams. The Wolfhounds and Penguins were comprised almost entirely of top international players.

### Campese - Best and Fairest

Australia's David Campese received the Hong Kong 7s "Best and Fairest" trophy, an award that went to the Eagles' Tom Smith in 1986. Campese's consistently fine performances this weekend signalled to the rugby world that he must once again be considered among the world's finest wings. Some pundits opined that his return to form is linked to the fact that he no longer shouldered the responsibility of Australia's captaincy.

### Taiwan Takes Bowl Title

Taiwan dashed by the larger Dubai Exiles (26-12) in a second-half burst of tries to win the Bowl Championship of the Hong Kong 7s.

The heavier, slower Dubai team controlled the Taiwanese into the second half, leading 12-10 with less than five minutes remaining. But, then the fitness and speed of the Taiwanese took its toll.

Taiwan, led by the Bowl Division's leading scorer Jou Tian Sing (with 6 tries), scored 16 points (including three tries) in the last four minutes of the game.

### Prelims

On the road to the final, Taiwan beat Thailand, 20-10, and the Netherlands, 15-12, while Dubai beat Sri Lanka, 17-4, and Brunei, 10-0.

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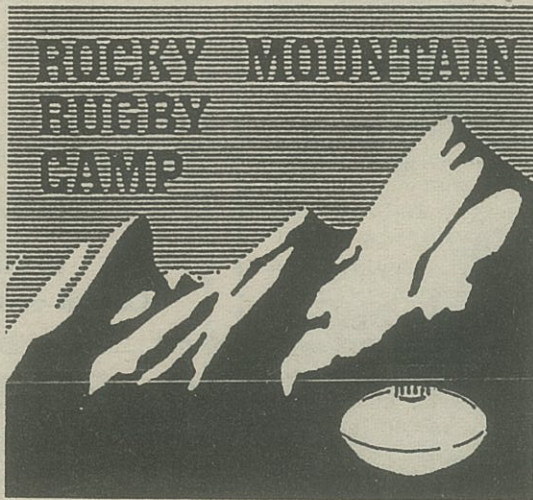
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Taiwan, worthy winners of the Bowl Championship.

(Photo - Hagerty)

# U.S. Goes 2-2 In Sydney Sevens

by Fred Barnes

Sydney, Australia  
April 2-3, 1988

After capturing the Plate Championship in Hong Kong with a 20-12 victory over Canada, the Eagles travelled to Australia for the Sydney 7s.

The third annual Sydney 7s, hosted by the New South Wales Rugby Union and sponsored by Toohey's Beer, was held on Easter weekend at Sydney's famous Concord Oval. This year's competition was a part of Australia's ongoing Bicentennial celebration.

The Eagles began pool play on Saturday with a 10-4 upset over Argentina. They then went on to beat the Netherlands (16-6) and lose to Fiji (26-4).

The Eagles' 2-1 pool record was good enough to earn them a berth in Sunday's championship round but despite several excellent individual efforts, the U.S. proved no match for the powerful All Blacks who romped to a 28-0 quarterfinal victory.

The Eagles' 2-1 pool record represented another year of improvement as the U.S. went 0-3 in the initial 1986 Sydney 7s and 1-2 in Sydney last year, before losing to Western Samoa in the Plate Final.

## UNITED STATES 10, ARGENTINA 4

The Eagles took an early lead against Argentina as Will Brewington passed to Mike Siano who drove into a defender and gave the ball back. Brewington scooted down the right touch line for the try and Mark Williams converted (6-0).

Barry Williams, who had scored 6 tries at Hong Kong, upped the U.S. lead to 10-0 by beating the Argentinian wing to the corner. The try was set up by a loop by flyhalf Charlie Wilkinson around Mark Williams.

Argentina eventually closed the gap to 10-4 on a try by Gabriel Teran, but it was too little, too late for the South Americans.

The U.S. put itself in excellent position to make the championship round by defeating Argentina, the 2nd ranked team in its pool.

"This was a big upset," said U.S. head coach Emil Signes. "Argentina with the addition of Hugo Porta, was a much better team than they sent last year. Even though he's getting older, it's exciting to beat a legendary player like Porta."

## U. S. vs Argentina

1. J. Wilkinson
2. Brewington
3. Siano
4. Smith
5. C. Wilkinson
6. M. Williams
7. B. Williams

## UNITED STATES 16, NETHERLANDS 6

The United States defeated the Netherlands, the bottom-ranked team in the pool, 16-6, in a lackluster effort.

The Williams duo provided all the scoring for the Eagles as Mark tallied two tries and two conversions and Barry added a



The 1988 U.S. Eagles 7s Team: (Front, L-R) Barry Williams, Will Brewington, Kevin Higgins, Tom Smith (c), Mark Williams, Charlie Wilkinson, N.A. (Back) Dr. Peter Parnell, Emil Signes (coach), Dave Poquette, Mike Siano, Jim Wilkinson, Steve La Porta, Jeff Lombard (Mgr.).

try.

The Netherlands, which got a try from Jack Samshuyzen, converted by Marc Visser, refused to fold and remained in the game but the Eagles prevailed, 16-6.

The U.S. victory, coupled with a 10-4 victory by Fiji over Argentina, meant that the U.S. had clinched a place in the tournament's Championship Division.

The U.S.-Fiji match would decide the top spot in the pool.

## U. S. vs. The Netherlands

1. Poquette
2. Brewington
3. J. Wilkinson
4. Smith
5. C. Wilkinson
6. M. Williams
7. B. Williams

## FIJI 26, UNITED STATES 4

Fiji, who lost to the eventual champions in the semifinals of both the Hong Kong and Sydney 7s (Australia in Hong Kong; New Zealand in Sydney), had too much firepower for the Eagles.

Fiji put the boot to every loose ball on the ground, virtually every other ball they got their hands on, and outran the U.S. to the ball. Every single U.S. mistake was converted into a Fiji try.

Fiji was led by Luke Erenavula who scored 2 tries and 3 conversions while Meli Rabonu (2) and Niko Baleiverata also scored tries as the Fijians jumped out to a 26-0 lead.

The Eagles averted a shutout when Mark Williams outran two defenders for a try after scrum-half Tommy Smith created a gap on the final play of the game. Final Score: Fiji 26, U.S. 4.

## U. S. vs. Fiji

1. J. Wilkinson
2. Brewington
3. Siano
4. Smith
5. C. Wilkinson
6. M. Williams
7. B. Williams

## NEW ZEALAND 28, UNITED STATES 0

The U. S. drew the powerful All Blacks in the first round of the championship round and New Zealand powered its way to a 28-0 victory. The score was an accurate reflection of the game as the Eagles were totally dominated.

Alan Crowley (2 tries), Eric Rush (1 try), John Schuster (1 try), Dallas Seymour (1 try), and Frano Botica (1 try, 2 conversions) provided the scoring for New Zealand.

## U.S. vs. New Zealand

1. Poquette
2. J. Wilkinson
3. Siano\*
4. Smith
5. M. Williams
6. LaPorta
7. B. Williams

\*replaced by Brewington

## Leading Scorers

### Mark and Barry Williams

Mark Williams and Barry Williams were the leading scorers for the Eagles at Sydney, just as they were at Hong Kong.

The pair combined for 26 of the 30 U.S. points at Sydney. Mark led the way with 18 points (3 tries and 3 conversions) while Barry had 8 points on 2 tries.

## Emil Signes

Commenting on the tournament, Eagle coach Emil Signes said:

"Fiji and New Zealand are just a notch or two above us. We had a good team effort and Mark and Barry Williams continued to show that they can compete on a world level.

"Tommy Smith did a good job as captain and it was good to see Will Brewington, who was hurt in Hong Kong, score our first try against Argentina to get us going.

"The tourney was a little bit disappointing as the crowds were smaller than 10,000 due to it being held on Easter weekend and with it raining all day Sunday. With Wales and Scotland,

though, the competition level was a little higher than at Hong Kong.

"It was good to see teams that we beat, Argentina and Spain, in the Plate final. We beat Argentina at Sydney, and Spain at Hong Kong, and it was comforting to know we had beaten both of the Plate finalists."

## All Blacks Top Wallabies

### Sydney, Australia

The New Zealand All Blacks dominated an injury-decimated

Scottish National Side, 22-12, to win the rain-swept final of the Australian Bicentennial 7s tournament at Concord Oval. New Zealand led from the start and held a 16-6 margin at half-time.

Scotland, bolstered by Welsh internationals Paul Moriarty and Robert Jones as replacements, came back just after the interval with a Moriarty try, 16-12.

However, All Black Alan Crowley finished the Scots off with a last minute 50-yard dash for a converted try. Final score: New Zealand 22, Scotland 12.

First-time All Black John Shuster was voted the tournament's MVP after scoring two tries in the final. John Kirwan, back to wing after a stint at prop in Hong Kong, and Alan Crowley scored the remaining tries for New Zealand.

## New Zealand Prelims

New Zealand was strong throughout the two-day tournament. After beating Hong Kong, 36-0, Wales, 26-6 and Western Samoa, 22-0, in the pool rounds, they went on to beat the United States, 28-0, in the quarter finals and Fiji, 16-6, in the semis.

## Scotland Prelims

Scotland, which lost Graham Marshall, Gary Armstrong, Keith Robertson and Iwan Tukalo along the way, had a much more difficult road to the final.

In the first round, Scotland was upset by Japan, 18-12, and lost to Australia, 16-4, before beating Spain, 30-0. Scotland then rallied to beat a strong Tongan team, 18-8, in the quarterfinals and wreaked vengeance on Australia, beating them, 8-4, in the semi-finals.

## Spain Wins Plate

In the Plate final, Spain beat Argentina, 20-12.

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