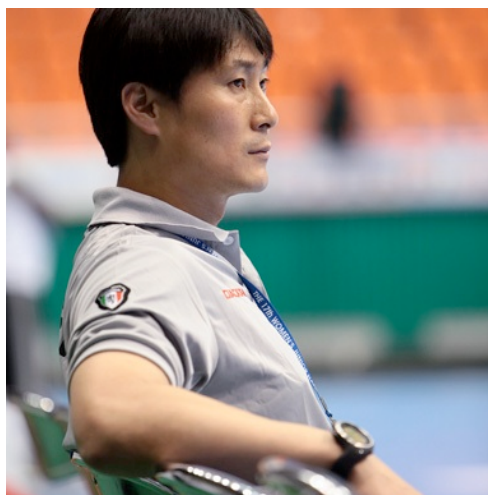


"Mental strength is their big advantage"– interview with the Korean coach Baek Sangsuh

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A whole nation is crossing their fingers for this team: After several Silver and Bronze medals at Women's Junior WCHs now the Korean's dream of winning Gold for the first time is very close. After seven victories they're already qualified for the semi finals, but some tough matches will wait for coach Baek Sangsuh and his team. In this interview Sangsuh talks about the chances for winning this historical title on home soil – after the close victory against Germany that paved the way to the semis.

Your team was really dominating all of their matches before. Why was it such a close match against Germany?

Sangsuh: It was a really tough match, as my players didn't manage to go through the tall German defense. Germany was a real good opponent, but in the end we were the lucky winners and qualified for the semis.

Are you proud on your very successful team?

Sangsuh: Yes, for sure. But you saw that the physical power is decreasing, but we have a great mental strengths and mental fitness.

How long did you prepare this team for the WCH on home soil?

Sangsuh: We started in spring to build up this team then we had two training camps, each for two weeks, before we went to Spain and Hungary to finish our preparations with matches against European teams.

Korea was never before juniors champion. Is the Gold medal your great target?

Sangsuh: We're absolutely willing to win this title, but we only focus from match to match. And we know that we have some real hard matches ahead of us, starting with the last Main Round game against the unbeaten team of Norway.

What's your tactics for this match on Tuesday?

Sangsuh: We don't know yet. We have to decide if we're playing to win or if we look on the other group to see what opponent would be easier for us in the semis. Unfortunately this group is decided later, after our match against Norway.

What's the secret of success of your team?

Sangsu: All players work very hard in the training sessions, we have a good defense including our strong goalkeeper So Ri Park and we can play very fast and efficient in attacks. But I think our greatest advantage is the absolute will to win and the mental strength.

Do you have special mental trainings or preparations?

Sangsu: No, as this mental strength is traditionally in the mentality of our women's players from junior team and women's team.

The Korean team is always totally focused on Olympic Games. Why are so concentrated on this tournament and how many of your current junior players will play in London 2012?

Sangsu: Almost three of our junior players will be in the squad for London. In contrast to a World Championship the Korean people are completely focused on Olympics. The interest on women's handball rises extremely when we start at Olympics. Everybody hopes for winning the Gold medal. And it's easier to win medals at the Olympics, as only 12 teams participate in contrast to a World Championship with 24 teams.

By looking at the semi finals here in Korea: What's your favorite opponent?

Sangsu: We don't have one, as nothing's decided yet in the other group. In case we know whom we meet we start our preparations.