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Australia Ends Eight-Year Wait, Advances to 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Final

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Australia's national women's basketball team, the Opals, have finally broken through to the FIBA (International Basketball Federation) Women's Asia Cup final for the first time since 2017, defeating Korea 86-73 in the semifinals on Saturday at Shenzhen Sports Center in China. After an early surge, a mid-game stumble, and a strong third-quarter rally, Australia secured their place in the championship game, setting up a showdown with either defending champions China or Japan.

The last time the Opals reached this stage was in 2017, when they took home the silver medal behind a dominant Japanese team. This year, Australia is determined to go one step further and capture their first Asia Cup gold medal, a goal underscored by head coach Paul Goriss, who emphasized the team's focus and pride: "This is what we came here to do, to make the Final... We still have one more job to do. We want to go home with the gold medal."

The game's standout performer was Cayla George, who contributed 20 points and 13 rebounds, earning an efficiency rating (EFF) of 28. Sara Blicavs chipped in 14 points and 6 rebounds, while Chloe Bibby added 12 points. Alex Fowler's all-around effort produced a double-double with 11 points and 12 rebounds, complemented by 4 assists and 5 steals, resulting in a 26 EFF. Izzy Borlase also reached double figures with 10 points, as five Australian players finished in double digits.

Korea, having battled back from a 19-5 early deficit, briefly led 35-33 in the second quarter, but the Opals responded with a decisive run led by Bibby and Aokuso, who helped Australia take a 42-38 lead at halftime. Despite Korea tying the game early in the third quarter, Borlase sparked a 13-2 run that extended Australia's lead to 55-44, and the Opals never looked back, eventually stretching the lead to as much as 15 points in the final minutes.

Korean standout Heo Yeeun scored 20 points with 3 rebounds and 5 assists, supported by Park Jihyun's 19 points and Choi Isaem's 10 points. Despite their best efforts, Korea fell short but can take solace in returning to the top four after finishing fifth at the 2023 tournament in Sydney.

The Women's Asia Cup final will take place on Sunday, July 20, at 7:30 p.m. local time, with Australia aiming to claim their first championship title. Meanwhile, Korea will face the losing semifinalist from China or Japan in the bronze medal match earlier that day at 4:30 p.m.

Australia's performance in Shenzhen reflects a resurgence in their women's basketball program and sets the stage for an exciting conclusion to the 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup.