

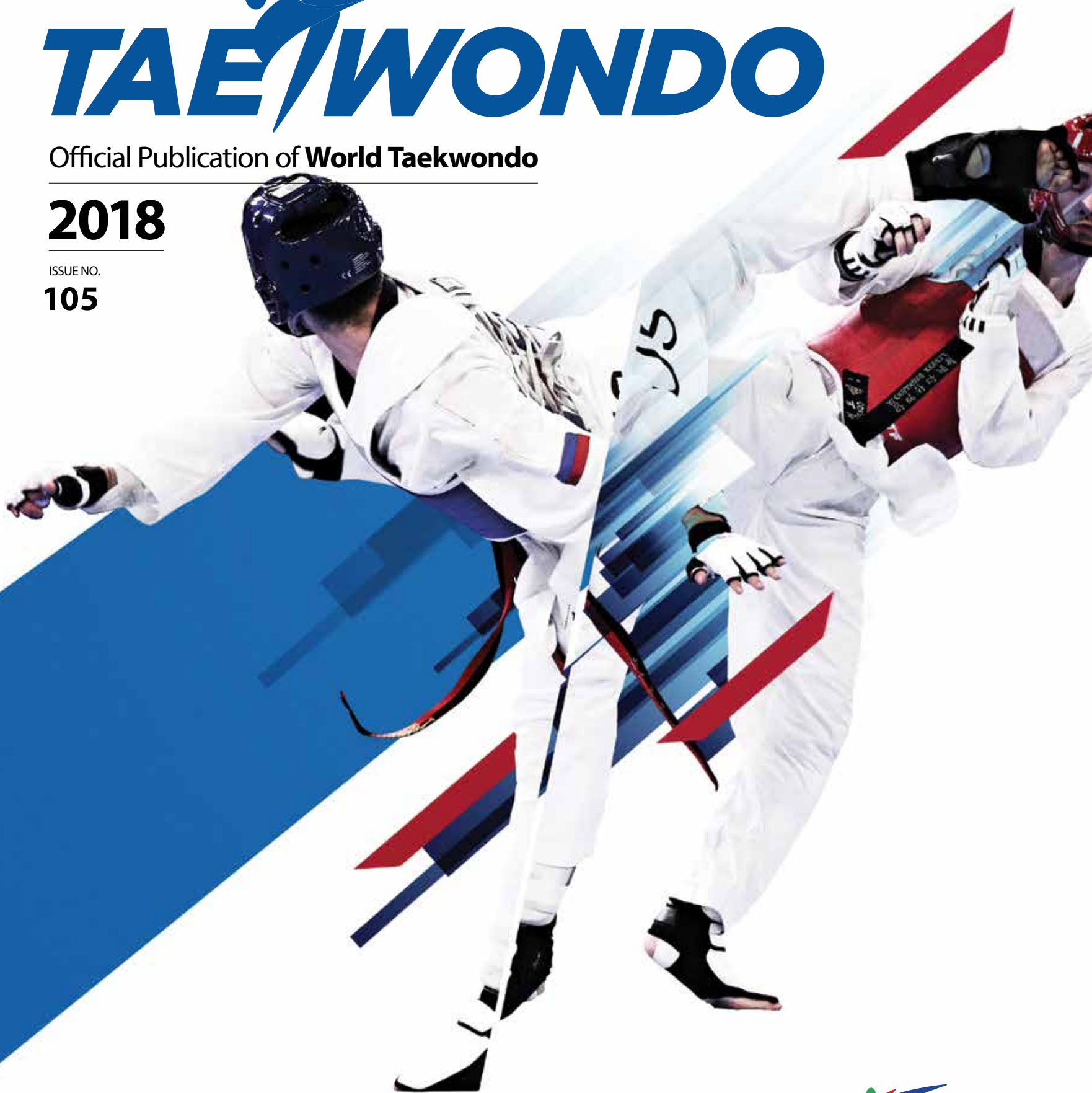
TAEKWONDO

Official Publication of **World Taekwondo**

2018

ISSUE NO.

105



'Peace is More Precious than Triumph'





Global Membership

209+1

World Taekwondo has 209+1
Member National Associations worldwide.
The “+1” stands for refugees

45

PAN AMERICA

Antigua & Barbuda	Guadeloupe
Argentina	Guatemala
Aruba	Guyana
Bahamas	Haiti
Barbados	Honduras
Belize	Jamaica
Bermuda	Martinique
Bolivia	Mexico
Brazil	Curacao
British Virgin Islands	Nicaragua
Canada	Panama
Cayman Islands	Paraguay
Chile	Peru
Colombia	Puerto Rico
Costa Rica	St. Lucia
Dominican Republic	St. Kitts & Nevis
Cuba	Surinam
Dominica	St. Vincent & the Grenadines
Ecuador	Trinidad and Tobago
El Salvador	Uruguay
French Guiana	U.S.A.
Grenada	Virgin Islands
	Venezuela

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AFRICA

Algeria	Madagascar
Angola	Malawi
Benin	Mali
Botswana	Mauritania
Burkina Faso	Mauritius
Burundi	Morocco
Cameroon	Mozambique
Cape Verde	Niger
Central African Republic	Nigeria
Comoros	Rwanda
Cote d'Ivoire	Sao Tome & Principe
Congo	Senegal
Djibouti	Seychelles
D.R. of the Congo	Sierra Leone
Egypt	Somalia
Equatorial Guinea	South Africa
Ethiopia	Sudan
Gabon	South Sudan
Gambia	Swaziland
Ghana	Chad
Guinea	Tanzania
Guinea-Bissau	Togo
Kenya	Tunisia
Lesotho	Uganda
Liberia	Zimbabwe
Libya	Zambia

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EUROPE

Albania	Italy
Andorra	Kosovo
Armenia	Latvia
Austria	Lithuania
Azerbaijan	Luxembourg
Belarus	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Belgium	Malta
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Moldova
Bulgaria	Monaco
Croatia	Montenegro
Cyprus	The Netherlands
Czech Republic	Norway
Denmark	Poland
Estonia	Portugal
Finland	Romania
France	Russia
Georgia	San Marino
Germany	Serbia
Great Britain	Slovakia
Greece	Slovenia
Hungary	Spain
Iceland	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland
Isle of Man	Turkey
Israel	Ukraine

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ASIA

Afghanistan	Malaysia
Bahrain	Mongolia
Bangladesh	Myanmar
Bhutan	Nepal
Brunei	Oman
Cambodia	Pakistan
China	Palestine
Chinese Taipei	Philippines
Hong Kong	Qatar
India	Saudi Arabia
Indonesia	Singapore
Iran	Sri Lanka
Iraq	Syria
Japan	Tajikistan
Jordan	Thailand
Kazakhstan	Timor-Leste
Korea	Turkmenistan
Kuwait	United Arab Emirates
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan
Laos	Vietnam
Lebanon	Yemen
Macao	

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OCEANIA

American Samoa	New Caledonia
Australia	New Zealand
Cook Islands	Palau
Fiji	Papua New Guinea
French Polynesia	Samoa
Guam	Solomon Islands
Kiribati	Tonga
Marshall Islands	Tuvalu
Micronesia	Vanuatu
Nauru	

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President's Message



“

**2018 will be our
'Year of Youth.'
I look forward
to meeting
the talent our
pipeline is
producing”**

Dear World Taekwondo Family and Friends:

2017 was another wonderful year for taekwondo – and a busy one! Let's look back on some great moments, then look forward to 2018.

2017 started with rule changes. These got their first road test at the World Championships in Muju, Korea, in June, and were well received. In Muju, we also re-branded, from “World Taekwondo Federation” to “World Taekwondo.” The new brand makes a powerful statement, raising our prestige to the maximum.

Muju was our biggest world championships ever. Special visitors included Korean President Jae-in Moon, IOC President Thomas Bach, and the International Taekwondo Federation.

The World Para Taekwondo Championships in London, Great Britain, showed that our para athletes have all the skill, athleticism and determination we expect from taekwondo's elite.

Our Grand Prix Series continues to raise standards. It was gratifying in 2017 to take the series to Rabat and Abidjan, given the rising power of African taekwondo.

We also pioneered the Grand Slam Champions Series, in Wuxi, China. This made-for-TV, super-elite, invitational series offers Hollywood-style production values and the richest prize money in our sport's history. This is taekwondo's new benchmark for production values.

Our first-ever World Beach Championships took place in, Rhodes, Greece. This takes taekwondo out of the venue into the sunshine, while offering our poomsae athletes a new competition format and a cool, individualized new look.

Our humanitarian efforts continue. Following our taekwondo academy for Syrian refugees in Jordan, we added a second academy for Congolese refugees in Rwanda in 2017. I was also appointed to the Olympic Refuge Foundation, where I will join the IOC President and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Looking ahead, in 2018, we add a fifth-edition to our four-edition Grand Prix Series, in Rome, Italy. This, and the Grand Slam, demonstrates WT's commitment to increasing opportunities for our athletes in terms of elite competition, media exposure and prize money.

2018 will be our “Year of Youth.” Our Junior Championships take place in Hammamet, Tunisia, in April, then we have the 2018 Youth Olympic Games, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October. I look forward to meeting the talent our pipeline is producing.

Special thanks to our executives, our referees, our coaches and our wonderful athletes. You make us proud!

Yours in taekwondo –

Chungwon Choue

Chungwon Choue

President, World Taekwondo

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PART.1 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Kiziba Refugee Camp

Taekwondo Debuts at Kiziba Camp, Rwanda

Following our program in Jordan, the THF's latest initiative to 'empower the powerless' is now underway in Rwanda



Continuing its sustained efforts to bring the benefits of taekwondo to refugees and displaced persons, the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF) started a new pilot project in Rwanda, with a first visit to Kiziba Refugee Camp, a camp established in 1996 and located about 15 kilometers outside Kibuye town in Karongi district, in the western province of Rwanda.

The THF's local operating partner, the Rwanda Taekwondo Federation (RTF), visited Kiziba camp and organized a demonstration event and workshop attended by hundreds of camp residents.

Kiziba is the oldest refugee camp in Rwanda, and is home to more than 17,000 refugees, primarily from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Seventy-seven percent of the refugee population living in Kiziba are women and children, and the camp hosts the largest population of protracted refugees in Rwanda.

Under the guidance of UNHCR, the Kiziba Taekwondo Academy project aims at rendering a great service to the refugees living in the camp by allowing them to take part in playful physical activities and be exposed to the many benefits and philosophy of taekwondo and sports.

RTF Secretary General, Placide Mugabo, explained that "the refugees



in Kiziba camp, especially the youth, were thrilled and showed eagerness to learn the sport.”

Another official camp visit took place at the end of March 2017 to officially launch the Kiziba Taekwondo Academy from April, with local taekwondo coaches teaching daily training sessions in the camp for an initial duration of one year allowing the project to have a sustainable impact and give valuable feedback to the THF and its partners. This visit concurred with the WT Africa Para Taekwondo Open, taking place in Kigali on April 1-2, 2017.

The initiative is part of a wider agenda between THF, World Taekwondo and the RTF to introduce and promote the sport in vulnerable communities, in addition to implementing humanitarian projects in refugee camps in Rwanda. It follows a Memorandum of Understanding between the three organizations signed in November 2016.

Kiziba is the oldest refugee camp in Rwanda, and is home to more than 17,000 refugees, primarily from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo

Taekwondo Cares Program

Taekwondo Cares in Rwanda School



As part of its commitment to help build better societies through sport, World Taekwondo (WT) is supporting taekwondo classes for primary school children in Rwanda in the first “Taekwondo Cares” project in the country.

WT and Korea-based Olympic broadcaster Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) have a Memorandum of Understanding under which SBS builds “Hope Schools” and WT supplies taekwondo instructors and financial support to purchase related equipment.

The first “Hope School” to benefit from this joint program is the Mukiza Primary School in southern Rwanda. There, some 60 boys and girls are being trained in the sport by a WT-recognized Rwandan taekwondo coach.

“Taekwondo upgrades children’s health, fitness, self-discipline and self-confidence, and it is especially applicable in developing nations as it one of the most cost-effective and easy sports to deploy,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “I am delighted that this, our second charitable taekwondo program in Rwanda, is now underway.”

Separately, the WT’s Lausanne-based charity initiative, the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF), which assists refugees and displaced persons worldwide, has been running a program in the Kiziban Refugee Camp in Rwanda.

The camp hosts more than 17,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo who were forced to flee their country due to war and instability. Since April 2017, the THF, in association with the Rwanda Taekwondo Federation, has been operating the Kiziba Taekwondo Academy, which runs three daily classes for 180 children.

WT, THF to Support Taekwondo Programs for Refugees in Djibouti

North African nation next target for THF



WT President Chungwon Choue visited the Markazi Refugee Camp in Obock, Djibouti on May 12 on a reconnaissance to see how taekwondo can assist the 1,500 Yemenese refugees resident there.

He was accompanied by Fardouza Moussa Egueh, President of the Djibouti Taekwondo Federation, Ahmed Ali Mohamed, Vice President of the Regional Council of Obock and Roger Piarulli, Director General of the WT on this visit to the camp.

“We are thankful to the WT for its wonderful activities helping refugees,” said Abdul-Razack Ishak, UNHCR Senior Field Assistant

in Markazi. “The weather is getting hot here and it would be great if we could have indoor facilities where kids can learn and play sports.”

“I thank you all for your warm hospitality and I am committed to supporting young refugees in this camp, in close cooperation with the Djibouti Taekwondo Federation,” Choue said. “We will provide an indoor sport facility at this camp so that children here can take part in taekwondo activities under comfortable conditions.”

Choue noted that taekwondo is popular in Yemen and suggested that Yemenese talent produced in the camp should aim

high and dream Olympic dreams.

The global taekwondo family has been working to empower refugees with taekwondo since 2015. The main vehicle for this activity is the Lausanne-based Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, or THF, which has been offering programs for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Turkey, and for persons displaced by earthquake in Nepal. Choue doubles as president of both WT and the THF.

In order to deliver effective and sustainable taekwondo programs, three parties – the Djibouti National Olympic Committee represented by IOC Member and President



of Djibouti National Olympic Committee Aicha Garad Ali; the Djibouti Taekwondo Federation, represented by President Fardouza Moussa Egueh; and WT-THF represented by Choue – signed an MOU committing them to empower young refugees in Djibouti.

After visiting the camp, Choue watched a demonstration performed by the members of the Djibouti Taekwondo Federation.

Choue said he was truly impressed by the passion of the taekwondo practitioners, and promised to send instructors to Djibouti to further develop taekwondo programs in the nation.

During his trip, Choue also paid a courtesy call on Hassan Mohamed Kamil, Secretary of State for Youth and Sports, to discuss the development plans of taekwondo in Djibouti. Kamil asked for cooperation from WT in ensuring access to women and less-privileged people, and to send qualified instructors to Djibouti. Choue committed to continued and sustainable supportive programs, and also proposed that taekwondo should be adopted in elementary school programs, given the educational value of taekwondo for the young.



Localization Means Sustainability: Meet Coach Asif Sabah of THF Azraq Academy

“My main motivation is simply giving these children something that will give them the chance to see something that will bring them back some of the hope they’ve lost,” said Coach Asif Sabah of his unique group of students. “Sport can make their life better; it can refine their personalities, and give them something to hang on to.”

His students are Syrian refugees, many of who have suffered traumatic experiences, but Sabah offers them a life-enhancing skill: He is the local taekwondo coach at the THF Academy in Azraq Refugee Camp in Jordan.

Born in Zaraq, Jordan, in 1969, Sabah took up the sport at the age of 19 and started teaching it in 2002. He has also become a

qualified taekwondo first-level referee and possesses vast knowledge of techniques and rules.

Before working with the THF, Sabah managed his own taekwondo training center in the village of Azraq, near the camp. It was there that he took in a couple of Syrian refugees who wanted to participate in training sessions. Seeing the impact taekwondo had on these individuals filled him with joy, and is the main reason he joined the THF’s cause.

In order to ensure that its programs are sustainable, the THF focuses on localization - so hired Sabah. He has been coaching at the Azraq Academy since it opened in April 2016.

Still, he recognizes the challenges of both

the students and their environment.

“These kids have been through a lot, and dealing with them isn’t always smooth and easy,” he admitted. However, Sabah finds his work extremely rewarding. “I am really touched by how fast their psychology, and their emotional state can change,” he said.

Over time, Sabah has gained their trust and built strong relationships with his students. “It’s a relationship based on love and respect, it’s much bigger than a coach with his students, I’m very fortunate that they look up to me,” Sabah said. “On the other hand, I am learning a lot from them every day.”

A strong believer in the values of discipline, respect, order and responsibility of action, he conveys these values in every training session.

As a result, Sabah believes strongly that the sport will be of great benefit to the refugees over the long term. “Taekwondo will raise and improve the self-confidence of these children, directing their attention towards something useful and benefitting them in many ways,” he explained.

Sabah hopes to continue working with refugees well into the future, providing them with long-term benefits and opportunities: “I hope that one day I can help my students gain taekwondo professionalism and grant them the opportunity to travel and participate in taekwondo championships all around the world,” he said.

Syrian Refugee Earns Black Belt in Refugee Camp

First dan promotion is a milestone for Azraq Taekwondo Academy

The Taekwondo Humanitarian Federation Azraq Taekwondo Academy, which teaches taekwondo and related educational programs to Syrian refugees in Azraq Refugee Camp, has graduated its first-ever black belt. Wael Fawaz Al-Farraj was born in August 2002 in Syria, and currently resides at Azraq Camp in Jordan. Although he is only 15 years old, Al-Farraj has been practicing taekwondo since the THF Azraq Academy first started classes in the camp in April 2016. At that time he was 13, but had an obvious talent for the sport. A year and a half later, he has become perhaps the THF's most accomplished student.



Al-Farraj said that he has been strongly impacted by taekwondo and has become passionate about the martial art. His coaches note that he is extremely determined and practices every day – not just during the organized training sessions, but also on his own. Due to his natural ability and motivation, the young boy has developed strong bonds with both instructors teaching at the academy, who are both surprised and enthusiastic about his progress.

On Nov. 30, 2017, the Syrian teenager took part in a belt test with a large number of local taekwondo students from Jordan. Of all the many students testing for black belt that day, Al-Farraj finished at the head of the class, making him the first THF student to achieve the double feat: dan

grade and best student at the dan grading. Earning the iconic belt after only a year and a half of practice is no easy task, which is why the THF is so proud. The news was well received at the WT Headquarters in Seoul, Korea.

"I was delighted to hear the news that Azraq's first-ever black belt has been earned - this shows real progress," said WT and THF President Chungwon Choue. "I offer my congratulations to Wael Fawaz Al-Farraj, and thank his coaches for producing such a fine student in such a short time."

Noting that "sustainability" is one of the key watchwords of the THF,



Choue added, "I hope that, as he matures, Wael will pass on the sport to those younger and less experienced than himself, so that, in the fullness of time, the student becomes the teacher."

In fact, that process may already be underway: During his free hours, Al-Farraj has begun to teach taekwondo to other children living in the camp.

Crown Prince of Fujairah Donates USD100,000 for Taekwondo Programs to Empower Refugees

Generous donation to be used for programs in refugee camps



At the opening ceremony of the 5th Fujairah Open Taekwondo Championships on Feb. 23, 2017 the Crown Prince of Fujairah donated USD100,000 to taekwondo charity programs for refugees.

"The growth of refugee numbers globally is one of the greatest crises facing humanity today," H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Al Sharqi told World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue. "I make this donation because taekwondo is an economical, easy-to-deploy tool that delivers self-discipline, self-defense and self-confidence to refugees, so effectively upgrading their lifestyles."

The prince donated the monies to the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, or THF, a charitable initiative established in Switzerland. The foundation's mission is to empower refugee children via the martial art and sport

of taekwondo, as well as through related educational programs that teach good global citizenship and Olympic values.

"I want to offer my deepest thanks to His Highness both for his tireless support of taekwondo in the UAE, and most especially, for this unexpected and extremely generous donation," said Choue. "This money will be transparently used to create long-term, sustainable programs for the benefit of refugee children worldwide."

The THF, together with WT's in-house World Taekwondo Cares Program (WTCP), has been operating taekwondo programs for refugees in camps in Jordan and Turkey, and among persons displaced by earthquakes in Nepal.

This year, the two organizations plan to build a dedicated taekwondo training facility at the Azraq Refugee Camp in Jordan, and at another,

as-yet-to-be-decided refugee camp in Rwanda.

The prince made his donation at the opening of the three-day championship, which attracted 589 athletes from 35 countries.

Choue noted that the championships this year had attracted more competitors and more countries than it had last year, indicating the rising importance of the tournament.

The WT Demonstration Team performed in the opening ceremony and was warmly applauded by the audience.

A booth was set up in Khalifa Hall where attendees could take the "THF Challenge" – under which persons break a board on camera; pledge a donation to the THF; and challenge another party to do the same. The challenge is one way the taekwondo grassroots – be they individuals or clubs – can assist the THF.

World Taekwondo President Attends Inaugural Board Meeting of Olympic Refuge Foundation

Choue honored with position; will leverage THF experience



Photo: IOC/Christophe Moratal

World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue attended the inaugural board meeting of the newly created Olympic Refuge Foundation – an initiative of the IOC to support creating accessible and sustainable sports facilities within disadvantaged communities and initiate sport-related programs directed at children, young people and vulnerable populations around the world. The meeting took place at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne on December 8, 2017 and was chaired by IOC President Thomas Bach, chair of the foundation board, with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, serving as vice-chair. Choue joined fellow board members, Zaiqing Yu, IOC vice-president, H.E. Sheikh Joaan Bin Hamad Al-Thani, president of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and Yiech Pur Biel, athlete member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016, at the meeting. During the meeting, the board determined the objectives of the foundation and scope

of the activities during the meeting. The importance and location of the first pilot project was also discussed. The foundation will also support the creation or rehabilitation of accessible sports facilities in disadvantaged communities and risk-free play spaces without harassment or abuse. IOC Honorary President Jacques Rogge was also appointed as an honorary member of the foundation. Speaking after the meeting, Choue said: “It is a great honor to have been appointed as a member of the Olympic Refuge Foundation and I am delighted to have an opportunity to contribute to this foundation from the perspective of an international federation. I firmly believe that all of us in the Olympic Movement have a social responsibility to use sport to contribute to a better and more harmonious society. “I would therefore like to commend President Bach and the IOC for establishing this fantastic

initiative in close coordination with UNHCR. Social development through sport has always been something very close to my heart and I pledge I will do everything I can to contribute to the success of the foundation.” “I am also very happy that the IOC accepted my proposal on the creation of a Youth Olympic Refugee Team for the Buenos 2018 Youth Olympic Games which will be discussed at the next IOC session in PyeongChang.” Choue will bring first-hand experience to the role having served as the founding President of the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF) since 2016. The THF’s mission and values are very closely aligned with the Olympic Refuge Foundation as it aims to bring the physical and mental benefits of taekwondo to vulnerable peoples. The THF has taekwondo programs in Jordan, Turkey and Rwanda and launched an earthquake relief program in Nepal in 2016.

Taekwondo Helps UN Celebrate International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

Staff at the United Nations Headquarters tried out taekwondo on March 28 as the combat sport was presented to the world body in a wide-ranging demonstration and seminar as part of a celebratory event for the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

The event was jointly organized by the Permanent Mission of Monaco to the United Nations together with the international organization Peace and Sport within the framework of the 4th edition of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, celebrated on April 6. The event was the latest example of cooperation between Peace and Sport and World Taekwondo after the two organizations, and the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF), signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2016.

A children's taekwondo demonstration team, composed of 15 children aged between 10 and 14, performed poomsae and mixed gender tag-team competition followed by freestyle poomsae performances by US National Poomsae Team athletes.

One of the UN staff members said, "It was great fun watching some spectacular taekwondo moves. The young athletes were fantastic and a real inspiration. It just goes to show that anyone of any age can practice taekwondo anywhere!"

After remarks from WT and THF President Chungwon Choue, who was addressing the UN in New York for the second time in two years, having announced the foundation of the THF there in 2015, a three-round demonstration kyorugi match took place. The match was fought between two of the sport's finest players,

Great Britain's double Olympic gold medalist Jade Jones, and World Taekwondo Junior Championships' gold medalist Skylar Park from Canada.

After the event, Jones said, "It was inspiring to listen to athletes' experiences on how sport has changed their life. I hope to help younger generations to nurture their dreams and hopes through taekwondo."

"Today provided a wonderful chance for UN staffers to see, and get a chance to try their hand at, taekwondo," said Choue, who had earlier addressed VIPs during a lunch reception on the THF's mission of empowering refugees worldwide. "It was also a wonderful opportunity for us to inform some very high-profile people about our humanitarian initiatives."

During the event a fellow Olympic sport, table tennis was also demonstrated and taught.

Before the taekwondo activities, a press conference was held with the attendance of WT President Choue, PATU President Ji-ho Choi, WT Secretary General Hoss Rafaty, Jones, and Park. During the conference, Joel Bouzou, president of

Peace and Sport, praised the continued humanitarian activities of WT, pointing out that taekwondo was the first sport to allow refugee athletes to take part in the the Qualification Tournament for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The demonstration team and Choue also had time to pose for a photograph holding white cards to celebrate the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace has been observed by the UN every year since 2014.



Thomas Bach Attends THF Board Meeting in Muju

120 WT Member National Associations pledged support for THF

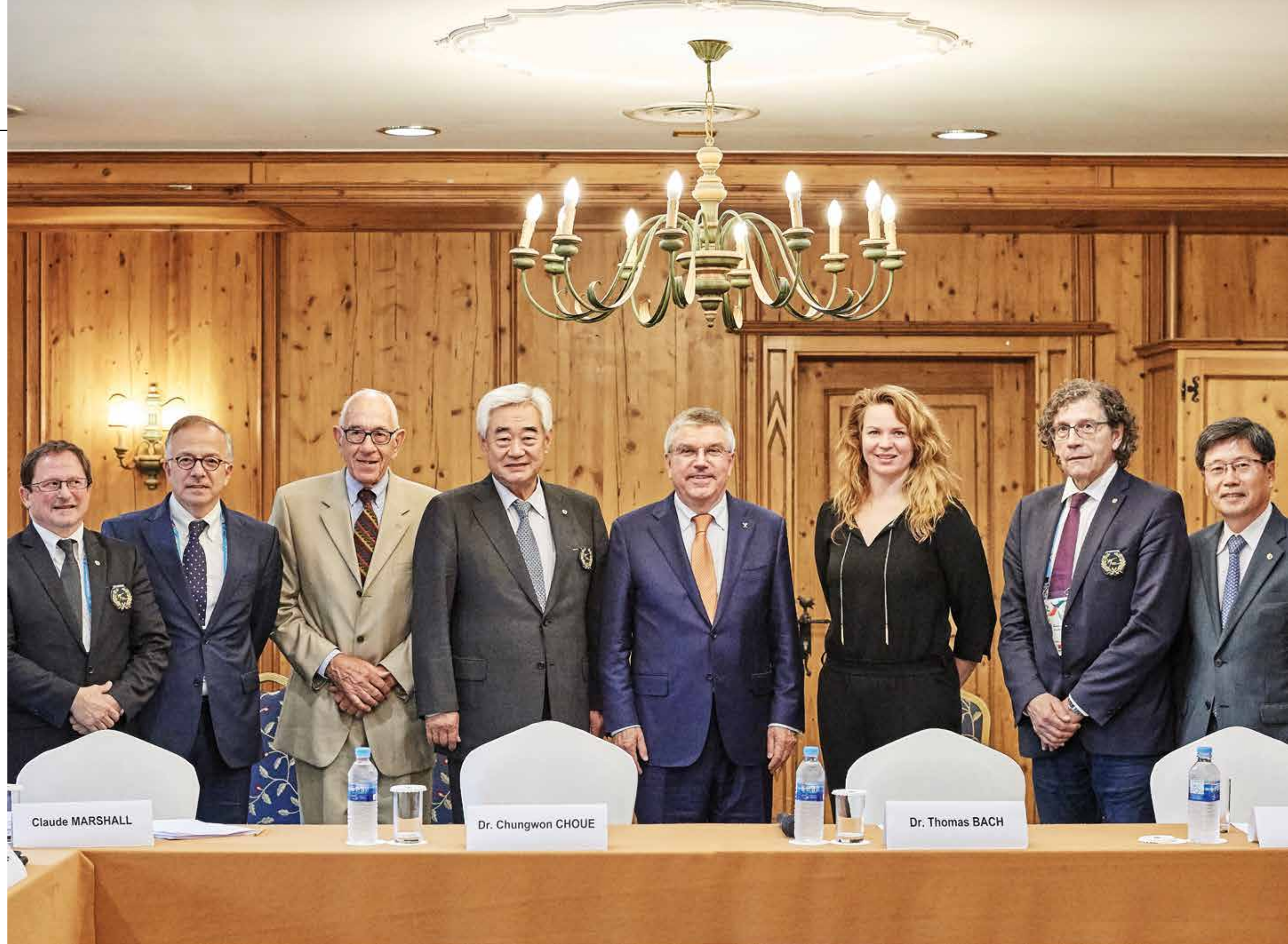
“Success always needs to take responsibility,” declared IOC President Thomas Bach at a meeting of the THF Board of Trustees, which took place on June 30 on the sidelines of the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships 2017 in Muju, Korea.

Honoring the THF Board with his presence, the IOC chief saluted WT President Chungwon Choue and World Taekwondo’s proactive humanitarian stance to help address the world refugee crisis. The THF and WT are doing this by empowering refugees and displaced persons with the life-enhancing benefits and ethical values of sport.

Sport can plan a major role in today’s society, and is a tool that has a preventive effect on war and violence, Bach noted.

The THF Board Meeting took place on the last day of the seven-day World Taekwondo Championships. During the tournament, the foundation kicked off a worldwide online petition campaign, and also operated an information booth in the spectator engagement area just outside the front gate of the competition venue.

More than 120 Member National Associations of World Taekwondo pledged to support the THF’s online petition campaign and to further raise awareness of THF activities within their countries by signing a Humanitarian Charter. After having signed the charter, federation presidents posed for pictures with Choue.





PART.2

CHAMPIONSHIPS

1:45 AUS

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DAEWOO



2017 World Taekwondo Championships:

Biggest, Best Ever

South Korean President Jae-in Moon, IOC President Thomas Bach and the ITF Demonstration Team were among the honored guests in Taekwondowon in Muju, Korea

The 2017 Muju World Taekwondo Championships, the largest ever, ran over seven days in Muju, Korea, and ended with host nation Korea in first place overall, followed by Turkey in second place, Serbia in third place and Russia and Great Britain rounding out the top five. In the female division, Korea came in first place, followed by Turkey, Serbia, USA and Great Britain. In the male division, Korea again came first, followed by Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan and Great Britain. The Female MVP Awardee was Ah-reum Lee of Korea; the Male MVP was Abdoul Issoufou of Niger. Team Korea's Mun-hee Cheon and Serbia's Dragan Jovic were named Best Coaches. Tarik Benrodi of Morocco, Andrey Khegay of Russia, Songchul Kim of Canada, Neydis Tavaréz of Puerto Rico and Julie Dib of Lebanon were named Best Referees. The "Active Participation" award was won by Greece; the "Good Fighting Spirit" award was won by Djibouti. With 183+1 (the "one" denotes a refugee team) nations represented and 1,800 athletes and officials registered, 2017 was the biggest taekwondo world championships ever, welcoming 17 countries which have never formerly taken part. It took place at Taekwondowon in Muju, in the rolling countryside of Korea's Jeolla Province. Muju is the world's largest purpose-built venue for taekwondo, featuring accommodation and dining facilities, a gym and stadia. A total of 945 athletes took part; 570 male athletes and 375 female. More than 42,000 spectators watched the event. According to Nielsen Sports, the championships generated total revenues of USD9,460,307 and the TV media value amounted to USD8,260,820. Overall, the event led to a total expenditure by in-scope visitors of USD10,829,386.

Moon Shines over Muju

Korean president attends 2017 World Championships



South Korean President Jae-in Moon, in a surprise visit to the first day of the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships spoke of his hopes for sportive and political reconciliation between the two Koreas at the opening ceremony. His address preceded the highlight of the ceremony – a highly symbolic back-to-back demonstration by teams from the International Taekwondo Federation, or ITF, and World Taekwondo, or WT.

“We have guests who are closest in distance but who have traveled a long way to be here,” said Moon – the first president ever to visit a world taekwondo championships - referring to the ITF visitors.

Moon was thanked by WT President Chungwon Choue. Following Moon’s theme, Choue – who had earlier that day said he anticipates increased cooperation between the WT and ITF to follow the championships - expressed his hopes that the tournament would be a “festival of peace and harmony.”

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony that formed the back-drop to this sports diplomacy was jaw-dropping. It opened with video on the overhead screens of taekwondo matches, performances and Taekwondowon – the world’s largest taekwondo-dedicated training facility and the championship venue – and a recorded message about the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, a charity initiative which empowers child refugees worldwide via the gift of taekwondo training.

The first performance was a show stopper: It featured floodlit chime drums being played and dancers gyrating over the floor – which doubled as a screen, over which film of taekwondo history ran, to the aural backdrop of pansori, or Korean opera. The second performance was a live dance/drama covering taekwondo’s recent history, from the first world championships in 1973 to the present – again, making full use of the stadium floor as a screen, with booming music.

This was followed by a group taekwondo performance, serenaded by a troupe of traditional percussionists whose thunderous rhythm set the tempo for their punches and kicks. It concluded with what may well be a world record of serial jump spinning kick breaks along the length of the stadium floor. Next was more taekwondo-themed dance and a fan dance set to, inevitably, the Korean folk tune “Arirang.”

Then, President Moon was introduced on the VIP stand – he waved to the crowd to wild applause. After he took his seat, a key moment came: The newly rebranded World Taekwondo flag was marched on, before the flags of all participating nations entered the field of play. The crowd rose as the Korean national anthem was sung by a children’s choir.





After Moon and Choue had spoken, Sye-kyun Chung, Speaker of the National Assembly of Korea, said to the crowd, "I am happy to hear your thunder!" Next, IOC Vice President Zaqing Yu delivered a message from IOC President Thomas Bach, telling the athletes, "All of you are assured to make your mark here in Muju." Bach himself visited the championships on June 30 for the closing ceremony. Tae-hun Kim of Korea – the 2017 championships host nation – and Bianca Walkden of Great Britain – the 2019 championships host nation – recited the athletes' oath. This was followed by the referees' oath. An opening declaration was read by the governor of Muju and the two chairman of the organizing committee. Then the flags exited the stadium and a troupe of taekwondo players performed with banners. Next was the highlight of the evening: A joint performance by the International Taekwondo Federation and WT demonstration teams. After that had concluded, in an unscheduled development, President Moon walked onto the stadium floor and shook the hands of every member of both the ITF and WT teams, before both teams and assembled VIPs took group photos. The photos concluded the opening ceremony.



WT, ITF Shoulder to Shoulder

The moment the audience had been waiting for was a joint performance by the International Taekwondo Federation and World Taekwondo Demonstration Teams.

The WT squad would be the first to ignite the arena.

In black, white and colored doboks, they performed group poomsae that ran like a martial kaleidoscope, then a flying series of non-stop kick breaks. Funkier stuff followed: taekwondo dance, set to thumping electronic rock. Next: Traditional group poomsae and sky-high breaks, followed by power breaks. A performance followed using – unusually for taekwondo, a primarily unarmed martial art – oars and sticks.

After this, the team surged over the floor in a parade of freestyle leaps, kicks and gymnastics to K-rock. The show ended with





high breaks that unfurled the new World Taekwondo banner.

After the stage was cleared of smashed boards, the highly anticipated ITF Demonstration Team, composed of North Koreans, entered.

The team marched on wearing plain, traditional doboks, and were introduced by a sturdy matron at the mic. First, they performed traditional group poomsae marked by powerful basics.

This was followed by self-defence and power kick breaks using unusual angles - jumping ax kicks and jump twist kicks. Next was female-against male self-defense including head locks with the legs followed by full body slams.

A drama - three attackers assaulted a young man and his lady friend - followed. All attackers were swiftly dispatched. Next came power breaks by the team's big-





gest member against some very thick boards. The breaker was given the biggest applause of the evening for his repeated efforts to break one particular chunk that stubbornly refused to shatter.

Next were a series of well-timed two-versus-one, three-versus-one and four-versus-one fights, which incorporated the hero being beamed with wooden poles.

There were more breaks and somersault breaks, then the unbreakable board was bought out once more. Yet again, it failed to succumb, even to a barrage of jumping spinning back kicks.

The ITF show ended with break falls, combat techniques and tile smashes that left powder from the shattered masonry lingering in the air.



Presidents Plant Peace



In a deeply symbolic move, President Yong Son Ri of the International Taekwondo Federation and President Chungwon Choue of World Taekwondo planted a tree together outside Taekwondowon in Muju.

"There is a saying, 'From small acorns, mighty oaks grow,'" said Choue. "I hope and believe that the small steps we are taking toward taekwondo unity here in Muju will lead to great things for the global taekwondo family in the future."



W-46kg category:

In the first semi-final, hometown favorite Jae-young Sim took on Colombia's Andrea Ramirez Vargas. The first round went 2-1 to Sim, after a duel of mid-level round kicks from both fighters. In the second, Sim raised her game, varying her attack and scoring to the head while the Colombian girl tried, but failed, to land her spinning back kick. The round ended 11-2 to Sim. In the third, Sim had the full measure of her opponent and won the match with a convincing 16-9 victory over Ramirez Vargas, to the delight of the local crowd.

In the second semi-final, Napaporn Charanawat of Thailand went up against Vietnam's Thi Kim Tuyen Truong. From the opening bell, both fighters were virtually mirroring each other, mixing round kicks and ax kicks, then working up-close, fighting to make kicking range. Despite the work rate, Round 1 ended scoreless. The second ended with a 2-1 lead for the Vietnamese fighter – all the points coming from penalties. Truong finally found her range in the third, extending her lead to 9-1 after the Thai fell and after she landed a pair of head kicks. The Thai got back into the fight with an ax kick, taking the score to 6-9 then 7-9. As the clock counted down, the match got torrid, both players tumbling to the ground in the clinch. In the last four seconds the score rose to 8-9, but Truong clung on to her lead for the win.

The final pitted Korea's Sim against Vietnam's Truong. First blood went to Sim, who forced Truong out of the area for a one-point lead – which was soon extended with another penalty, 2-0. In a very mobile fight – with Sim showing off some superb lateral footwork on the perimeter – the score rose to 3-1, Truong's point coming from a punch. In the second, the tempo slowed; the referee ordered both players to engage. The pace rose as the round counted down. Sim looked unlucky for her ax kick to the face not to score, but she still extended her lead to 6-2. In the final round, Truong was penalized again, going 8-2 down, then her punch gave her another point. Sim landed an impossible twisting kick to the head – the technique of the evening – then another head kick, even though the Thai forced her out of the ring twice. It ended 18-9 to Sim, whose tactics, footwork and conditioning delivered a well-deserved gold. Truong took silver, leaving Charanawat and Ramirez Vargas with bronzes.



M-87kg category:

In the first semi-final, Vladislav Larin of Russia went in against Kyo-don In of Korea. An excellent fight, with plenty of free play and clean technique, it ended 6-6 and went to golden point – where the Korean lad fell, twice, giving the match to the Russian.

In the second semi-final, Alexander Bachmann of Germany took on Ivan Trajkovic of Slovenia in another very even fight that ended 15-13 to the German, whose close-range kicks and clinch game looked first rate.

The final pitted the icy-cool Larin against the wily Bachmann. Round 1 was a display of well-matched back and forth, single-kick play with no clear superiority, that ended 2-1 to Larin. In the second, a stumble and fall by the Russian bought the score even, 2-2, then, after a fast exchange, Bachmann drew ahead 5-4. There was everything to play for in the third. Bachmann unleashed a serial attack across the mats attack that gave him a 7-4 lead. But Larin is a dangerous finisher and a crescent kick to the German's head protector bought the scores level, 7-7. A punch from Bachmann and a fall took the Russian 7-9 down – then 7-11. After an action-packed final few seconds of hurricane-force action, it ended 11-9 to Bachmann.

Silver went to Larin, while bronzes went to In and Trajkovic.





W-67kg Category:

In the first semi-final, the veteran, four-time European champion and 2015 World Championships silver medalist Nur Tatar of Turkey went in against Jan-di Kim of Korea. There was a high work rate from the start, with both girls probing the high and low lines. Tatar opened the scoring – then in a clash the board rose to 4-1. The referee allowed plenty of open play; the match flowed and the round ended 4-1 to the Turk. In Round 2, action started from the buzzer. Tatar looked particularly dangerous with her cut kick to the trunk, but it was a punch that extended her lead to 5-1. Then, in rapid-fire fashion, Kim returned fire and bought the score up to 5-4. In the third, Kim dominated the center of the ring, trying to force Tatar over the line, but was penalized for holding, and the score climbed to 6-4. Tatar took advantage of Kim’s forward pressure to bury her knuckles in Kim’s trunk protector, going 7-4 up. But Kim stayed game for a last-minute effort: She started connecting and the board rose to 8-8, then 9-9. The Korean crowd roared and screamed as the bout went to golden point. Both came out fighting, but it was Tatar who landed, putting her through to the final.

In the second semi-final, Paige “McFierce” McPherson of USA took on Mengyu Zhang of China. Right away, the American went in hard, but seemed almost to bounce off the taller Chinese player, and nearly visited the mats. Zhang scored first, with a big, arcing round kick that scythed down onto McPherson’s head protector, putting the Chinese player 3-0 up. In the second, the American attacked with a vicious cut kick but almost ate a head counter fired in response. Both players were fighting a linear battle, stabbing front-leg kicks at each other and neither giving ground, but the round ended 3-0. In the third, both girls went at it, kicking with real venom, McPherson landing to the body and going to 2-3. The action slowed until the last 45 seconds and the US crowd started chanting. The American raised her score to four then to six in a short flurry of techniques that was too fast to call. Suddenly, the match had turned around. With seconds left, the Chinese athlete turned up the heat but too late; McPherson went through, 6-5.

The final pitted Tatar against McPherson. The first round was lackluster, with both players probing, but neither committing. It ended 0-0. Round 2 continued in the same vein – albeit with the Turkish crowd chanting “Tur-ki-ye!” furiously. Finally, in the match’s first flurry, the American girl visited the mats, putting the Turk one point up. Then, in a brief but very fast exchange, the American scored to the body, 2-1. The rounded ended on that score. Round 3 saw more serious combat, and McPhersons was in trouble, being 6-2 down. She started unleashing head kicks and chasing the Turk, raising her score to 4-6. With only 10 seconds left, the American launched a barrage of attacks while trying to force the Turkish girl off the mats. Tatar showcased some nifty footwork to stay out of trouble and in the area. It ended with Tatar winning her first world title, 6-4. She was promptly called by Turkish President Recep Erdogan with a message of congratulations – testament to the popularity of taekwondo in the nation.

Silver went to McPherson while Kim and Zhang had to be satisfied with the bronzes.



M-58kg category:

The first semi-final encounter featured Carlos Navarro of Mexico versus Yun-jo Jeong of Korea. After a lively, stylish match featuring plenty of clean, fast technique, Jeong took the win against a very game Navarro, 15-3.

The second semi-final pitted Jesus Tortosa Cabrera of Spain against Mikhail Artamonov of Russia. The Russian won a hard-fought match that featured equal amounts of close-in push action and high-altitude kicking from both players but ended 25-15 to the Russian after his opponent amassed 10 penalties.

The title match between Jeong and Artamonov promised excellence – and delivered. The game started fast, with the Korean going onto the offensive and both fighters exchanging kicks at all angles and engaging in high-energy pushing. In quick succession, the Korean landed two arcing head kicks form close range, igniting roars from the hometown crowd. But the Russian came back, and the first rounded ended 9-7 to Jeong. In the second, Jeong fought aggressively in the push range and although the Russian looked dangerous with head kicks, it was Jeong who continued to batter Artamonov’s head protector, ending the round 17-11 up. The crowd applauded as the fighters came out for the final round of this tremendous match. Jeong’s kicks looked faster than ever, but the Russian still had plenty of juice and landed head kicks of his own. In the last four seconds it was 24-23 – then the bell rang on a proud victory for Jeong.

Artamonov won a very well deserved silver while Navarro and Tortosa Cabrera took home the bronzes.



M-68kg category:

The first semi-final pitted Dae-hoon Lee of Korea against Bulgaria's Vladimir Dalakliev. The local crowd roared as Lee walked on: He is the most popular taekwondo player in the Korean game and has won world championship titles twice, in 2011 and 2013. The fighting started up close, with both lads showing a broad range of techniques. The Bulgarian scored first but not for long; Lee landed a body kick to go 2-1 up. He fell: the board went to 2-2. In a nice clinch move, Lee pushed and landed a body kick to go 4-2 up, then 6-2 up. The crowd applauded a spectacular jump spin kick from the Bulgarian that narrowly missed Lee's head. The first ended 6-2 to Lee. In the second, a lightning-like cut kick from Lee raised his points to 8-2. In an exchange of head shots, both athletes missed but the local crowd gasped at Dalakliev's dangerous dexterity. An ax kick pulled down to a round kick – skillful play from Lee – raised the board to 10-2. Then, as the Bulgarian assaulted with an ax kick, Lee landed a perfectly timed cut kick to the body. Round 2 ended 13-3 to Lee. In the third, Lee fired a series of twist kicks and his score climbed to 16-5. The Bulgarian landed a head kick; it was disallowed for holding, and a coach appeal failed. The board stood at 17-5 to Lee. A sizzling serial attack by the Bulgarian – including head and spin kicks – failed to land. Lee countered coolly. The match ended 23-6 after a highly professional performance by Lee and an entertaining effort from Dalakliev. The second semi-final encounter featured Yu-jen Huang of Chinese Taipei fighting Ahmad "The Desert Wolf" Abughaush of Jordan. The Jordanian, following his spectacular victories at the Rio Olympics, is probably the most anticipated fighter in the game. The fight started with Huang attacking and "The Wolf" back-pedaling, conserving energy and dancing round the perimeter. Round 1 ended 0-0. In the second, Huang scored with an arcing ax kick to the head from the clinch. Abughaush

W-53kg Category:

In the first semi-final, European Champion Zeliha Agris of Turkey went in against Dinorahon Mamadibragimova of Uzbekistan. Agris was behind 5-1 in the first two rounds against a nimble, active and accurate opponent, but pulled some high-scoring techniques out of the bag in the third to win 11-7. In the second semi-final, Inese Tarvida of Latvia took on Tatiana Kudashova of Russia. The two were closely matched until, in the last round, Kudashova sealed victory with a duo of head kicks, winning 11-5. The final pitted Agris against Kudashova. Round 1 proved a cagey, tactical business which Kudashova led, 3-1. After an early clash and fall, the second continued on a similar course, with both players stabbing at

had to come to life. A spinning back kick to Huang's face missed by a whisker, then a body kick bought the Jordanian's score to two versus Huang's three. So, there was everything to play for in the third. Abughaush attacked forward with a punch-cut kick combination, then a jumping ax kick that bought gasps from the crowd. But Huang extended his leg in a side kick and extended his lead. In the clinch Abughansh almost scored with an arc kick to the head – again, it missed by millimeters. As the seconds counted down, Abughaush leapt into an aerial attack, but too late. The match ended 9-4 to Huang. The title match saw Lee do battle with Huang. Lee was greeted in the arena with thunder from the crowd and banners emblazoned with his name. The fight started with probing front-leg kicks, before Lee landed a punch-body kick combination, going three points up. Very nice work. Lee scored yet again from in close, then again, going 7-0 up. Lee forced Huang back and then landed another punch, before Huang was penalized. The round ended 9-0 to Lee. Some messy exchanges marked the start of the second before Lee, in rapid succession, sneaked two kicks to the trunk to go 13-0 up. Finally, Huang scored a kick to the body from the clinch – but Lee shot back with a round kick to the head. After an edge of mats flurry and an inconclusive IVR request from the Chinese Taipei coach, the rounded ended 17-4 to the hometown favorite. In the third, a kick to the trunk PSS put Lee 19-4 ahead, with the Korean keeping the Chinese Taipei lad on the back foot and on the edge of the mats. Huang surprised Lee with another body shot, raising his points to six. Then a really nice, close-in round kick to the head put Lee 23 points up – then 26. Huang shot back with another body shot, but the uneven match ended 26-8. Huang had been outclassed, while Lee's push game and bullseye kick placement suggest he is at his career peak. Huang won silver, while Dalakliev and Abughaush took home bronzes. each other from range, and ended with the Russian clinging to her lead, 3-2. The Turk evened the score, then the Russian landed a head kick to go 6-3 up. Then it was 7-6 to the Turk after a head kick she delivered on the edge of the mats. The Russian went onto the offensive. She was two points down but evened the board to 8-8. With the final seconds counting down, it looked like golden point – then the Turk connected to the head in the very last second, winning an 11-8 victory. A brilliantly timed piece of under-pressure play by Agris. Silver went to Kudashova, while bronzes went to Mamadibragimova and Tarvida.





W-49kg Category:

In the first semi-final, China's Yuntao Wenren went up against defending world champion and Rio bronze medalist Panipak Wongpattanakit of Thailand. Both players looked physically well matched – tall and leggy – and the fight started at a measured pace. First blood went to Wenren with a punch, 1-0, then the Thai landed a head kick, but fell. The round ended 3-2 to Wongpattanakit. Action restarted and another head kick gave the Thai an extended lead, 6-2. The round ended on that score. In the third, Wenren went into the attack. The Thai player hung back, letting her opponent do the work, but as the Chinese charged in under Wongpattanakit's hooking head kick for a punch, she misjudged and the kick connected around her guard. The Thai fighter was now 9-2 up, then 10-2 as the Chinese fell. But it was not quite over. Wenren landed a head kick of her own, taking her score to six. In the last few seconds, the Thai suffered another point deduction when she was backed off the mats, but ended with a comfortable 7-10 win.

In the second semi-final, Vanja Stankovic of Serbia took on Kristina Tomic of Croatia. The fight started at a torrid pace. The Serbian appeared to land an arcing kick but it was disallowed for holding; a coach appeal failed, leaving the Croatian with a one-point penalty lead. Things heated up with a textbook roundhouse by the Serbian to the head; the thwack of it was audible across the stadium. The Croat came back with a punch then another gamjeom, for 3-3. In Round 2, Stankovic showcased some awesome speed and flexibility with her high kick attack, but again, her reckless tactics cost her penalties and Tomic went 4-3 up before the Serbian landed a round kick, to go 5-4 up. In the final seconds another head kick gave her a 8-4 lead. In the third, Tomic came out much harder and faster, but Stankovic put her on the defensive and landed another head

kick, 11-4. Penalties continued to fly, and in the last 30 seconds the score was 12-6. It ended on that note with a deserved victory for Stankovic.

The final was an east-west clash, pitting Wongpattanakit against Stankovic.

The defending champ had the height advantage, but the Serbian looked more aggressive. First blood went to Stankovic in convincing style: She landed one of her textbook round kicks to Wongpattanakit's head for three points, then was forced off the mats by the Thai's counter-charge for a one-point penalty. The first ended 3-1 to Stankovic. In Round 2, the Thai was stabbing forward with her long front leg, but not connecting. However, she was dominating the center of the mats, and forced her opponent out of the area for another point, 2-3. The rounded ended on that score.

In the third, the reigning champion had to score, but as she attacked forward, she went down, leaving the board at 4-2, in Stankovic's favor. As the Serb lunged in for a punch attack, the Thai landed her hook kick to the head but fell; her points were deducted for holding. The Thai coach appealed. Disallowed. The board now read 5-2 to the Serb. The Thai won back two points with a body kick, but the Serb landed yet another perfect roundhouse to the head that dropped Wongpattanakit. The score was 9-4, then 9-5. Thirty seconds remained. The Thai sought to score to the head, but her efforts backfired as she tumbled. The score was 10-5 – and that was it. Serbian Coach Dragan Jovic hoisted his newly minted world champion – Serbia's first ever – onto his shoulders in delight.

Wongpattanakit earned silver, while Tomic and Wenren took the bronzes.



M-63kg category:

The first semi-final encounter featured up-and-comer Bradley Sinden of Great Britain – ranked 62 – against Rio 2016 gold medalist Shuai Zhao of China, ranked 18. The Brit was half a head shorter but fought a physical game against the towering Chinese in a no-holds barred, high-scoring battle that saw penalties flying left and right and had the crowd on its feet. Zhao – sniper-accurate with head kicks – won an exhausting victory, 29-43.

The second semi-final pitted Mahammad Mammadov of Azerbaijan against Mirhashem Hosseini of Iran. Both are tall and leggy and both play similar, single-shot games. The match was won 6-5 by the Iranian.

The final was a showdown between Zhao and Hosseini. Round 1 featured an athletic high kicking duel from both lanky players. Hosseini took a nasty fall but got back up. It ended 2-2. Round 2 saw more evenly matched action, but just before the buzzer, the Chinese flicked up his telescopic leg and landed a hook kick to the head, taking the lead, 5-2. The final round saw more action with the two players kicking high in both open play and from the clinch. But the Chinese proved more accurate, seizing gold, 11-5.

Hosseini won silver while Sinden and Mammadov took home the bronzes.



W+73kg Category:

In the first semi-final, defending World Champion Bianca “Queen Bee” Walkden of Great Britain was matched against Sae-bom An of Korea. In a very physical match, the champion delivered a professional performance for a 9-3 victory. In the second semi-final, Jackie Galloway of USA took on 2016 Olympic gold medalist Shuyin Zheng of China. Galloway used plenty footwork and some rough tactics against the Chinese ‘talkwondo’ fighter, winning 4-3.

The final was a showdown between Walkden and Galloway. The champ scored right off the opening buzzer with a lightning round kick to the body. Both players were using lots of footwork – very active for heavyweights – but it was Walkden who was controlling the center of the ring. The first ended 3-0 to Walkden. In Round 2, Galloway was mobile but Walkden picked her shots and her laser-like accuracy extended her lead to 10-0. In the third, Walkden kept stabbing away with her side kick; Galloway simply could not break through into the contact range. The American tried to fight forward, but Walkden controlled the distance and danced away from Galloway’s offensive. It ended 14-4. A masterly performance by “Queen Bee,” who kept her crown and never looked in any danger – and who, in the medal ceremony, won a special award: A smooch from her beau, Moldova’s Aaron Cook.

Silver was won by Galloway while An and Zhang took home the bronzes.



M-54kg category:

The first semi-final matched Italy’s Vito Dell’Aquila against hometown lad Tae-hun Kim, the defending world champion. The fight started fast, both fighters unleashing barrages of round kicks, Kim firing ambidextrously, Dell’Aquila favoring his front leg. Kim, dominating center ring, forced the shorter Italian off the mats for the first point; the Italian was deducted another point for firing serial flick kicks. Kim’s forceful pressure tactics and better aimed body kicks raised his score to 7-0 by round’s end. The second continued with Kim using footwork and dual-leg kicks, while the Italian relied upon his front leg. The second ended 15-0 to Kim, whose arsenal and tactics the Italian had no apparent answer to. In the third, despite vocal support from the Italian team, Dell’Aquila failed to land and the match ended 16-0 to Kim after the Italian amassed 10 penalty points – indicating possible unfamiliarity with the new rules implemented at the start of 2017.

The second semi-final encounter was sensational: Iran’s Armin Hadipour Seighalani versus Thailand’s Ramnarong Sawekwiharee. Both fighters started fast, both used the full area, both fired head and spinning kicks and both landed, the points rising too fast to call. The Iranian was more accurate; the Thai more aggressive. Round 1 ended 8-4 to Seighalani. In the second, the Iranian’s cobra-like front leg was doing sterling work, lifting the board to 13-7. The Thai returned fire with a spinning back kick and a serial round kick attack. With the board at 15-15, the Iranian forced the Thai off the mats – but Sawekwiharee still managed to score with a back kick. The round ended 18-16 to Sawekwiharee. In the third, the Iranian was doing the chasing, but the Thai was landing, taking



his score to 21-16 while backpedaling around the mats. The Iranian won two penalties points, to go 18-21. In a show of remarkable coolness and professionalism, with just 20 seconds remaining, Seighalani dragged the score up to 20-21, the 22-22 – then went ahead. It ended 25-23: A masterly from-behind performance by the Iranian.

The final, with Kim, ranked 6th, against Seighalani, ranked 4th, promised fireworks: Both lads showcase very different styles, Kim with his dual-legged kicks and smart footwork versus the sniper-like front foot and tactical smarts of the Iranian. The Iranian struck first, two points with a cutting kick to the trunk. Kim got one point back, then was dropped by Seighalani’s side kick. In the last seconds, Kim struck back to the body, ending the round 3-3. In the second, the score rose to 4-4, the Iranian landing the kicks but being forced off the mats by the Korean. Kim sneaked a superb round kick to the Iranian’s face – and suddenly Seighalani was in trouble. The second ended 9-4 to Kim. Round three saw a high work rate, with both kicking and pushing, Kim forcing the smaller Iranian back. A penalty took the score 10-5 to Kim. The Iranian launched a last-minute charge, with serial attacks and spinning kicks, but it was too late: the defending champion kept his crown and took home another gold, 10-6.

Seighalani won a deserved silver, while Sawekwiharee and Dell’Aquila had to be satisfied with bronzes.

The awards were presented by IOC Vice President Zaiqing Yu and ASOIF President Francisco Ricci Bitti.





W-73kg Category:

The first semi-final encounter featured world number one and Beijing 2008 Olympic gold medalist Maria “Fist of Fury” Espinoza of Mexico versus Hye-ri Oh of Korea, the 2016 Rio Olympic gold medalist and a big hometown favorite. The match proved a clash of physiques – the tall Oh versus the stocky Espinoza – and styles – long range kicks from Oh, versus a close-in game and active footwork from Espinoza. Oh came from behind in the third round to win it, 15-6.

The second semi-final pitted Reshmie Oogink of the Netherlands against London 2012 Olympic gold medalist Milica Mandic of Serbia. After a very evenly matched fight the score was level at 3-3. The golden point was won by the Serbian with a head kick – followed by a short victory dance.

The final was a showdown between the category’s two most recent Olympic gold medalists.

A stumble by Oh gave first blood to Mandic, then a round kick to the head gave her a 4-0 lead. Oh returned fire with a body shot, 2-4, then Mandic was penalized for raising her leg. The first round ended 3-4 to the Serbian. In the second, Oh went to work, raising her score to 8-5, with some accurate body kicks – including one fired while backpedaling on the edge of the mats: real skill. In the clinch, the Serbian was pushed to the deck, indicating surprising strength from the svelte Oh. Mandic got up and forced Oh backward. The round ended 9-7 to Oh.

In the third, after a flurry and a beautiful head kick from Mandic, the Serbian was 13-11 ahead. Her score rose after errors by Oh – then the board surged to 12-18. After an appeal by Oh’s coach, Mandic was docked one point, but was still ahead. Oh went on the attack in the last 15 seconds and forced Mandic out, but the Serb veteran won it 17-13. A great result for Mandic; for her club Galeb in Belgrade; and her coach Dragan Jovic who has produced two world champions in this competition.

Oh won silver while Espinoza and Oogink took home the bronzes.



Memorial Placed at Taekwondowon for Departed Athletes



A memorial to departed athletes was placed, at the request of WT President Chungwon Choue, at the entrance to the venue of the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships, Taekwondowon. The initiative was suggested to Choue by ex-Team GB Olympian Sarah Stevenson and Coach Pete Adamson of Scorpion Taekwondo to memorialize ex-Team GB international Caroline Fisher who passed away in 2017 of breast cancer, leaving behind a 2-year-old daughter. Also memorialized on the photographic shrine were Anya Mirkin of Israel, Seyithan Akbalik of Turkey and Ki-sun Shim of Korea. The aim is to create memories for present and future generations. “Once you have been in the sport, you are always in the sport,” said Choue. “This is a small way for us in the world taekwondo family to remember our departed friends; may they rest in peace.” A number of athletes have been seen paying their respects at the memorial, and bouquets and flowers have been placed alongside it.



M+87kg category:

The first semi-final was an all-African, Olympic silver medal clash: Anthony Obame of Gabon, the London 2012 silver medalist, took on Abdoul Issoufou of Niger, the Rio 2016 silver medalist. A brave show by Obame, but the leg length of Issoufou gave a 9-16 victory to the towering lad from Niger – who ended the match by taking a knee in front of his defeated opponent. A nice touch that impressed the audience.

The second semi pitched Great Britain's Mahama Cho against Roman Kuznetsov of Russia. The Briton played a brilliant game – superb distancing, great footwork and accurate body kicks – to win a convincing 22-4 victory.

The final was a showdown between the big man from Niger and the brilliant tactician from Great Britain. Battle commenced with Cho looking unintimidated by his head-taller opponent – but a stumble and fall cost him a point. A disappointing round finished with center-of-mat face-downs punctuated with short bursts of action: 1-0 to Issoufou.

Cho started the second showcasing some sweet footwork, but then the fight returned to center-ring psychological stare-downs. Cho tried a jumping round kick and fell again, going 2-0 down. Then he lost another point for clinching. The second ended 3-0 to Issoufou.

In the third, Cho appeared to land a head kick but it did not register and he was penalized for holding. Issoufou raised his score to 6-1. Cho landed an arcing kick on Issoufou – quite a feat against such a tall fighter – taking the score to 7-4. It was appealed by Issoufou's coach: Video replay showed that Cho had landed an apparently accidental face punch prior to the kick. The score was adjusted to 7-1. In the last seconds, Cho charged forward, forcing Issoufou off the mats three times in succession and raising his points to 4-9. The match ended on that score.

Silvers were won by Cho and bronzes by Obame and Kuznetsov.



W-57kg Category:

In the first semi-final, double Olympic gold medalist Jade "The Welsh Wonder" Jones of Great Britain went in against Ah-reum Lee of Team Korea. After a very foughty last round, with both girls hitting the mats and Lee being run out of the area, the match was won by the Korean, 14-8.

In the second semi-final, Nikita Glasnovic of Sweden took on Kubra Hatice Ilgun of Turkey. It was a one-sided affair: A dominant Ilgun, showcasing class footwork and high-altitude kicks, won 8-0.

The final pitted Lee against Ilgun. The first round went to Lee, 3-0, fighting with precision and economy and proving un-hittable. In the second, the Korean extended her lead with a perfectly placed ax kick to the face; the round ended 6-2 to Lee. The third saw a more physical game with a lot of pushing and the last 10 seconds were all-out action, but the Korean held off the onslaught and won gold 7-5.

Silver went to Ilgun, while bronzes went to Jones and Glasnovic.





W -62kg category:

The first semi-final saw Rio 2016 bronze medalist Ruth Gbagbi of Cote d'Ivoire go into action against So-hee Kim of Korea. With Gbagbi five points up in the first round, Kim went down in a bruising clash on the edge of the mats, her leg twisting. Clutching her knee and unable to continue, Kim fell – leaving the field to the African.

The second semi pitched the unheralded Tatiana Kuzmina of Russia against Rio 2016 bronze medalist Kimia Alizadeh Zenooin, a heroine in her native Iran for winning her country its first-ever female Olympic medal. The Russian fought an ambidextrous fight and led in the first two rounds, but the Iranian showed her quality and came back in the third to win it, 9-6.

The final was a battle of styles and physiques: The powerful, combative Gbagbi and the slender, tactical Alizadeh Zenooin. Round 1 started with the Iranian drawing first blood with a body kick, but Gbagbi looking ultra-intimidating with her forward-fighting, physical game – the impact of her kicks resounded around the stadium. The first ended 12-5 to the African. In the second, the Iranian did well to raise her score marginally in the face of relentless stabbing kicks from Gbagbi, who ended the round comfortably ahead, 15-9. In the third Alizadeh Zenooin went on to the offensive, but to no avail: She visited the mats repeatedly as the African warrior relentlessly blasted through her defenses. It ended 19-9 – a convincing victory and a gold for Gbagbi.

Silver was won by Alizadeh Zenooin; bronzes were taken by Kim and Kuzmina.



M-74kg category:

The first semi-final should have pitted Masoud “The Warrior” Hajizavareh of Iran against Maksim Khramtcov of Russia, but the veteran Iranian had been injured the previous day, and did not appear on the floor, granting Khramtcov a by.

The second semi-final encounter featured Nikita Rafalovich of Uzbekistan, the 2015 silver medalist, fighting Kairat Sarymsakov of Kazakhstan. Round 1 started with both lads feeling each other out from range, using front-leg probing kicks. The first point on the board was a penalty against Sarymsakov, giving the round to Rafalovich, 1-0. In the second, the Uzbek extended his lead with a round kick to the body – then, in a flurry of action, the scores rose, 5-3 to the Kazak. After some edge-of-the-mats action, the second ended with Rafalovich ahead, 6-5. In the third, the points rose to 8-6, then the two engaged in some torrid clinch-work that ended with the board at 7-8. More close-in pushing took the board to 8-8. There were 11 seconds left – showdown! Both kicked at the same time – no score – then the Uzbek went on the attack – but without result. So it went to golden point. It was the Kazak who launched a barrage of attacks, but the Uzbek scored to the body, taking him to the finals.

The championship title match saw the fresh Khramtcov do battle with Rafalovich – who had endured an exhausting match against Sarymsakov. From the opening buzzer, Khramtcov surged forward with high attacks, to vocal support from a noisy Russian crowd. But Rafalovich danced out of trouble and the first ended scoreless. In Round 2, the first point of the match was a penalty against the Russian. Both fighters were sparring from range but not entering danger-close, and the referee demanded action. Finally, the Russian connected with a body shot, 2-1. The round ended on that score.

In the third, Kramtcov continued attacking forward with a machine-gun high round kick; the Uzbek used his feet to stay out of trouble and conserve energy. But his economical tactics paid off as he landed a round kick to the body, going 3-2 up. The Russian returned fire with a body kick of his own, 4-3. With 34 seconds left and a world title on the line, the referee again called on the two to fight. The Russian responded, and landed another shot, going 6-3 up. In the final seconds Rafalovich finally exploded into all-out attack, but Khramtcov held off the charge to capture the title – then dashed across the arena streaming a Russian tricolor: It was a first world championship title for a Russian male.

Rafalovich won silver, while Sarymsakov and Hajizavareh – wearing a neck brace – went home with bronzes.

The medals were presented by IOC Member Tony Estanguet, president of the Paris 2024 Committee and World Taekwondo Council Member Driss El-Hilali.





M-80kg category:

The M-80kg is arguably the most eagerly awaited contest at the championships, featuring some of the most entertaining players in the game – and the bouts did not disappoint.

The first semi saw 13th ranked Damon Sansum of Great Britain takes on 17th ranked Anton Kotkov of Russia. It was an entertaining fight, with the Brit looking the more aggressive, but with the leggy Russian unleashing some spectacular and highly technical kicks. This clean, open and enjoyable bout ended 10-10. In golden point, the Russian backed the Brit out of the area and sealed victory with a body kick.

The second semi was a highly anticipated battle between two of the greatest crowd pleasers in taekwondo, Moldova’s combative Aaron Cook and Azerbaijan’s stylish Milad Beigi Harchegani. The Azeri is a Rio 2016 bronze medalist and the 2016 Grand-Prix winner, while Cook is a former Junior World Champion. A promising fight proved one-sided: The tall Azeri was super accurate, crushing Cook with point after point as the crowd fell silent. It ended 41-5 after brilliant play by the Azeri – but a heart-breaking result for Cook, and one of the saddest bouts this writer has witnessed in taekwondo.

The final was Kotkov versus Beigi Harchegani. Both lads have similar tall, slim physiques but it was the deadly accurate Azeri who stamped his superiority on the match early, connecting with a face kick in a torrid flurry and ending the round 4-1.

In Round 2, the Azeri went to work plying his long, laser-guided legs and ended the second 13-1 up. In the third, Kotkov stayed game but just could not connect. With the Azeri superior in both clinch and open play, it ended 21-3. An utterly dominant performance by Beigi Harchegani – who looks unstoppable if he maintains his present form.

Silver went to Kotkov, while Sansum and Cook took home the bronzes.



TEAM RANKING BY POINTS

Men

Rank	Team Name	-54kg	-58kg	-63kg	-68kg	-74kg	-80kg	-87kg	+87kg	Pts	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1	Republic of Korea	14	15	5	15	5	4	6	3	67	3	0	1
2	Russian Federation	2	10	5	5	15	10	9	6	62	1	3	1
3	Islamic Republic of Iran	9	5	10	5	7	3	3	4	46	0	2	1
4	Azerbaijan	2	2	7	4	2	15	4	4	40	1	0	1
5	Great Britain	3	4	7	5	3	7	2	9	40	0	1	2
6	People’s Republic of China	1	2	15	5	2	5	2	3	35	1	0	0
7	Chinese Taipei	2	3	5	10	5	4	2	1	32	0	1	0
8	Mexico	4	7	3	4	5	2	4	2	31	0	0	1
9	Uzbekistan	1	3	2	3	10	4	2	4	29	0	1	0
10	Kazakhstan	1	3	4	3	7	5	3	3	29	0	0	1

Women

Rank	Team Name	-46kg	-49kg	-53kg	-57kg	-62kg	-67kg	-73kg	+73kg	Pts	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1	Republic of Korea	14	4	4	14	6	6	9	6	63	2	1	3
2	Turkey	3	4	14	9	2	14	3	4	53	2	1	0
3	Serbia	0	14	4	2	2	0	14	2	38	2	0	0
4	United States of America	1	3	3	3	3	9	2	9	33	0	2	0
5	Great Britain	0	2	0	6	3	4	3	14	32	1	0	1
6	Russian Federation	2	2	9	2	6	3	4	4	32	0	1	1
7	People’s Republic of China	4	6	4	1	2	6	2	6	31	0	0	3
8	Cote d’Ivoire	2	1	2	1	14	2	2	2	26	1	0	0
9	Mexico	2	4	2	3	3	2	6	4	26	0	0	1
10	Croatia	0	6	2	3	4	4	4	3	26	0	0	1

Closing Ceremony:

IOC president witnesses a spectacle of taekwondo

Seven days of high-octane sporting action at Taekwondowon in Muju were concluded by a closing ceremony that featured spectacular demonstrations, attended by none-other than IOC President Thomas Bach.

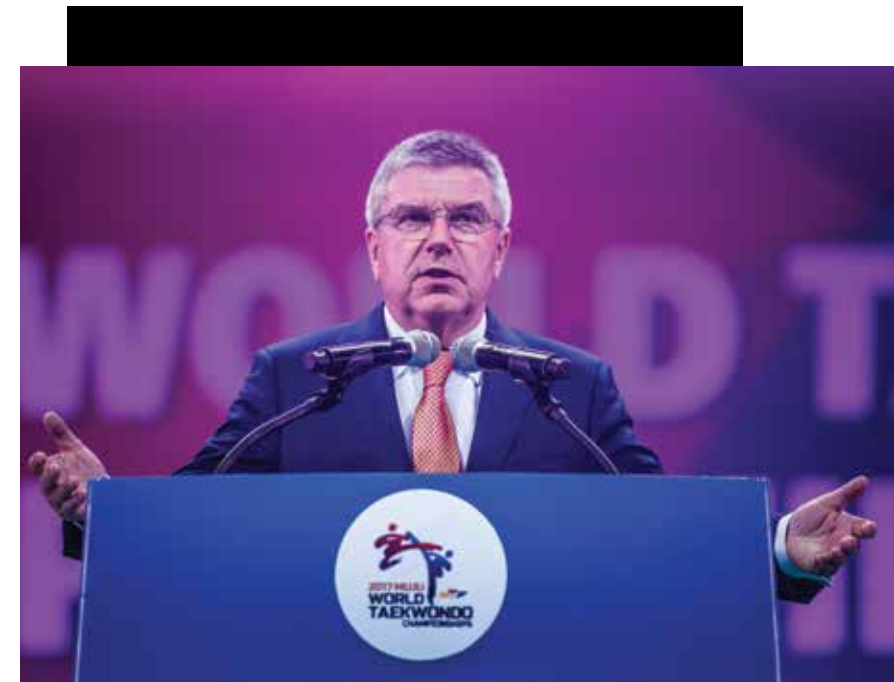


2017 World Taekwondo Championships

The ceremony got underway with a deafening performance of traditional Korean music, sung by a national treasure. Next up was the International Taekwondo Federation Demonstration Team. Their performance included synchronized group poomsae, self-defense moves, breaking and a comedic staged fight.

The World Taekwondo Demonstration Team followed with their usual slick presentation – equal parts athleticism and showmanship. It included stick fighting, banner dances, group poomsae, self-defense, freestyle flips, tricks’n kicks – and of course the group’s trademark high-altitude breaks. The performance featured a kaleidoscope of colored doboks, and was set to music – thunderous, evocative and funky as the mood of the demo shifted.

A photo session followed with the ITF and WT demonstration teams and VIPs, including International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, WT President Chungwon Choue and ITF officials, before a Mixed Gender Team demonstration match between Spain and USA. This high-tempo, action-packed “battle of the nations” format is an event that World Taekwondo would like to see enter the Olympics. Spain emerged victorious, 43-24.



The Leaders Speak

With the opening ceremony having been attended by South Korean President Jae-in Moon, the highest profile guest at the closing ceremony was visiting IOC President Thomas Bach.

Muju featured “exciting competitions, great sportsmanship and unforgettable moments,” Bach said. Addressing the athletes, Bach said: “You amazed us with your performances and the energy that defines your sport... We have seen that taekwondo, more than ever before, is a global sport with athletes from 183 countries, and 26 countries winning medals. You are a powerful example of the universal appeal of taekwondo.” He finished by noting that, “Sport has the power to change the world.”

Korea’s Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Jong-hwan Do thanked the world taekwondo family for realizing “the promotion of peace through sport,” and thanked Bach and the IOC for realizing the 2014 meeting in Nanjing, China, that led to ITF-WT cooperation.

The speeches were followed by a promotional video for Manchester, Great Britain, the host of the next World Taekwondo Championships in 2019. The championship flag was then handed to a representative from Manchester.

Finally, the championships were declared closed by representatives of the organizing committee and a blast of ticker tape descended on the field of play. And that was it for the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju, Korea.



Thomas Bach Comes to Town: IOC President in Muju

WT welcomes very special guest to the 2017 Worlds

MUJU,
Korea



IOC President Thomas Bach visited the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships, where he attended an academic symposium, looked around the facilities at Taekwondowon, presented an IOC President trophy to WT President Chungwon Choue and held a press conference.

At the 6th International Symposium for Taekwondo Studies, Bach presented Choue with the trophy. Imploring all present to “join the fight for Olympic values worldwide” he said he was making the award “in recognition of the contribution your president is making.” The title of the award was fitting for taekwondo, Bach said: “The sky is the limit.”

Bach and Choue then donned dobok and, together with other VIPs and IOC members, smashed boards on which were inscribed various social and sportive ills including corruption, match fixing, illegal gambling and doping.

The two then left their hand prints for Taekwondowon.

Following a short visit to the Taekwondowon Museum, Bach paid his respects to a memorial for athletes who have passed away recently, set up at the entrance to the championship venue.



“That is a very good gesture to honor these young athletes,” Bach, who was visibly moved, said. “It is good to keep their memory alive.”

Bach and Choue then held a press conference.

Choue noted that after Korean President Jae-in Moon visited the championships’ opening ceremony, and as around 10 IOC members were present during the seven-day event, it was a final honor to welcome the IOC president on the final day for the closing ceremony.

Bach congratulated World Taekwondo on the championships, saying that taekwondo and Olympism “share the same values” and that it is critical to defend these values, which are under attack around the world.

He added that it was “great to see how global taekwondo has become in recent years, developing from a national sport to a global sport.”

There were 183+1 national teams at the event. The “+1” refers to the World Taekwondo Refugee Team at the championships.

Bach also commended World Taekwondo for the changes being made to the game to make it more transparent and exciting.

The IOC president praised World Taekwondo for its academic symposium and inclusion of refugees, noting that it was the first international federation to invite refugee teams, and one refugee had participated in the championships.

In regards to its humanitarian programs assisting refugees in camps around the world with training, he said that World Taekwondo was “setting a great example.”

Regarding ITF-WT cooperation, Choue noted that the two federations were discussing a joint demonstration at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics in South Korea in 2018. However, this initiative had to be further discussed with the IOC and the PyeongChang 2017 Organizing Committee, he said.

Earlier in the day, Bach had attended a short ceremony at a pavilion on the grounds of Taekwondowon, which had been named in his honor.

Bach remained in Muju for the full day. He watched matches in the afternoon and the championships’ closing ceremony in the evening.



“It is great to see how global taekwondo has become in recent years, developing from a national sport to a global sport.”



NEW RULES, NEW GAME

2017's new rules took shape in Muju

The 2017 World Taekwondo Championships marked the biggest test yet for the new competition rules introduced at the beginning of 2017, designed to ensure that taekwondo, having achieved its aim of being “fair and transparent” now “dazzles and excites.” So, how does the sport see the new game? WT Communications spoke to coaches, athletes, referees and officials on the sidelines in Muju to find out.



Farzan Ashourzadeh Fallah

Athlete (Iran)

I am so-so. Not so happy, not so unhappy. Some players like these rules, some like the past rules. Players like Aaron Cook that like to attack and fight actively, I think the new rules are very good for them. Until now in Muju, there have been great fights, with many points. It is good for spectators, more points in the fights. It does not matter for me, the new or the past rules, as all players use the same rules. Finally, for all players it will be good. But right now, my mind is busy.

Laurence Rase

Performance Director (Belgium)

The new rules are much better. They give a more powerful game, it is much more dynamic. It is like taekwondo is going back to my time, before the PSS. I only see good things. The only negative right now is the consistency. Here, it is good, but at the G1s and G2s, it is still an issue. But in time it will be better. Now, you cannot go past the body with the hands. I like the push, but I don't like the gamjeom when the hands slide past the opponent's body. When you make a powerful attack, that can happen, so this can punish powerful attacks. And the pressure on the center referee is too high. He has to see everything, and he is just a human. He has to see the face kicks, it is very difficult. It is a pity the judges cannot help with the face kicks. But overall, it is looking good. I like it. It is more powerful and more pleasing.

Tarik Benradi

Referee (Morocco)

Generally, with the new rules, the fights have more motion and more action. This is good. And it is good to have the pushes. We want to fix the grabbing, like fixing falling down. If you grab me, you block the fight. If the arm goes past the body, that is a gamjeom. You can push but you cannot pass the torso. I like also the no lifting of the knee. This is very good. Lifting the knee without kicking and punching is a prohibited act and the rules are very clear. You lift the knee with no kicking or punching is a gamjeom. Now, we are seeing more combinations, more techniques. I like it. Before Muju, we had to take a referee course at least once. We had to attend some international opens for the experience before the World Championships or Grand Prix.

Ali Sagirkaya

WT Auditor (Turkey)

The new rules bring more active fights, more fair results and fewer instant video replay requests. That means they fit our sport. It used to be side kicks and leg blocks and low kicks - it did not look good, but it was allowed. Now that kyunggo is taken away, athletes cannot do this. So the new rules bring more dynamism to our sport: Whoever deserves to win, will win 99 percent of the time. The referees have to be very well educated, there cannot be two different decisions for one action. So they have run really good educational programs for the refs. So far, what I have seen are very close standards. But when you go to the G-ranked tournaments, you can witness some referees did not catch the main juice of the rules. So they still make mistakes. We need to bring everyone's level together.

John Cullen

WT TV Commentator (Great Britain)

I like the new rules, I think taekwondo is reverting back to something I recognize and enjoy. The fact that you can get two points for a kick to the body means that if you are smaller you are not at such a big disadvantage. So, footwork is starting to come back, timing and distancing is coming back - the things that excited me about taekwondo are coming back. But there is a lot of pressure now on the referee to get the gamjeoms right; they have to be consistent on the holding. Everything else is quite objective - you are out of the ring, you lift the leg and so on. So they are scoring freely and there are some entertaining matches. I like it - it is nice not to have anything to complain about! In the past three Olympics, the players served the system. Now, it is time for the system to serve the players.

Mark Kaufmann

Taekwondo Sport Manager, Rio 2016/Senior Sport Manager for Ashgabat 2017 Asia Indoor Martial Arts Games (USA)

I think the new rules are easier to understand. The full point deduction is very clear and I think that is a better opportunity for non-taekwondo zealots to understand the game. For a viewing audience, either TV or in-venue, they need to look and understand. The half point deduction was difficult to understand. The control of the leg check is a great addition to the sport: I am not seeing any of the leg fencing. All in all, I think the new rules are great. I congratulate the WT leadership on being willing to change to make the product more attractive. Not a lot of federations do this kind of thing.

Gary Hall

Performance Director/
WT Technical Committee Member (Great Britain)

I think the new rules are good. They are livening the game, making it more active and dynamic and encouraging fighting, which is what the sport ultimately is all about. They allow you to fight from the clinch and open the fight. They prevent the standing around. At this event, I have seen a lot of games being decided in open play, which is what the sport should be all about - not golden point. But I think there is still a little bit too much stop-start. The referee process should be smoother and less formal - like boxing. In boxing, you break it up and then keep the game going. I think the other issue is as you change the rules so many times that the refs have to adjust and there are still some inconsistencies due to the quantity of change they have to handle.

Carlo Molfetta

Team Manager (Italy)

These changes are really important to take out the subjective opinions. Now, if you push it is a point. If you grab, it is gamjeom. If I don't grab but I hug it is gamjeom. And I like two points for a body kick. And I like so much the extra point for a spinning kick. It is really important to keep these spectacular techniques. And I like also when you go down or go out - you quickly get gamjeom. I like this. Half point is - what? It's nothing! Now, for taekwondo, physical preparation is very important, the new rules make it more physical. Before, when I started in international tournaments, there were some kinds of fights that were only tactical style. Now, you can't stop. Never! If you stop, the referee gives you gamjeom. For this reason you need more physical preparation. Before, you could do one hour of push kicks. Really boring! Now it is more fighting. I like fighting! Taekwondo is for fighting!

Dae-hoon Lee

Athlete (Korea)

Taekwondo is more interesting now but it is not perfect yet, as the rules are still new. I want it to become more stable and better. When the players kick and leg block - I want to get rid of that. I like that in the new rules. But sometimes when players lift the legs, sometimes they give a gamjeom, sometimes not. Sometimes they push and catch the other player. That is not good. The referee needs to see more closely - the action is very fast. In preparation for the new rules, I worked on how to keep the distance and not get the penalties. These were the main things.

Alexander Bachmann

Germany



Love & Gold

German champion's passion is for more than taekwondo

As a "sports soldier" in the German Army – i.e. an elite athlete funded and trained by the state – Alexander Bachmann trains to win. But at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju, Korea, he had another mission: To get even with his fiancée – fellow German international Rabia Gulec.

"She had a bronze from the Puebla 2013 World Championships and she was an Olympian, and she made fun of me," he said. "She had a medal – I did not have a medal!"

That changed on the evening of June 29 at the 2017 Worlds in Muju.

After fighting through the preliminaries,

Bachmann reached the semis, where he took on Ivan Trajkovic of Slovenia. "I trained very hard and I had had a really good draw," Bachmann said. "I expected to make it to the semi-finals, and in the semi-finals I knew I had to fight the Slovenian and I have never lost against him, so I thought, 'Today, there will be more.'" Bachmann won the fight 15-13.

To win a world championships semi-final is quite an achievement for a lad whose father had once told his coach not to waste time on him. Bachmann got into the sport after his older brother started it, and he was taken along to "play with the other kids." As time

went by, he became more and more invested in taekwondo, but was not successful as a competitor. "In my youth, I was not very good, and I lost many tournaments, so my father said to my coach, 'It's not a good idea to spend time on him,' but my coach said, 'Wait and see, he will get better.'"

He did. Bachmann rose through the ranks, and won a prestigious placing in the German Army as an athlete and soldier. His first big win was gold at the Belgian Open in 2011, followed by silver at the 2014 European Championships, and another silver at the Military World Games in 2015. The latter win – in

Mungyeong, Korea – gave him a good feeling for the 2017 Worlds. "I like to fight in Korea," he said. "I don't know if it is a good atmosphere, but everything here is perfect for me."

In Muju the result against Trajkovic indicated that the 22-year-old Stuttgart native was not only an elite-level player, but had clearly mastered the new rules instituted at the start of 2017: His close-range kicks and clinch game looked first rate. "For me, it is easier to kick to the body than to the head, and the new system is two points for body," Bachmann said. "And they made the new rules with the pushing, and I think for me it is very good, I like this

style, it was not hard for me to change."

Then, it was the 2017 world championship final of the men's -87kg. On the central competition mat, Bachmann faced off against the icy-cool Vladislav Larin of Russia.

"Larin is good, I respect him very much, he is a great athlete and a very good person," Bachmann said. "He fights beautifully and he has nice technique so it was a pleasure to fight with him in the finals." Their final would be a clash not just of Germany against Russia, but of range versus range; Larin holds the edge at distance, Bachmann is a master of the up-close-and-personal game. What was the

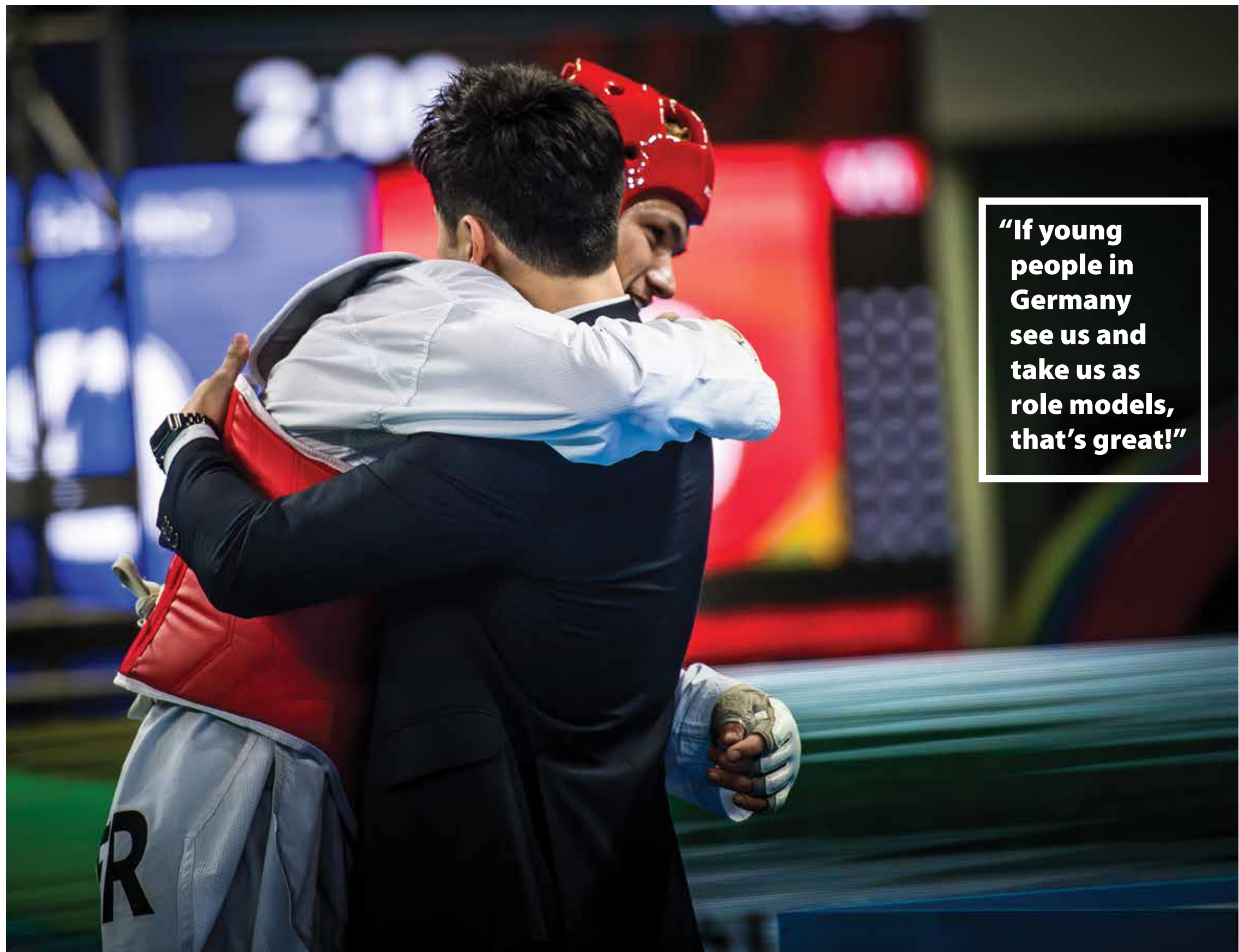
"In my youth, I was not very good, so my father said to my coach, 'It's not a good idea to spend time on him'"

game plan? "In the first and second rounds, I just wanted to control the fight and the third round I knew it would be like a battle," he said. "That was my feeling."

Bachmann's predictions proved largely correct. Round 1 was a display of well-matched back-and-forth, single-kick play with no clear superiority; it ended 2-1 to Larin. In the second, a stumble and fall by the Russian bought the score even, 2-2, then, after a fast exchange, Bachmann drew ahead 5-4. There was everything to play for in the third and final round.

Bachmann unleashed a serial, across-the-





“If young people in Germany see us and take us as role models, that’s great!”

mats attack that gave him a 7-4 lead. But Larin is a dangerous finisher, and a crescent kick to the German’s head protector bought the scores level, 7-7. A punch from Bachmann and a fall took the Russian 7-9 down – then the German’s score rose to 7-11. After an action-packed final few seconds of hurricane-force action as Larin fought desperately to claw back points, it ended 11-9, and Alexander Bachmann was the 2017 World Taekwondo Champion.

“I felt very surprised,” he said. “It was an unbelievable feeling!”
His number-one fan was, naturally, delighted. “I cried! I just cried, but I was happy and laughing,” Gulec said. “And at first, he did not believe it!”

He does now.
“It was a big win, it was on the national news,” Bachmann said. He hopes that his win will boost taekwondo in his home country as he leads the sport forward alongside current German star and 2013 World Champion Tahir Guelec – who just happens to be his fiancé’s brother.
“Me and Tahir are the new generation, we will take over, we are hungry!” he said. “If young people in Germany see us and take us as role models, that’s great!”

Like most current-generation taekwondo stars, Bachmann’s sights are set on Tokyo 2020.

“I will try my best to be in Tokyo, and after Tokyo – if I make it – I will look to either practice taekwondo or do something else,” he said. “I don’t know where my road will go after taekwondo; it is open, I think much can happen.”

Regardless of where his sportive career leads him, he looks likely to take home a much more important gift from taekwondo than any gold medal: Rabia.

The two first met at a national training camp in 2010. “He fell in love with me first!” Gulec laughed. “Then I fell in love with him.”



Alex Bachman At a Glance



Hobby
Spending time with friends, hanging out, drink, playing soccer, going to the cinema.

Why taekwondo?
Because I started as a child, it is a part of me now, if I did not do it, a part of me would be missing. It is my passion!

Motto
Respect people and don’t judge.

Tae-Hun Kim

Korea



3-Time World Champion Wields a Bespoke Stealth Kick

Korean super kicker unleashes unstoppable roundhouse kick

Team Korea's Tae-hun Kim is a three-time world champion, but if you want to know the secret to his success – well, he is not saying much. "There is no secret," he said. "I was lucky and I did my best."

The lanky, softly spoken 22-year-old leveraged both luck and effort to grab gold in Muju. After a relatively easy fight in the semis – he beat Italian Vito Dell'Aquila, 16-0 – he faced a stiff challenge from Iranian top gun Armin Hadipour Seighalani. The two showcase very different styles: Kim with his dual-legged kicks

and smart footwork, versus the sniper-like front foot and tactical smarts of the Iranian.

The Iranian struck first: two points with a cutting kick to the trunk. Kim got one point back, then was dropped to the mats by Seighalani's side kick, losing another point. In the last seconds, Kim struck back to the body, ending the round 3-3. In the second, the score rose to 4-4, the Iranian landing the kicks but being forced off the mats by the forward-pressuring Korean. Then Kim landed a superb round kick on the Iranian's face – a sneaky, out-of-no-

where strike – and suddenly Seighalani was in trouble. The second ended 9-4 to Kim. Round three saw a high work rate, with both kicking and pushing, Kim forcing the smaller Iranian back. A penalty took the score 10-5 to Kim. The Iranian launched a last-minute charge, with serial attacks and spinning kicks, but it was too late: the defending champion kept his crown and took home another gold, 10-6.

Speaking the following day, Kim opened up – a little – about his preparations for the championships, the first top-level competition



to feature the new rules adopted at the start of 2017.

"I did a lot of training for the close fight: A lot of weight training," he said. "There has to be basic strength for the new rules, not for any special technique, but for general strength and for leg strength – not to get pushed off the mats."

The training paid off: Kim relentlessly pressured his opponent backward. Many competitors (and teams) are not yet fully settled about how to leverage the use of the push

that the new rules allow, which may herald a new range of techniques and tactics: Do you push and kick? Push and spin? Or push just to make fighting space and clear the clinch? Kim, however, is clear: "I like to push and go for the head kick," he said.

Kim is cautiously optimistic about the new rules. WT Education Committee Chairman Philippe Bouedo says, "The old rules favored defensive fighters, the new rules favor offensive fighters," and Kim is in agreement: He is a forward-fighting player, with good stamina

and a high work rate. "I think that the new rules are better for aggressive competitors," he said.

Even so, as a tall, leggy player, he has reservations about the new nuances of the close-in game. "There are pros and cons," he said. "I can get more points kicking to the body; the downside is that you get close and push each other, and that negates the game."

Unsurprisingly, his favorite technique is the round kick to the head – and Kim's version is very crafty indeed. "That is my specialty!" he said. "I use it a lot: It is short and strong."

It comes up straight and then turns in at the last moment.” Using his hands he showed the unusual trajectory the kick takes: It starts out on a low, straight line under the opponent’s guard, then flicks up, unseen, to the head. As it evades peripheral vision, an opponent has to have an ultra-sensitive combat radar to detect it.

He has no complaints about the PSS (Protector and Scoring System), but is not in favor of the possible adoption of a sensor on the trunk PSS to score punches, which some in the sport are arguing for. “It would encourage too much close contact,” he said. “It could ruin taekwondo fights.”

Asked about his favorite competitors he mentioned Team China’s legend Jingyu Wu – “I like her fighting style” – Azerbaijan’s Milad Beigi Harchegani – “He is really good and I think he has a special style of taekwondo” – and Team

Russia’s Alexey Denisenko – “He has a multi-faceted fighting style, I like his techniques – that guy has a lot of skill!”

In his free time, Kim plays computer games and hangs out with friends. In the future he plans to continue to compete: “I am still young and I want to show good competitions for the spectators.” But he will not stay in taekwondo forever. “I have no big plans as I am focused on taekwondo,” he said. “But in the future I want to find something I really want to do, I don’t really want to work in the taekwondo field.”

Regardless of what he does in the future, as a three-time world champ as of June 26, 2017 – Tae-hun Kim’s name is deeply engraved upon the sport’s history. The question is what will taekwondo textbook writers of the future dub his bespoke round kick? Perhaps, “the stealth kick?” Or, perhaps, “the Tae-hun chagi?”

Tae-hun Kim At a Glance



Hobby

Computer gaming.

Favorite song

‘Love Yourself’ by Justin Bieber.

Favorite movie

Nothing comes to mind.

Favorite food

Hamburgers.

Favorite competitor

Alexey Denisenko (Russia): He has a multi-faceted fighting style, I like his techniques, that guy has a lot of skill!

Why taekwondo

I do it because I think it is my calling and it is the thing I do best.

Motto

I only use common words, so nothing special!

“There is no secret.
I was lucky and
I did my best”



Vanja Stankovic

Serbia



Journey of Self Belief

Belgrade's star factory produces yet another champ

Finish high school? Check. Prepare for university? Check. Win world championships? Check.

It was a fitting end to Vanja Stankovic's school days: On June 26, 19-year-old Serbian won the gold medal in the women's -49kg category. But it was not something she had anticipated before she flew out to Korea. "I did not expect to get to finals, I just wanted to show my best and believe in myself and see what will happen," she said in an interview the day following her victory.

That victory adds yet another honor to the (increasingly crowded) medal wall at her dojang, Belgrade's famous Galeb ("Seagull") Taekwondo Club. Under Head Coach Dragan

Jovic, the club has produced two Olympic medals (Milica Mandic's London 2012 gold and Tijana Bogdanovic's Rio 2016 silver) and now a world championship title – Serbia's first-ever.

"Galeb is really the most successful club in Europe," Stankovic – who had already won golds at the European Under-21s in Bulgaria and the Belgian Open prior to Muju – said. "We have good coaches, a good system of training, we train so hard every day, twice a day." However, Galeb is not just training; it is also camaraderie. "In our club we are like a big family, everybody loves and supports each other, and everybody wants to come to the club."

If teamwork is one reason for Stankovic's

success, another is her apprenticeship in the sport at a formative age. "I started when I was maybe 8-years-old, my friend started it and she liked it and asked me to go with her," she recalled. "It was a game and I liked it – and now, nine years later, I am here!"

Another reason is self-belief. "We always believe in ourselves and in our club and in our country," she said. "From the start, my coach Uros Todorovic was helping with my mental strength: He made me believe in myself."

With her good looks and engaging personality combined with her new world championship status, Stankovic looks set to become one of the stars of Serbian sport, given taekwon-

do's high profile in the Balkan nation.

"Before Milica's gold in London, nobody knew taekwondo, they would say, 'Is it fighting with sticks?'" she said. "But after two Olympic medals – especially Milica's in London – there was a boom for taekwondo in Serbia and now it is one of the most famous sports; everyone knows Milica and Tijana and Dragan."

Having finished school, she now plans to study economics at university – but will continue competing in taekwondo. "I want to see how high I can go," she said.

As a fighter, the Serb's core assets are speed, power and aggression.

"I am not very tall, you know, so I try to

"I always try to do my best – best speed! Strongest!"



be the fastest I can be – I try to surprise my opponent with speed." And speed generates power. "I am not going for the KO, but I practice strong and fast and explosive," she said. "I always try to do my best – best speed! Strongest! That is what you see in the fight!"

In technical terms, she boasts clean and powerful technique; in fact, the high round-house kicks she unleashed in Muju could be taken from the pages of a taekwondo textbook.

With the new rules coming in, her preparations for the 2017 Worlds were strenuous, with heavy priority on conditioning. "It is physically harder now, you need to push each other,"

she said, detailing a long process of weight training and leg strengthening. "I think for me, the new rules are better; the new style is more aggressive – more fight! – and more interesting for the watchers."

Though she insists that she still enjoys both the training and the fighting of the sport, her final in Muju presented a stern test: She found herself taking on the defending World Champion and Rio 2016 bronze medalist, Panipak Wongpattanakit. The Thai star, in addition to her experience at the pinnacle of the sport, also boasts a height and leg-length advantage.

"The plan was to attack and don't give her the chance to make contact," Stankovic said



“Before a fight I sit quietly and I visualize the match: I see myself fast and strong and kicking the opponent in the head and body and the match is mine. I try to imagine...”

of her game plan. “The plan was to break her fight, break her position, to move her and when she raised her leg, I would kick.”

Prior to stalking out into the spotlight, she pre-pictured the coming bout. “Before a fight I sit quietly and I visualize the match: I see myself fast and strong and kicking the opponent in the head and body and the match is mine,” she said. “I try to imagine...”

Then she was called out of the warm up area and onto the mats. Game on.

The buzzer sounded for Round 1. First blood went to Stankovic in convincing style: She landed a picture-perfect round kick to Wongpattanakit’s head for three points – before being forced off the mats by the Thai’s counter-charge for a one-point penalty. The first ended 3-1 to Stankovic. In Round 2, the Thai was stabbing forward with her long front leg, but not connecting. However, she was dominating the center of the mats, and forced Stankovic out of the area for another penalty point, 2-3. The round ended on that score.

In the third, the reigning champion had to score, but as she attacked forward, she went down, taking the board to 4-2 in Stankovic’s favor. Then, as the Serb lunged in for a punch attack, the Thai landed her hook kick to the head but fell; her points were deducted for holding. The Thai coach appealed; disallowed.

The board now read 5-2 to the Serb. The Thai won

back two points with a body kick, but Stankovic landed another wicked roundhouse to the head that dropped Wongpattanakit. In Zen-mode, her mind and body were perfectly synched. “I did not think about kicking,” Stankovic said. “I just did what comes.”

The score was 9-4, then 9-5. Thirty seconds remained. The Thai sought to score to the head, but her efforts backfired: she tumbled. The score was 10-5 – and that was it. Jovic hoisted his newly minted world champion – Serbia’s first ever – onto his shoulders in delight.

“I could not speak, I could not move, I just started yelling,” Stankovic said, recalling the instant when she realized that she was the 2017 World Champion. “I could not see anything or hear anything, I just thought, ‘I did it! I did it!’” Many, many times earlier I had tried to imagine that moment – how it would feel. It was the most amazing feeling, ever. “

A day later, when the dust had settled, she was able to look back upon about her taekwondo journey so far. The key learning is self-belief.

Taekwondo markets itself as being about self-defense, self-confidence and self-belief, but Stankovic was never 100 percent certain about the latter. After victory in Muju, she is now.

“I always told myself that hard work pays off,” she said. “I was not sure – but now, I am down with that: It does!

Vanja Stankovic At a Glance



Hobby
Reading.

Favorite song
I can’t really think of one!

Favorite movie
‘White Chicks’

Favorite food
Pancakes.

Why taekwondo
Because I love it! It is what I love to do!

Motto
I always told myself that hard work pays off. I was not sure – but now, I am down with that. It does!

Nur Tatar

Turkey



Korea Delivers World Championship Title – and Husband

Turkish champ marries inside taekwondo family

Few fighters deserve a world championship title as much as Nur Tatar. The Turkish international is not just one of the most familiar faces on the circuit, she is also one of the most consistent finalists. However the four-time European champion had never won a world title – until Muju 2017.

“I could not believe it, and I still can’t believe it!” she said the day following. “This is my fifth time at the World Championships. Finally, I got it!”

After her 6-4 victory over Team USA’s Paige

“McFierce” McPherson in the W-67kg category at Taekwondowon, she had to deal with a few calls. The first was to her fiancée, Iranian international Mehran Askari. “I called him directly and he was with my family and he was crying – my mum, my dad my brother, all were crying,” she said.

Then she had to answer a call from a sports fan named Recep Erdoğan – better known internationally as the president of Turkey. “He said ‘Congratulations!’ he said he was proud that I had brought the gold to our country, and

he believes all will go well and I will keep the same position in 2020,” she said.

How did the president know her mobile number? “If they are big they can find you – they can do anything!” she laughed. In fact, the two are acquainted: The Turkish president will be a guest at Tatar’s wedding this August. “He looks on me as a daughter,” she said.

That August wedding comes courtesy of taekwondo – and Korea. Tatar and Askari met at the Universiade in Gwangju in 2015 – where they both won bronzes – and started dating at



“I throw up before a fight – then I feel comfortable. I was sick three times on the day, and I can’t eat or drink on competition day”

the World Grand Prix Final in Baku in December 2016. The Turk is grateful to the home of taekwondo for gifting her with both a World Champions title and a husband. “Korea is my lucky country!” she said.

Where will the Iranian-Turkish couple reside, post-wedding? “We will live in Turkey!” she said. “We women always win!” she added, thumping the table to reinforce her point. Questioned about her punch – she wielded it to great effect during her semi and final fights in Muju – she admitted, “I learned that punch

from my husband-to-be. We train together, and he showed me.” She added mischievously, “We fight when we are training but we have no fighting at home: When we come home, we have no power! We are tired!”

Now a third dan university student studying PT, the 25-year-old from Van in Turkey started young. “I was really just following my brother,” she said. “That was how I started taekwondo at five.”

Tall and lithe, with dark, dangerous eyes and her mission statement – the Olympic rings –

tattooed upon her shoulder, Tatar looks the archetype of the Turkish woman warrior. However, she admits that she finds premier-league taekwondo a high-stress business. “I throw up before a fight – then I feel comfortable,” she said. “I was sick three times on the day, and I can’t eat or drink on competition day.” (Indeed: During this interview the day after her win, Tatar was upbeat, but still feeling queasy.)

Despite her jitters, she had a good feeling prior to Muju. “The first day I was feeling weak and not energetic, but I believe in myself,” she

said. “I knew I was going to get the gold – I felt it!”

She does not have an official nickname, but one has been suggested by her colleagues. “The line is ‘Like a lioness,’” she laughed. (“A Turkish lioness!” her coach added.) It is fitting. Asked to describe herself she said, “I am powerful and strong: When I am feeling good, feeling the concentration, I believe nobody can beat me.” Her favorite technique is taekwondo’s most powerful blow, the back kick; she is also a wicked puncher.

While the main point of conversation in Muju was the new rules, Tatar is not that interested in joining the discussion. “It does not matter, I do not think like that,” she said. “In my mind, if you are fighting, if you are strong, you can win. You can do it!”

Despite her winning ways, despite the high-profile patronage of the president, and despite the huge national taekwondo league in Tur-

key, Tatar is not impressed with the level of media and sponsor attention taekwondo gets. “I am not happy: The media side is not too interested and the sponsor side is not that interested,” she lamented. “There are a lot of registered athletes in Turkey, but not much [commercial] value.”

Currently a student of physical education at university, her plans in taekwondo extend beyond competition. “Now, I am thinking I will retire, but Mehran is a PT trainer and he will continue to fight,” she said. “When we finish our careers we will do international training, as coaches.”

In that ambition, she will be assisted by the fact that she is a world champion – a title that enters her name in the taekwondo history books. “Of course I got the medal for my country and I got it for myself and I got it for my husband,” she said. “It is good for us. What we can do with it, I do not know – whatever!”

Nur Tatar At a Glance



Hobby

Riding.

Favorite song

‘Sivran Khosravi’ by Dooset Daram.

Favorite movie

‘Kara Sevda’.

Favorite food

Don’t know! Food does not really matter to me.

Why taekwondo

I started it as a child. I could not think at that time. If I had thought about it, I would not have done it!

Motto

Pray and believe in God.

“In my mind,
if you are
fighting,
if you are
strong,
you can win.
You can do
it!”

Taekwondo Becomes Compulsory Sport at Universiade in Taipei 2017

And freestyle poomsae joins kyorugi on Summer Universiade program for first time



In a duo of firsts at the Taipei 2017 Summer Universiade, which ran from Aug. 20-26, taekwondo became a compulsory sport of the university games, while freestyle poomsae was included in the taekwondo program. The moves had both been approved by the International University Sports Federation (FISU) . While taekwondo had been an optional event since 2003, FISU decided, in 2009, that it would become a compulsory sport as of 2017. Freestyle poomsae was not originally going to be part of the program, but following a request from WT, FISU decided that its addition would not extend the competition period or the number of technical officials required, but would greatly enhance the opportunities for athletes and the experience for spectators. Hence, it was included. The move to include the highly creative discipline of freestyle poomsae reinforces WT's commitment to providing maximal opportunities for young athletes across all taekwondo's sub-disciplines. "Taekwondo has been an optional sport on the universiade programme since 2003 and we have always enjoyed being involved in this wonderful competition," said WT President Chungwon Choue. "It is a great honor to be granted the status of a compulsory sport, and we are doubly gratified that FISU saw fit to include freestyle poomsae in the universiade." With taekwondo's inclusion, 14 compulsory sports were contested in Taipei.

Medal Count

Rank	Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
1	Korea	6	6	3	15
2	Iran	4	1	6	11
3	Russia	3	0	3	9
4	Turkey	2	1	1	4
5	Serbia	2	0	0	2
6	Chinese Taipei	1	5	3	9
7	Azerbaijan	1	1	3	5
8	United States	1	1	2	4
9	Vietnam	1	0	3	4
10	Thailand	1	0	1	2

World Para Taekwondo Championships: London

Russia Comes out Top at Record-Breaking 7th World Para Taekwondo Championships

London is setting for biggest, best ever World Paras

The record-breaking 7th World Para Taekwondo Championships drew to a close today with nearly 200 elite para taekwondo athletes from around the world battling it out to become world champion.

Russia finished top of the medal table with six gold medals, Turkey finished second on four gold medals and Kazakhstan and Mongolia finished joint third with two gold medals. The remaining gold medals were shared equally between hosts Great Britain, Spain, Iran, Serbia,

Ukraine, Denmark and Rwanda. Russia finished top of the male medal table for the fourth consecutive world championships with Turkey finishing top of the female medal table for the third time at a world para taekwondo championships.

The championships attracted a total of 263 athletes from a record-breaking 59 countries and took place in the London 2012 Paralympic venue, The Copper Box. The one-day event was awarded a G10 world ranking making it even





London 2017
proved that para
taekwondo is
all set to wow the
world at Tokyo 2020



more important for athletes hoping to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Mahdi Pourrahnama of Iran was awarded with the male MVP and Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar of Mongol was awarded with the female MVP.

Speaking following the championships, World Taekwondo President Choue said:

“This has been the best ever world para taekwondo championships. I find myself saying that every time we host the event but it is because the development of the sport is so fast that every world championships we have more athletes, from more countries, competing at higher standards than ever before.

“This event was a fantastic opportunity for athletes to secure world ranking points towards qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games but also fantastic experience at competing at the highest level. The World

Taekwondo Council are looking into hosting the World Para Taekwondo Championships every year ahead of Tokyo 2020. This needs to be approved but will give our athletes the opportunity to gain even more experience and provide even more entertainment for the global Paralympic audience in 2020.”

The poomsae competitions for athletes with an intellectual impairment and athletes with a motor impairment saw a record number take part across junior and senior, male and female classes during the championships.

Hosts of the 2014 World Para Taekwondo Championships, Russia, came out on top of the poomsae classes winning three gold medals, narrowly beating current hosts, Great Britain who won two. The remaining eight gold poomsae medals were shared among eight different countries.

Zhanna Shcherbakova of Russia and Narbayev Talgat of Kazakhstan were awarded the best female and best male coach of the World Championships, respectively. Renata Crkvenac of Croatia, Andrey Khegay of Russia and Barbara Ruth Marian of Canada were awarded the best referees of the championships.

The tournament had been opened by Choue who expressed his delight at the growth of the sport and praised GB Taekwondo for organizing such a great event.

During the opening ceremony, World Taekwondo, in partnership with their global partner, Booyoung, presented Booyoung Scholarships to Rwanda, Korea, Nepal, Uzbekistan and Peru.

Amy Truesdale

Great Britain

By Andrew Cross (IPC Reporter)



“This gold medal has got to be the best of my career. It’s definitely got to be the most memorable one in my favorite competition”

British girl proves unstoppable in London

Following the London 2012 and the Rio 2016 Olympics, Great Britain has gone taekwondo crazy after Jade Jones and Bianca Walkden’s successes. For the London 2017 Para Taekwondo Championship, the focus was all on the home-favorite Amy Truesdale.

Being a favorite comes with a lot of responsible and far more pressure than usual. The cameras are on you, there are more family and friends who are able to come and support you in the stadium, plus there is an expectation to perform.

All of that is exactly what Chester-born

Truesdale had to face at London on Oct. 19.

Truesdale is tough and resilient and the extra attention was not going to stop her reaching her goal – gold and the World Para Taekwondo Championship title.

The 28-year-old breezed through her quarter-final match 21-1 before gaining a place in the gold medal match with another impressive performance, a 23-4 victory in her semi-final.

In the final, Truesdale rose to the challenge and made light work of her Moroccan opponent. The Brit was 17-3 up in the second round before Rajae Akermach was forced to

withdraw due to injury. The pressure was gone and Truesdale had her gold medal and the title she craved for.

“It hasn’t sunk in at the moment. There’s definitely a sense of relief that it’s done now and I think tomorrow it will sink in,” said Truesdale after her victory.

“I’m absolutely made up! This gold medal has got to be the best of my career. It’s definitely got to be the most memorable one in my favorite competition.

“There was a little bit more pressure because it’s a home tournament, where there are

a lot more supporters, and there are a lot more people you know. Obviously, it’s televised as well, so there was a bit more pressure to perform. But I think I dealt with the pressure very well and the outcome is good.”

The record books show that Truesdale now has two World Para Taekwondo Championship gold medals; however, she sees London 2017 as her first true gold medal and world title.

“In 2014 I actually lost the final and received a silver medal, but the girl I was fighting was not supposed to be in my group. So by default I was classed as world champion but I actually

got silver.

“In my opinion, this is the first time I’ll be world champion.”

Truesdale only conceded eight points during her three matches as she made her way to the finish. Her resilience in defense came from all the hours of work she puts in with her coach Andrew Deer at the British Taekwondo HQ in Manchester, where Jones and Walkden practice.

“My coach and I have a really good relationship. The training we’ve got in place is very specific to what is needed in Para Taekwondo,

so what we had in mind with my game plan paid off on the day.

“I’ve been training with Team GB for a while now and I go up to Manchester about three times a week and work with the Olympic team. It is really enjoyable and I get to train with the best people in the world and use their facilities. I’m really lucky to be in that environment.”

Grand Prix Series 1: Rocking Russia

Taekwondo returns to Moscow as local stars shine

MOSCOW, Russia

Aug. 4-6, 2017

Series 1 of the 4-edition Grand Prix tourney - the WT's elite-level invitational event, which offers athletes both prize money and media exposure - took place on friendly turf for the sport: Moscow, Russia. With Team Russia now one of the world's top five taekwondo squads, the sport is gaining increasing traction in the country, which is a regular stop on the Grand Prix tour and which also hosted the 2015 World Championships with tremendous success. Needless to say, the home town fans made plenty of noise for their home town heroes - but also offered generous support for all visitors.



W
-67kg

The final of the women's -67kg saw two current world champions go head to head – Ruth Gbagbi from Cote d'Ivoire, the current world champion at -62kg and Nur Tatar from Turkey, the current world champion at -67kg. Gbagbi came out fastest, taking an early lead in the first round with a kick to the trunk protector and then quickly followed it up with a second to take the first round 4-0. Gbagbi kept Tatar at bay in the second round with her defence proving too strong, only conceding one point through a gamjeom. However, with just 30 seconds remaining of the final round, Tatar found a way through and landed a kick to the trunk protector and quickly followed up with a punch to take the score to 4-4. With just two seconds left it looked like it was heading towards a fourth round but in dramatic fashion Gbagbi landed a head kick to win the match 7-4. Olympic gold medalist from Rio 2016, Hye-ri Oh from Korea, and USA's Paige McPherson shared the bronze medals between them. Gbagbi had overcome Oh in the semi-final, scoring an impressive 21 points to Oh's 11. In the second semi-final, Tatar and McPherson were brought together for the second time in just over a month having matched up against one another in the final of the World Championships just a month earlier. Tatar had come out on top in Muju and McPherson was hoping to make up for that loss in Moscow but despite taking the match to a fourth round, Tatar scored a golden point to progress to the final.

M
+80kg

In the men's +80kg final Russia's Roman Kuznetsov matched up against Kyo-don In of Korea. A tense and tactical first round saw In go into the first break 2-1 up. But a turning kick from Kuznetsov gave him a 4-2 lead before In pegged him back to 4-4 with a kick to the trunk protector. With just a minute of the third round left, Kuznetsov was 9-4 up but a thrilling late surge from In saw him bring the score level on 9 a piece with 10 seconds to spare. The third round finished 9-9. The Russian crowd were desperate for a Kuznetsov win and created a fantastic atmosphere for the fourth and final round. Buoyed on by the crowd's support, Kuznetsov landed an excellent head kick to win in golden point. The Russian crowd were also able to celebrate a bronze medal in the men's +80kg as Yury Kirichenko shared bronze with Vedran Golec of Croatia. Kirichenko had been defeated by In in the semi-final after a thrilling three-round match which ended 12-4 to In. Kirichenko himself had caused an upset in the round before by defeating compatriot, Vladislav Larin. Eventual gold medal winner, Kuznetsov took on Golec in the second semi-final. Much like the first semi-final the opening round was very tight and tactical with Golec finishing the first round in the lead. However, spurred on by the home crowd, Kuznetsov finished strongly and came away the victor, with a score of 8-4.

W
+67kg

In the final of the women's +67kg, world champion Bianca Walkden from Great Britain met Korea's Bich-na Kim. High in confidence from her gold medal at the World Championships in Muju, Walkden took an early lead landing two punches to Kim's trunk protector. An impressive head kick saw Walkden extend her lead and while Kim fought valiantly she was not able to counter the pressure the world number two put on her. Walkden took gold with a victory of 14-0. Russia's Olga Ivanova and Da-bin Lee of Korea secured bronze. Ivanova faced Kim in the semi-final after Kim had produced an excellent display to defeat Iva Rados from Croatia in an unexpected victory. Ivanova and Kim traded kicks in a close tactical battle but both failed to register a point in the three rounds. Forced into a fourth round, the home crowd cheered on Ivanova but to their disappointment Kim landed a kick to Ivanova's trunk protector giving her a vital golden point to progress to the final. With the surprise early exit of Shuyin Zheng, Walkden was keen to capitalize and came up against Lee in the second semi-final. A turning kick to the trunk protector in the first round and a kick to the head in the second round contributed to Walkden entering the third round 7-0 up. The third round brought out the best in both fighters with both landing a number of successful kicks but Walkden was ultimately too strong and won the match 21-6.

M
-58kg

In the men's -58kg final Korea's Tae-hun Kim continued his successful year by taking gold after Ramnarong Sawekwiharee from Thailand was forced to withdraw before the fight began due to injury. Sawekwiharee had fought well in the semi-final but it had clearly taken its toll and left him unable to compete in the final. Mohammad Kazemi from Iran and Jesus Tortosa Cabrera from Spain won the bronze medals. Kazemi met Kim in the first of the two semi-finals. Kim showed his dominance early on take the lead and finished the first round 6-0 up. Despite Kazemi's best efforts, the second and third rounds followed a similar course and Kim came away the victor with a score of 25-4. Tortosa Cabrera and Sawekwiharee matched up in the second semi-final and produced a highly entertaining bout for the enthusiastic crowd. Sawekwiharee came out stronger and landed an early kick to the trunk protector before two gamjeoms gave him a 4-2 lead at the end of the first round. A head kick brought Tortosa Cabrera back into the match and he finished the second round 8-6 up. In the final round he extended his lead but Sawekwiharee finished strongly to win the match 18-12.

W
-49kg

In the final of the women's -49kg, Olympic gold medalist So-hui Kim from Korea battled it out against Thailand's Panipak Wongpattanakit. Wongpattanakit had won bronze at Rio 2016 but had outdone Kim in Muju winning silver at the World Taekwondo Championships. The opening round was cagey with both fighters eager not to give away any cheap points. The first round finished 2-1 to Kim after she had landed a kick to the trunk protector but had then been given a one point penalty. In the second round, a second penalty for Kim brought it to two points each but Wongpattanakit quickly pulled away with a kick to the trunk protector. Her advantage was short-lived as Kim too landed a kick to the trunk protector. The round finished 4-4. In the final round Wongpattanakit took on early lead once again courtesy of a gamjeom but then followed it up with a kick to the head to take an 8-4 lead. Kim put pressure on Wongpattanakit in the final stages and scored two points through penalties but it wasn't enough and Wongpattanakit took the gold with a final score of 8-6. Camila Rodriguez from Colombia and Serbia's Tijana Bogdanovic shared

the bronze medals. Rodriguez took on Kim in the semi-final. Both fighters put up a strong defence with Kim the only one able to land a valid kick in the first round giving her a 2-0 lead. The second round saw much of the same high-quality defence leaving the score at 2-0 at the end of round two. With a minute left of the third round, Kim stepped it up a gear and landed a succession of kicks to the trunk protector, extending her lead and giving her the victory with a score of 13-0. In the second semi-final Bogdanovic fought Wongpattanakit. The closely ranked athletes missed each other at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games where Bogdanovic had won silver while Wongpattanakit secured bronze. Everyone anticipated a close fight between the two in Moscow; however, Wongpattanakit was on excellent form and delivered three kicks to the trunk protector in the first round to take a strong early lead. In the second round she extended her lead even further to 19-1. Bogdanovic did her best to fight back but Wongpattanakit was too good on the day and in the end took the match with a score of 33-3.



M
-80kg

The final of the men's -80kg brought together Moldova's Aaron Cook, who went into the Grand Prix as the number two seed, and Russia's Anton Kotkov, who had already produced a shock victory against Olympic gold medalist Cheick Sallah Cisse in the semi-final. The nerves of the crowd were apparent in the first round with Cook keeping Kotkov at bay and giving the Russian fans little to cheer about. In the second round, Kotkov took the lead for the first time only for Cook to land a kick to the trunk protector and regain the advantage. With one second of the second round remaining, Cook landed a spectacular combination of a turning kick to the head and kick to the trunk protector to give him six points and go into the final round 11-8 up. The two fighters produced undoubtedly the best round of the Grand Prix so far in the final round as Cook who had gone 15-12 up in the opening stages of the round was pegged back to 15-15 by a head kick from Kotkov.

From there, there was a flurry of acrobatic and breath-taking kicks from both fighters with the partisan crowd generating an electrifying atmosphere. But it was Kotkov who was producing more successful kicks and took a significant 12-point lead. Cook fought back strongly and both fighters gave their absolute all; however, for Cook it was not enough and Kotkov won the match 35-26 and also won the hearts of the crowd.

Cheick Sallah Cisse of Cote d'Ivoire and Korea's Hun Kim won the bronze medals. Many had expected Cisse to progress to the final and as he took an early 3-0 lead against Kotkov in the semi-final and it looked like the match was headed the way it was expected. However, Kotkov fought back and utilized the punch well to finish the first round 9-3 up. Kotkov continued to make the most of the punch in the second round but two head kicks from Cisse helped him to a 12-10 lead at the end of the second round.

The final and highly entertaining third round was all square with 30 seconds left, but the home crowd got firmly behind their man to give him the energy for a late surge. With little more than 10 seconds to go Kotkov once again made the most of the punch to go 15-14 up and then landed a kick to take the match 17-14. In the second semi-final Kim fought Cook. Both fighters came out very quickly, but it was Cook who dominated the fight and won.



W
-57kg

The final of the women's -57kg was an all Korean affair with 2017 World Champion and MVP Ah-reum Lee taking on compatriot and bronze medalist in -62kg at the World Championships So-hee Kim. An early gamjeom gave Kim a one point lead but Lee quickly came back into the match and landed three kicks to the trunk protector in quick succession to go 6-1 up. A penalty just before the end of the round saw her take a lead of 7-1. Gamjeoms from both players early in the second round took the score to 8-2 before Kim closed the gap to four points just before the end of the second round. In the final round Lee stepped up the intensity, landing four excellently executed kicks over the course of the round. Kim managed a well-timed head kick but it was not enough and Lee took the gold medal with a score of 16-9.

Carolena Carstens from Panama and Raheleh Asemani from Belgium won bronze. Carstens took on So-hee Kim in the first semi-final. Kim took an early lead and delivered two kicks to the trunk protector to help her towards a first round score of 5-1. Carstens landed a turning kick but it failed to register and she could not stem the tide with the second round finishing 11-3 to Kim. In the final round Kim proved too strong and progressed to the final with a score of 15-5. The second semi-final matched Asemani and Lee. Asemani struggled in the first round as she failed to register a point, while Lee executed three kicks to the trunk protector to take a 6-0 lead. In the second round Lee extended her lead but Asemani got her first points on the board as it finished 10-2. In the final round Lee pulled away landing a series of kicks, including an accurate kick to the head, to win the match 26-6.



M
-68kg

In the final of the men's -68kg, Korea's World Champion Dae-hoon Lee took on home favorite, Alexey Denisenko. Lee was clearly unfazed by the strong Russian support for Denisenko and came out flying, landing six kicks to the trunk protector in the first round, helping him towards a 14-1 lead. After the high-scoring first round, the second saw a more measured approach from both fighters and neither were able to register any points. In the final round Denisenko looked to close the gap but for each kick he landed, Lee seemed to have an answer. An excellent head kick from Denisenko shortened Lee's lead to eight points but it wasn't enough and the final score finished 18-11 to Lee.

Olympic gold medalist Ahmad Abughaush from Jordan and Christian McNeish from Great Britain won the bronze medals. Abughaush got off to a strong start landing two punches but was quickly pulled back by Lee who combined a kick to the trunk protector followed by a punch. Lee extended his lead in the second round almost immediately with a kick to the trunk protector and then landed another two during the round to finish 9-2 up. In the final round Abughaush looked to close the gap landing a kick early on but Lee followed up with a kick to the head and a punch to extend his lead once more. Despite Abughaush's best efforts, Lee won the match 19-7.

In the second semi-final, both Denisenko and McNeish led during the first round before it finished all square at 3-3. Denisenko landed two head kicks in quick succession in the second round to take the lead before both McNeish himself landed a head kick but which left himself open to a kick to the trunk protector. The second round finished 12-8. In the final round McNeish came out strongly and landed a kick to the trunk protector followed by a kick to the head to take the lead but he was quickly overtaken again by Denisenko. Despite a series of gamjeoms and a strong finish from McNeish, he could not catch Denisenko and the fight ended a very close 17-16 to Denisenko.

DRAMATIC RISE

Cote d'Ivoire

African champ bulldozes through competition

RUTH
GBAGBI

There are few athletes in taekwondo who have undergone a more dramatic rise over the last two years than Cote d'Ivoire's Ruth Gbagbi.

At the World Championships in Chelyabinsk she fought valiantly but finished 17th. Fast forward to the present day and she is an Olympic bronze medalist, current World Champion in -62kg and most recently gold medalist in the -67kg at the Moscow 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 1.

Hard-working and humble, she describes her recent success as a "grace from God." While there is no doubting how hard she has worked to get where she is today, she is keen to point out the role those around her have played in her development.

"I have been advised by a lot of people that I can make it. I know that in the past I had some defeats but defeat yields victory. Based on the defeats, all the advice I have received from family and friends and a lot of training I have been able to succeed. I am very self-confident which has helped me a lot to win."

Naturally weighing in the 65kg range, she has shown with her success here at -67kg in Moscow and at -62kg in Muju that she does not find it difficult to transition between different weight categories.

Her power and offensive style certainly helps her compete in the higher weight categories but historically, she has not fared as

"I dedicated my win to the female youth and gave them advice to be more resilient and work with application. Only hard work and resilience brings success"



well in the Grand Prix. In Moscow, she put that behind her to win her first Grand Prix gold.

"I have been participating in the Grand Prix since 2013 but failed to get past the quarter final," she said. "I have worked very hard to be where I am right now but I thank God that this year I have been granted with good mercy and I've been able to win this medal."

This is just the latest medal for her to add to her growing collection. In Rio she made history by becoming the first ever female from Cote d'Ivoire to win an Olympic medal as she claimed bronze in the -67kg. "I was very proud to bring a smile to the faces not just of the women in my country but the whole population," she said. "I dedicated my win to the female youth and gave them advice to be more resilient and work with application. Only hard work and resilience brings success."

She is reluctant to describe herself as a role model for aspiring female athletes, but there is no doubting that with what she has achieved, that is what she has become.

Another strong role model in the sport is her compatriot Cheick Sallah Cisse who also made history in Rio claiming Cote d'Ivoire's first ever Olympic gold medal. Cisse and Gbagbi are very close having been brought up in the same area and taekwondo brought them closer. The two train closely together and help each other develop. This can only be good for the sport in their country, where taekwondo has certainly grown significantly in recent years.

Gbagbi believes this boom is "a result of the past." "More people are now aware of taekwondo but previously we had some very good results. Also the new federation president and all his efforts to develop and push taekwondo have led to good results. But it is not just Cote d'Ivoire, there are many others. It is African taekwondo which is booming."

With Abidjan set to host the Grand Prix Final later in 2017 it looks like this boom is set to continue and Gbagbi cannot wait to compete in her home country. "It will be a great honor to show people locally what we do out of the country," she said. "We will get an additional energy from the country."

So what is next for this athlete who has achieved so much over the last year?

As a winner of the Grand Prix Series 1 she was automatically qualified for the newly created World Taekwondo Grand Slam event which she is "very enthusiastic and honored" to be a part of.

Beyond that Tokyo 2020 is the "main goal." "I must maintain this level," she says. "Winning is one thing but maintaining a top level is key. I must train a lot and work hard to remain at the top."

And what is the ambition in Tokyo? Will she be looking to make Olympic history once again and this time gold?

Humble as always, but with that self-confidence that has got her to where she is today, she replies, "With the help of God, why not?"



"Based on the defeats, all the advice I have received from family and friends and a lot of training, I have been able to succeed"

SUCCESS STARTS IN THE MIND

Russia

Russian champ puts mental game to the fore

**ANTON
KOTKOV**

For many fighters, being drawn against the current world number one in the semi-final and then the world number two in the final of a World Taekwondo Grand Prix would be a daunting prospect. Add to that the pressure of fighting in front of a home crowd and it would be easy to forgive a fighter for being nervous.

But for laser-focused Anton Kotkov, the most important thing was to stay centered on the matter at hand and not be overwhelmed by the occasion.

"I was just concentrating on what I should do in that second," he said less than 24 hours after claiming his first ever Grand Prix gold medal by beating Moldova's Aaron Cook in a breath-taking final. "I believed if I did my job I would win."

"I saw all the support of the people. Every time I got points I heard the noise. It made me feel very energised!"

W
ONDO
MOSCOW 2017



"I was just concentrating on what I should do in that second"

"Of course there are lots of emotions. I couldn't win a Grand Prix before and had lost in the Grand Prix quarter final. This time I decided to win. No matter who I fought, I decided to get gold."

Taekwondo is undoubtedly a sport of the body and the mind and for Kotkov, success starts in the mind.

"I believe in success and success will only happen when you believe in it," he said. "I felt that it was my time and it was time to win and this Grand Prix should be my first Grand Prix gold."

This winning mentality, Kotkov says, comes

from his coaches who have instilled a winning atmosphere in the Russian team which is clearly bearing fruit as Russia came away with seven medals from the 2017 World Championships.

"Everything starts not from exercises but from the mind," Kotkov explains. "When coaches manage to change our minds to victory, our team got stronger."

But even with this deep concentration, Kotkov was not oblivious to the support of the crowd here in Moscow and the contribution they made to his victory.

"I saw all the support of the people. It was very amazing and it gave me more emotions, more energy and I wanted to win for them. Especially in the third round [of the final], when the situation was so tight. Every time I got points I heard the noise. It made me feel very energized."

It wasn't just the result which delighted the Russian crowd but also the way the match was fought. The third round was the ultimate round of the competition with both fighters trying exciting and acrobatic techniques.

Kotkov believes this is how taekwondo should

be fought and is full of praise for his fellow finalist Aaron Cook. "He [Cook] is a great fighter and I like to fight him because he shows really beautiful taekwondo," he said. "I think the real taekwondo should be like this. I like beautiful taekwondo, beautiful kicks, but not so many athletes can show this."

At the start of the year, World Taekwondo introduced a series of rule changes to encourage athletes to fight in a more exciting and dynamic style and penalize overly defensive techniques. For Kotkov, the results of these

changes are already clear. "These changes made taekwondo more spectacular," he said. "When I went to the first tournament of the year, the German Open, already with the new rules and all the changes I saw that taekwondo had changed. I saw that many athletes changed the style of fighting. I saw that these changes will help taekwondo show spectacular fights."

As a newly crowned Grand Prix Series champion, Kotkov's focus moves to the next Grand Prix in Rabat. At the end of year he also greatly looked forward to competing in the new World

Taekwondo Grand Slam. But like most of his fellow athletes the end goal is Tokyo 2020. Whereas a few years ago his goal would have just been to qualify for the Games, now his aim is not just to qualify but to win gold.

"I believe I am ready to do that," he says. "I am ready to do anything to get gold."

If success starts in the mind then he is already on his way to achieving his ambition.



Grand Prix Series 2 Rabat

Going Loco in Morocco

Africa welcomes first-ever Grand Prix

RABAT, Morocco

Sept. 22-24, 2017

The second edition of the 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series took place over three days at the Complexe Sportif Prince Moulay Abdellah in the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

The event was historic: It marked the first time a Grand Prix - one of taekwondo's most prestigious events - had taken place on African soil. And that was appropriate: African fighters had been the big surprises at Rio 2016, taking home a hefty trove of medals. So, the Rabat Grand Prix marked a coming of age of African taekwondo.

The event brought together 221 athletes and 48 international referees, representing 55 countries. Invitations were based on the August World Taekwondo Olympic Rankings.

The victor in each category won USD5,000 in prize money; the silver medalist got USD3,000; and the two bronze medalists took home USD1,000 each.



Grand Prix Series 2 Rabat

W
-67kg

The final in the women’s -67kg division pitted 2016 Rio Olympic gold medalist Hye-ri Oh of Korea against 2017 Muju World Champion Nur Tatar of Turkey. The two are well matched in terms of height and physique and leg speed, but after a nervy feeling-out period, it was Oh who scored first with a body kick, ending the round 2-0 up. The second round saw long-range psychological warfare, with occasional flurries of action – then in the round’s final second, Tatar went 3-2 up with a spin back kick. In the third, Oh went 4-3 up but lost a point for grabbing: The round ended 4-4. In golden point, Tatar scored with a thwacking round kick to the body, leaving Oh with silver. Bronzes in the category went to Irem Yaman of Turkey and Ruth Gbagbi of Cote d’Ivoire.

M
+80kg

The final of the men’s +80kg category saw Great Britain’s Mahama Cho take on Moscow Series 1 Grand Prix winner Roman Kuznetsov of Russia, who had benefitted from a by in the semi finals, after his opponent Ivan Trajkovic of Slovenia pulled out with an injury. Action started fast with both lads firing fast, dangerous kicks. Kuznetsov opened the scoring, but Cho fired back with his jumping kicks and Round 1 ended 2-0 up to the Russian. In the second, Cho evened it up with his switching round kick to the body, 2-2, then drew ahead 4-2 with close-range hits after driving his opponent to the edge of the mats. In the third round, the Russian connected to Cho’s head, going 5-4 up with a big arcing kick – then, amid a furious flurry, Cho buried a deceptive but perfectly timed spinning back kick in his opponent’s face, and Kuznetsov hit the mats. Although a shaky Kuznetsov wanted to continue, the referee stopped the fight. Cho looked delighted at his victory in what was clearly the fight of the night. Bronzes were won by Kyo-don In of Korea and Trajkovic.

W
+67kg

The final in the +67kg category saw London 2012 Olympic gold medalist and Muju 2017 World Champion Milica Mandic of Serbia do battle with 2015 and 2017 World Champion Bianca Walkden of Great Britain. (The two fight in different categories at world level, but in the same Olympic category.) Walkden, as always, started fast, going three points up up with a back kick. Despite a high work rate from both fighters, the round ended 3-0, as did the second round. In the third, both girls were connecting but not scoring. Mandic fell, and Walkden scored again but lost one point for holding. The match ended 7-1 with gold for Walkden and silver for Mandic. Shuyin Zheng of China and Sae-bom An of Korea had to be satisfied with bronzes.



WT Executives Talk up African Taekwondo



The rising status of African taekwond was in focus at a lively press conference the day before the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 2 kicked off in Rabat. “This Grand Prix is the first Grand Prix on the African continent,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “The London 2012 Olympic Games were more favorable to European countries, but the Rio 2016 Olympics were for the African continent – five medals went to African countries.” General Ahmed Fouly, president of World Taekwondo Africa, noted that the WT had extended significant logistical, coaching and financial support

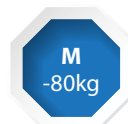
to the continent in 2016. In 2017, World Taekwondo Africa has organized more referee training sessions than any other continental union. WT Technical Comittee Chairman Jin-bang Yang itemized some of the support that the federation has extended to Africa, such as equipment donations, financial support for elite athletes, training camps, etc. He added that the Grand Prix provides a springboard for local players. “This is a very good stepping stone for Moroccan players to move up to the first

level, this will contribute a great deal to athletes’ level in Morocco,” he said. “Morocco always comes close to Olympic medals, but now, hopefully, while we hold this in Morocco, Morocco can participate with more players,” emphasized Moroccan Taekwondo Federation President Driss El-Hilali. “This is the beginning for Morocco to move ahead.” Fouly closed the press conference, thanking King Mohammed VI of Morocco for his official royal patronage of the Grand Prix. “This is a great honor for us,” Fouly said.





The final in the men's -58kg division pitted three-time world champion and round-kick machine Tae-hun Kim of Korea against the cobra-quick Carlos Navarro of Mexico. Action started in top gear, with both lads feeling each other out trying to find the range. Kim scored first with a body kick, going 2-0 up, while employing superior ring craft that forced the Mexican to dance around the perimeter of the mats. Navarro returned fire, winning three points with a very fast and deceptive spin back kick fired low, from the floor, before Kim landed another of his trademark round kicks, ending the round 4-3. In the second, Kim extended his lead 6-3 and in the third, continued to relentlessly pick up the points, going 8-3 up. Action heated up as the bout counted down, and in a flurry, the board went to 10-5. In the final seconds, Navarro connected with a head kick launched on the run, but the match ended 10-8 with gold to Kim – who is looking near-invincible on his current form – and silver to the Mexican. It had been a notably clean contest that saw the ref awarding no points against either athlete. Bronzes in the category went to Jesus Tortosa Cabrera of Spain and Farzan Ashourzadeh Fallah of Iran.



The final of the men's -80kg category is what the crowd had been waiting for: It is perhaps the most exciting category in the game. It saw Seif Eissa of Egypt do battle with Rio Olympic gold medalist and African taekwondo hero Cheick Sallah Cisse of Cote d'Ivoire, who had been fighting hard and entertainingly all day. The Cote d'Ivoirian had vocal support from the crowd, but the bout started at a slow pace with the two fighters probing each other and a fair bit of eyeball-to-eyeball psychological warfare taking place. It ended 0-0. In the second, the Egyptian scored first to the body, going 2-0 up, but then losing a point for grabbing, 2-1. Finally, Cisse unleashed his attack, raising his score to 3-2 with a body kick. In the third, just one point separated the fighters. Cisse asserted his dominance, going up to 5-2 and playing a very physical game of pushing that seemed designed to intimidate the taller, but slimmer, Egyptian. As the clock counted down, Eissa came alive, attacking across the mats with a flying side kick – a common technique in action movies but a rare kick in live competition – before landing a crescent kick to Cisse's head in the last 20 seconds, and evening the score, briefly, to 5-5. In the final seconds, the action escalated to close, fast and furious, with both men connecting. It ended 6-7 with a gold medal for the popular Olympic champ from Cote d'Ivoire, and a well-deserved silver for Eissa. Milad Beigi Harchegani of Azerbaijan and Rene Lizarraga of Mexico had to be satisfied with bronzes.



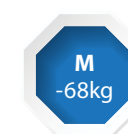
The final of the women's -49kg category saw So-hui Kim of Korea take on Thi Kim Tuyen Truong of Vietnam. Kim seized an early two-point lead with a body kick, then another. The Vietnamese put the pressure on, but Kim is a masterly counter fighter, and ended the round 7-0 up. The Korean went to 8-0 after Truong tried to land a head kick from the clinch, but ended up falling; Kim kept her cool and her feet. Defying repeated attacks from Truong, Kim maintained the distance and ended the second round 8-0 up. In the third, Kim landed a head kick, but her game corroded slightly under pressure as Truong finally found the range. Even so, the point gap and the skill gap were too great: Kim took gold with a convincing 14-5 victory, leaving Truong with silver. Bronzes were won by Jae-young Sim of Korea and Rukiye Yildirim of Turkey.





The final in the women's -57kg division pitted double Olympic gold medalist Jade "The Headhunter" Jones against 2017 Universiade champion Hatice Kubra Ilgun of Turkey. Ilgun opened the scoring, hitting Jones with a round kick to the body that was skillfully fired while she was pivoting away from Jones' attack. Jones maintained forward pressure, looked dominant and tried head kicks – but could not connect against the Turk, who took the first round, 2-0. In Round 2, Jones lived up to her nickname, landing a crescent kick to Ilgun's head from the clinch to go up, 3-2.

There were pushing matches in mid-ring as both athletes fought forward and refused to give ground. Ilgun connected to the body again, to go 4-3 up – then Jones fell, putting the Turk further ahead, 5-3, then 7-3 as her body kicks continued to land. As the third got underway, Jones had a fight on her hands – but promptly lost another point for holding. Then her picture-perfect hook kick landed to Ilgun's head, taking the board to 6-8, and she was back in the game. Both girls missed with head kicks and Ilgun maintained her narrow lead. With 15 seconds remaining, Jones tried desperately to connect with high kicks and forced Ilgun out of the ring – but she had left her last-minute charge too late. Ilgun won gold and Jones silver with a score of 8-6 for the Turk. A brilliant result for the Turkish fighter, who won her first-ever Grand Prix medal. Bronzes in the category went to Marija Stetic of Croatia and Ah-reum Lee of Korea.



The final of the men's -68kg category saw current World Champion Dae-hoon Lee – who had annihilated Saul "The Spine" Gutierrez of Mexico in the semi-finals with a relentless blitzkrieg of attacks – take on Muju 2017 World Championships silver medalist Yu-jen Huang of Chinese Taipei. Action started with both players firing light, probing kicks, with Huang looking unintimidated by Lee. As the round progressed, the kicks picked up power and Lee drew first blood with a two-point round kick to the body. Lee pressured Huang up against the edge of the mats where the two fought kick for kick. The round ended 4-2 to Lee, but in the second, the Chinese Taipei fighter evened the score, 4-4. Both were unleashing a full technical arsenal: round kicks, inverse kicks, head kicks, pushes, and kicks from the clinch. Lee's kick rate was extraordinary, as his legs worked like machine guns, but it was Huang who landed again to go 6-4 up, before Lee inevitably equalized 6-6. In the final seconds of the round, Lee drew ahead with a punch, ending the second 7-6 up. As the bell went on the third, the two briefly hugged – then it was game on. Huang was now more active, matching Lee kick for kick, but the Korean went 9-6 up as his round kick hit home yet again. By now his high kicks and stamina were drawing gasps from the crowd. Huang was penalized a gamjeom for grabbing, putting Lee 10-6 up. In the final 25 seconds Huang raised his score to seven, then Lee connected with a perfect round kick to the face, with a "thwack" that was audible around the stadium. Lee was penalized one point for holding, but the match ended 13-9 and a convincing victory for Lee, whose phenomenal work rate and clarity of technique were a joy to behold.

A well-deserved silver went to Huang, while bronzes were won by Gutierrez and Javier Perez Polo of Spain.



NICE GUY WITH A HIT LIST

For Cho, life is ‘eat, train, sleep, repeat’

Mahama “It’s Cho Time” Cho

Great Britain

In a sport known for its nice-guy players, Mahama Cho is one of the nicest. And yet, he maintains a “hit list” of targets that he wants to “cross out” – a list that comprises some of the baddest fighters on earth.

And his current “hit list” is not his first.

His family emigrated from Cote d’Ivoire to Great Britain when Cho was eight. The youngster, with little understanding of the language or culture of his new home, found himself the victim of bullies at school. His father had been a fighter back home in the heavyweight category, and at first did not want to teach his son taekwondo for fear he would take bloody revenge.

“I am not going to lie,” Cho, now 28, revealed. “I did have a hit list that I wanted to cross out!” Still, his father relented and began coaching his son in the way of foot and fist. “As soon as my father taught me what taekwondo was about, it changed my thinking,” he said. “It taught me how to defuse situations, how to be in control.” He adds, “I don’t get bullied now!”

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Cho – who won heavyweight gold

***“The ring is my kingdom.
When I enter, I don’t go in to be
second best!”***

at the Rabat Grand Prix with a spinning kick that delivered a technical knockout – being pushed around today by anyone.

After earning his early competitive spurs in the British game, he crossed the Channel and fought for two years for Team France, racking up a range of victories across Europe, but failed to get French nationality. Having accrued significant competitive experience, he returned to GB with renewed vigor and joined the home team in 2012. Now a mainstay of Team GB, the heavy-weight added his victory in Rabat to a list of achievements that includes silver at the Muju 2017 World Championships and gold at the inaugural Manchester 2014 Grand Prix.

As Team GB’s top male heavyweight, he understands respect – not just how to offer it, but also how to command it. “I remember when I first came in, GB was not a team that struck fear, people were happy to fight us. Today can you say that? No!” he said. “No GB athlete is going to be easy, we are here to stamp a statement: ‘If you fight us, you’d better bring your A Game!’”

His team nickname, “It’s Cho Time!” (a word play on “It’s show time!”), is appropriate given his fighting style: In a field where many heavyweights are technically limited, he is the most active, versatile and entertaining fighter in the category. The inspiration for his style, he said, comes from his (smaller) teammates.

“With the speed and athleticism in our team – they are fast, they are agile, they take action all the time – I have to catch up with them, and I think if I can perform against them, it should be much easier against the heavyweights,” he said. “I want multiple action – I want to kick more than once. The team pushes me to do that.”

At home base in Manchester, the mecca of British taekwondo, hard training is the name of Cho’s game. Injury free – “I am a healthy baby!” he said – he reckons he trains harder than any other heavyweight. “Every day is an opportunity to build strength.”

The resultant physical conditioning is impressive. In Rabat, in the finals of the Grand Prix, he faced off against top-tier Russian Roman Kuznetsov, who had benefited from a by in the semi-final. Yet once the action got underway, Cho looked as fresh and active as his opponent. In fact, it was Cho’s mental, not physical conditioning, that was the key element, he revealed. “Physically my body was shattered, but mentally I was not.” He added, “Even when I have aches and pains, it is not something I show.”

And his wide technical arsenal makes up for his opponents’ height advantages. “I am not fazed by them or how tall they are, I believe in my ability because I am faster and have more weapons than them,” he said. “They look for one kick but I can catch them with more than one shot. It is not about height, it is about what you have got and who wants it more.”

The Briton’s entertaining style of play has caught the eye of top pundits. WT Technical Chairman Jin-bang Yang calls Cho “always entertaining.” WT TV commentator John Cullen has dubbed Cho’s unique switch-leg aerial kick “the jumping tiger kick.” And, in Rabat, he deployed his precision-engineered heel hook kick to TKO Kuznetsov. “It is not an easy technique to avoid and it works well,” he said of the latter kick. “I have learned to use it relatively well, it is becoming part of the style of how I fight.”

Yet despite his hyper-toned physique and bristling arsenal of well-oiled techniques, Cho is widely known by everyone in taekwondo as one of the nicest guys in the game. “Outside the ring, I am probably the softest person ever,” he said. “I tend to engage a lot with the community and with my team mates, I interact with everyone and sit down and have meals.”

But can this all-round nice guy summon up the killer instinct required to win at the highest levels of what is, after all, a combat sport? Don’t underestimate “Cho Time.” “The ring is my kingdom,” he said. “When I enter, I don’t go in to be second best!”

This brings us back to Cho’s current “hit list” – a list comprising those fighters who have beaten him, but who he has not yet beaten. His win in Rabat qualifies him for the upcoming Grand Slam Champions Series, which will offer the biggest prize money in taekwondo history. It will also offer him an opportunity for revenge. “I am excited to get an opportunity to rectify unfinished business,” he said. “To be the best, you have to beat the best.” Topping his list are Rio 2016’s gold and silver medalists: the towering duo of Azerbaijan’s Radik Isaev and Niger’s Abdoul Razak Issoufou Alfaga.

“My hit list is shortened,” Cho said. “But it’s not as short as I would like it!”

Athlete in Focus

“Taekwondo taught me how to defuse situations, how to be in control. I don’t get bullied now!”



Mahama Cho At a Glance:

Hobby Watching movies on Netflix.

Favorite Movie ‘Yip Man.’

Favorite Food Peanut butter stew.

Why Taekwondo When you come here and see all the athletes you can smell the adrenalin, can see the fear in the eyes, and when they go out, they give 110 percent, but when it is over you see the family, the togetherness, the sportsmanship. It is the most respectful sport out there, nothing else is close, I value it a lot. It makes you understand the value of life.

Motto Eat, train, sleep, repeat.

Battle of Britain

Team GB's home turf heroes win big in London

LONDON, GB

Oct. 20-22, 2017

Taekwondo returned to London for the first time since the 2012 Olympic Games when the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 3 came to town.

Ahead of the semi-finals and finals, a moment's silence was paid in memory of Un Yong Kim, the founding president of World Taekwondo, who passed away on Oct. 3. With the event taking place in the London 2012 Olympic venue, The Copper Box, the crowd summoned memories of the famous Olympic Games with thunderous support. Spectators were assisted by the "Power Bar" which was intro-

duced by World Taekwondo for the very first time as part of the federation's commitment to enhancing fan engagement and making the sport easier to understand. The "Power Bar" provided fans with visual representations of the strength of athletes' strikes, allowing spectators to understand why some strikes registered points and others did not. On the mats, it was action all the way with the hometown fighters leveraging the hometown advantage to delight the hometown fans with a cluster of medals.





W
-67kg

The finale of the women's -67kg produced the fight of the Grand Prix so far. Current World Champion Ruth Gbagbi from Cote d'Ivoire took on Lauren Williams from Great Britain in the final. Both fighters started very quickly with Williams taking an early lead; however, the points were deemed to have been scored illegally by the referee and the score was reduced to 3-1 to Williams. After a frantic first round, Gbagbi finished 15-13 up. A push kick from Williams at the start of the second round gave her one point to close the gap and set the tone for a second round which saw Williams land two head shots and four kicks to the trunk protector to go into the final round 31-15 up. Cheered on by a jubilant home crowd, Williams looked to continue where she left off, scoring a punch early on

followed by a kick to trunk protector and another punch. A gamjeom took the score to 36-15. Gbagbi fought back landing a number of kicks to the trunk protector and a headshot but it wasn't enough and Williams claimed the gold medal with a 43-23 victory. The bronze medals were won by Matea Jelic from Croatia and USA's Paige McPherson. Williams and McPherson met in the first semi-final just a few weeks after having fought each other in the final of the President's Cup in Las Vegas. Williams had come out on top on that occasion and while McPherson hoped to avenge that defeat, she was not able to overcome Williams despite a valiant effort and lost 32-26. In the second semi-final Gbagbi had come up against Jelic. After a tight and tense match Gbagbi came out the victor with a score of 7-6.

M
+80kg

In the men's +80kg, the relative new comer, Rafail Aiukaev from Russia, took on Korea's Kyo-don In who came into London on the back of a bronze medal at the Grand Prix in Rabat and silver in Moscow. In took an early lead with a kick to the body protector followed by a head shot to take a 5-0 lead. Gamjeoms for both competitors saw the first round finish 6-1. Both competitors landed kicks to the trunk protectors at the start of the second round and were both penalised with a gamjeom giving In a 9-4 lead. Aiukaev brought it back to 9-6 which it finished in the second round. The third round followed a similar pattern. Gamjeoms for both fighters at the beginning of the third round kept the gap at three points. Chasing the match, Aiukaev attempted a spinning kick but fell to the

matt resulting in a gamjeom then he was penalized again for a kick below the belt. With 10 seconds to go In finished with a flurry as he landed a head kick to win the match 15-8. The bronze medals were won by Great Britain's Mahama Cho and Iran's Sajjad Mardani. Despite coming into the match on the back of a gold medal at the Grand Prix in Rabat, Cho was unable to make it to the final and lost 8-5. The second semi-final match was fought between Mardani and In. Mardani led for long periods of the match but In came from behind in the third round to take the score to 5-5 and force the match to a golden point round. Neither fighter was able to land a golden point and so it went down to the PSS and which fighter had registered the higher number of hits in that final round - which was In.

M
-68kg

The men's -68kg final saw Olympic Champion Ahmad Abughaush from Jordan, face Great Britain's young Bradley Sinden. Both fighters started quickly, attempting a number of head shots without success. After a scoreless first round, the second round continued along similar lines with the

two fighters remaining composed as they looked to take a foothold in the match. With just 20 seconds of the second round remaining, Abughaush took the lead with a punch only to be pegged back immediately by a kick to the body protector from Sinden. Abughaush took the lead 3-2 in the third round but a head kick restored Sinden's lead. A quick reply from Abughaush with a kick to the trunk protector saw the match finish out at 5-5. A golden point round was needed to settle the match but with a few seconds remaining it looked like neither fighter was going to land the golden point - only for Abughaush to manage it in the dying moments.

Joel Gonzalez Bonilla from Spain and Alexey Denisenko from Russia shared the bronze medals. Sinden had met Gonzalez Bonilla in the first semi-final. Despite going in as the clear favorite, the Olympic bronze medallist, Gonzalez Bonilla, could not overcome the home favorite and lost the match 16-9. The second semi-final saw Abughaush and Denisenko match up once again, with both fighters well aware of each other from the Olympic final at Rio 2016. The match did not disappoint, finishing 19-17 to Abughaush.

W
-57kg

The women's -57kg saw two-time Olympic gold medalist, Jade Jones face the current world champion Ah-reum Lee from Korea. The two had met at the World Championships earlier this year with Lee coming out on top on that occasion. Jones came out quickly and took an early lead with a

kick to the trunk protector. A gamjeom and a kick to the head followed by another gamjeom and another kick to the head extended Jones' lead to 11-0. Lee fought back with a kick to the trunk protector to take the score to 11-2 but three gamjeoms saw the round finish 12-4. The second round started with the same intensity as the previous round finished with both fighters registering points. Lee landed a kick to the trunk protector to narrow the gap but a punch from Jones followed closely by a gamjeom restored Jones' lead. The second round finished 19-8. In the third round Jones maintained the intensity she is known for and worked a succession of front kicks to the trunk protector to take a 25-9 lead. An excellent head shot from Lee gave her three points but Jones proved too strong and finished the match 31-14 much to the delight of the home crowd.

The bronze medals were won by Russia's Tatiana Kudashova and Poland's Patrycja Adamkiewicz. Jones and Kudashova met in the first semi-final of the night. After a close opening round, Jones began to edge away in the second and added to her lead in the third, finishing the match 25-10. Adamkiewicz fought Lee in the second of the semi-finals. The match followed a similar pattern to the first semi-final with the opening round remaining tight before Lee pulled away in the second and third round to win the match 29-11.



M
-58kg

In the men's -58kg final, Armin Hadipour Seighalani from Iran and silver medalist from the 2017 World Championships, Mikhail Artamonov of Russia matched up against each other. The two fighters had never fought before and the first round finished pointless with both athletes getting to know each other's style. In the second round, both athletes showed excellent cover and footwork and while they tried to mix up it, no points were registered. The fighters remained patient in the third round, keeping their distance and looking for a route in. But that route never came and the round finished 0-0, forcing a golden point round. It looked like once again neither athlete would manage to score but with just five seconds to go, Artamonov landed a head shot to win the gold.

The bronze medals were won by Tawin Hanprab from Thailand and Jesus Tortosa Cabrera from Spain, who had won bronze medals at the two previous Grand Prix in Moscow and Rabat. Hanprab matched up against Hadipour Seighalani in the semi-final. Hadipour Seighalani led for the majority of the match but was pegged back to 7-7 by Hanprab with under 30 seconds to go forcing the match to a golden point round. Despite Hanprab's valiant comeback, he lost the match as Hadipour Seighalani scored just two seconds into the round. Tortosa Cabrera and Artamonov fought in the second of the semi-finals. It was a tight and tense affair with neither athlete managing to register a point in the first three rounds, leading to a golden point round. As he did in the final, Artamonov won by a golden point.

W
+67kg

The women's +67kg saw two-time World Champion, Bianca Walkden, face Aleksandra Kowalczyk of Poland. Walkden came into the final having won gold at the last two Grand Prix and was looking to win her country's second gold of the night. A gamjeom gave Kowalczyk an early lead and quietened the crowd, but an excellent head kick over the shoulder from Walkden followed by gamjeom from both players took the score to 4-2 in Walkden's favor. Walkden landed another head shot but was penalized for holding immediately after, taking the score to 7-3. Two kicks to the trunk protector and a punch from Kowalczyk saw the first round finish 11-4. In the second round both fighters battled it out to take control of the centre of the court. A kick to the trunk protector extended Walkden's lead and a gamjeom from both fighters saw the round finish 14-5. In the final round neither fighter was able to register any kicks in the early stages and both gave away gamjeoms. However, a head shot from Walkden extended her lead to 18-7. Two gamjeoms ended the match 20-7 and earned Walkden the gold.

The bronze medals were shared between Briseida Acosta from Mexico and Da-bin Lee from Korea. Walkden and Acosta fought in the first of the two semi-finals. Walkden took an early lead which she maintained, but a spinning kick to the head from Acosta brought the scores level in the third round. With the clock ticking down Walkden managed to land a head kick of her own and win the match 13-11. Kowalczyk took on Lee in the other semi-final. Lee came into the match on form having won bronze at the Moscow Grand Prix but was not able to overcome the challenge of Kowalczyk who won the match 20-11.

W
-49kg

The final in the women's -49kg brought together the silver medalist from the 2017 World Championships, Panipak Wongpattanakit from Thailand and silver medalist from Rio 2016, Tijana Bogdanovic from Serbia. Wongpattanakit started the match strongly taking a 2-0 lead with a hook kick followed by a head shot over the shoulder to go 5-0 up. Another head shot, followed by a punch, push kick and another punch gave her a 14-0 lead at the end of the first round. Wongpattanakit continued her ascendancy in the second round with a kick to the trunk protector and a gamjeom extending her lead to 17-0. A kick to the trunk protector from Bogdanovic either side of a head kick and body kick from Wongpattanakit took the score to 22-2. The round finished 23-2. In the third round, Wongpattanakit proved too strong and with a flurry of head kicks, punches and kicks to the trunk protector she won the match 44-6. The bronze medals were won by Brazil's Iris Tang Sing and Turkey's Rukiye Yildirim. The first semi-final of the day was between Wongpattanakit and Tang Sing. Tang Sing led for the majority of the first two rounds but the second round finished 7-7. In the third round Wongpattanakit stepped it up a gear and pulled away to book her place in the final with a 21-12 victory. The second semi-final brought together Bogdanovic and Yildirim. It was a very close fight with both fighters in the lead at various points but with 30 seconds to go of the final round Yildirim was able to stamp her authority on the match to win 25-16.

M
-80kg

In the men's -80kg Olympic gold medallist Cheick Sallah Cisse from Côte d'Ivoire fought the current World Champion, Maksim Khramtcov from Russia. A push from Cisse gave Khramtcov an early 1-0 lead which he followed up with a punch. Cisse responded with a punch of his own and gamjeom followed by a body shot took the score to 5-2 to Cisse. Gamjeoms from both players brought the score to 6-3 but Cisse finished strongly with a shot to the trunk protector and forced Khramtcov off the mat to finish the first round 9-3. Both fighters defended well in the second round showing great movement and control of the mat. With 30 seconds of the round remaining, Cisse landed two excellent body shots in a row with the round finishing 13-5. In the final round the pace slowed with neither fighter being able to land many meaningful shots. Khramtcov landed a head shot with seconds remaining but it was too little too late and Cisse won the match 14-11. The bronze medals were won by Raul Martinez Garcia of Spain and Aaron Cook of Moldova. The first semi-final was fought between Cisse and Martinez Garcia. A push kick gave Cisse a 2-0 lead within seconds of the first round and from there he did not look back, winning the match 23-7. The second final saw Cook and Khramtcov fight each other once again. The two fighters fought in the Moscow Grand Prix final with Khramtcov coming out on top on that occasion. It was a close and tactical fight but Khramtcov's defence and counters proved too much and he won the match 33-19.



FIGHTING BACK

**Korean heavyweight beats
opponents – and cancer**

Kyo-Don “The Bear” In KOREA

Team Korea's Kyo-don In won gold against the world's best taekwondo fighters at the London Grand Prix Series 3 – but the hard-kicking opponents on the mats were far less formidable than the deadly enemy In has been battling in recent years.

In started the sport at age seven, and by 10, was competing. Always a big, strong lad, he was nicknamed “The Bear.” An obvious talent, he decided to major in taekwondo at the elite, martial art-focused Yongin University in Korea. As a fighter, he first came to global prominence when he won gold at the 2015 Summer Universiade in Gwangju, Korea.

Then, at the age of 21 in 2013 the hard-driving In discovered a lump on his neck. “I left it at the time, because I thought it was related to muscle, since I exercised hard every day,” he recalled. “But it stayed there for over a year.” He finally visited a doctor. After several examinations, he was told what the problem was. What he learned stunned him.

LOTTERY



"The doctor diagnosed a malignant lymphoma, which is very bad," In said. "I could not believe it! I never thought that I would get cancer." In August 2014, at the age of 22, he underwent surgery. The surgery was successful but he was still not out of the danger zone.

Post-surgery, "The Bear" began the fight of his life.

From September to December, he underwent a range of traumatic treatments. "It was very painful," he said. "I not only lost my appetite, even the smell of food made me nauseous." As the treatment continued, In's agony

skyrocketed. "It got worse as it continued," he said. "I thought it would be better to die if I had to receive more treatment, because it was so painful." His thoughts drifted to suicide.

Adding further to his depression was the enforced inaction of a young man who had so recently been a best-of-breed athlete. Declining to stay in hospital, he remained at his student dorm during his treatment. Even though he could not train, he kept up his academic classes. Making things worse, he had not told his fellow students about his affliction. "Because of my hair loss due to the treatment,

I always wore hats when I was in class," he said. "So people often made fun of me."

And the decline in his physical condition was impossible to mask. "One time, I met a referee who I know by chance and he said, 'How can a taekwondo athlete have a body like you? You must manage your body!'" In was devastated. "I was very upset and had to cry in secret," he said.

Yet he persevered with the treatment, and resumed training. The comeback was a struggle. "After I was told that I was cured in December 2014, I tried to fight in January 2015, but if I tried to move even a bit, I felt sick," he said. "My



"My coach kind of gives up on me during competitions, because he knows that I just do whatever I want to do on the mats!"

I officially began fighting from March 2015."

He was fully back on form by 2016, winning gold at the Asia Championships in Manila, Philippines. Now, in 2017, he is surging: In is one of the most consistent medalists in the heavyweight division. He captured bronze at the World Championships in Muju, Korea, silver at the Grand Prix Series 1 in Moscow, Russia, gold at the President's Cup, Asia Region, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, bronze in the Grand Prix Series 2 in Rabat, Morocco, and gold at the Grand Prix Series 3 in London, Great Britain, a victory that qualifies him for the new, big-money Grand Slam Champions Series at the beginning of 2018.

The speed of his return to form has surprised even In himself: "I got better result than I expected in Grand Prix series," he admitted.

Unlike most athletes, who study their opponent's in painstaking detail, In said he only cares about his own game. "My coach kind of gives up on me during competitions, because he knows that I just do whatever I want to do on the mats!" he laughed. His key advantage, he assesses, is timing rather than power. "I am tall but I am comparatively smaller than other athletes in my weight category," he said. "My

strength is that I know what to do at the right moment; I can figure out the situation very quickly and control the game." In terms of kicks, he likes front and back kicks, and tends to pick up points for head kicks. When it comes to kick placement, he is more of a sniper more than a machine gunner. "I kick when I find the unguarded point of the opponent," he said.

Now fully cured, his sights are set on the new Grand Slam series, though he confesses he does not really get what the concept of the nascent series is. He is also in the final stage of getting his masters in Physical Education at Yongin, "...but because I'm busy with competitions, I cannot focus on writing my dissertation!" After his competitive career finishes, he sees a future outside the game.

"I want to do something that is not related to taekwondo and I like meeting new people so I want to do my own business," he mused. "A restaurant will be good – grilled pork belly!" In the sense of food, at least, In is lucky: "I play in the +80kg category, so I don't need to care as much [about making the weight] as athletes in other weight categories," he said. Then he added, "But, I still need to make shape!"

Having defeated cancer – In is now fully recovered, though he still undergoes checkups twice yearly – he warns that nobody should take life or health for granted.

"There is a saying, 'Every word, indeed, is a seed,'" he said. "As I never thought that I would get cancer, I often talked about the disease very lightly and easily. But, as I was diagnosed with cancer, I thought that I should act and speak carefully all the time: You never know what will happen to you, or to anyone around you."

Kyo-don In At a Glance:

Hobby Listening to music and playing games at Internet cafés: I play Battle Ground these days.

Favorite Song 'Talk Through The Mind' by K-pop band Freestyle.

Favorite Movie Marvel series like 'The Avengers'

Favorite Food Grilled pork belly.

Why Taekwondo I found the kicks cool when I was a child, but I think I continued with it because I was good.

Motto You only live once.

FEROCIOUS IN THE FIGHT, Quiet in the Spotlight

Rising star personifies offensive taekwondo

Lauren Williams

Great Britain

At just 18 years old, Lauren Williams has already made quite the name for herself. At the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 3 in London it wasn't just her first senior gold medal which caught the eye - but also the manner in which she went about winning it.

The draw certainly didn't make it easier for her. In the quarter finals she met the current -67kg World Champion Nur Tatar from Turkey, in the semi-final it was Paige McPherson from the USA who won silver at this year's World Championships and in the final she fought the -62kg current World Champion.

But the relatively inexperienced fighter didn't let that phase her. "At the Worlds, I think I doubted

myself too much and I put too much pressure on myself," Williams said. But at this competition I didn't put anyone above me and I said to myself I'm just going to enjoy it; I don't really care about the outcome I just want to put a better performance in regardless of who I come up against; I'm just going to try my best."

"The girls that I beat are up there. They're world champions, they're Olympians, so to beat them - that's a massive confidence boost for myself."

Williams certainly didn't give the impression of being overawed by her opponents or the occasion. In each of her matches she came out quickly and tried to immediately stamp her authority on the match.





"I've always been an aggressive fighter. I've never gone into a fight wanting to sit back and relax, I've always wanted to go fight and put in a good performance so I don't think I'll ever lose that. That's something I enjoy: that intensity"

"I've always been an aggressive fighter. I've never gone into a fight wanting to sit back and relax, I've always wanted to go fight and put in a good performance so I don't think I'll ever lose that. That's something I enjoy: that intensity."

That intensity paid off with her registering 43 points in the final and 32 in the semi-final. But she recognizes that aggressive play doesn't come without its risks.

"I enjoy high scoring matches. I like looking for my next point and trying to score as many points as I can but sometimes it's not always beneficial. If I'm against clever players they'll pick me off and sometimes I need to rein it in and be a bit more on tactic and not as crazy. It's just being clever about that and channelling that aggression in the right direction and using it at the right times."

Williams humbly credits the home crowd for giving her that extra edge in London. "The crowd were amazing for me and I think it made a massive difference. I've never fought at a competition like this in front of a home crowd and it was a brand new experience for myself. It really made a difference. I had pretty much my entire family there as well and they've never seen me compete before, just my dad."

The sense of unity in Team GB is another factor she attributes to her recent success. "We all train together and push each other," she explains. "We are one of the strongest girl's teams and that is down to our train-

ing. We commit all the time and we're always pushing each other."

Speaking to Williams for just a short period of time it is clear just how much she loves the sport and competing. "I just enjoy going out and competing. For me it's not about the money at all. It's just about enjoying the fight so it doesn't matter what competition it is, I'm up for any competition."

There are plenty of competitions for her to look forward to. The World Taekwondo Grand Prix final in December 2017, next year's World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Manchester, the World Championships in Manchester the year after that and the pinnacle: the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Williams is excited about what these competitions can bring but her feet remain firmly on the ground. Pushed on whether she'll be aiming for gold at the Grand Prix final she reveals winning a medal of any color is her aim - as is putting in another performance like that in London.

For the home World Championships she's not putting pressure on herself for another medal.

Displaying maturity beyond her years, she says: "I just want to put in a better performance. On the day I can't control what happens, so as long as I put in the best performance I can; that's all I want and all I can ask for."



Action in Abidjan

The action is as hot as the weather in Cote d'Ivoire

ABIDJAN, Cote d'Ivoire

Dec. 2-3, 2017

Team GB's Bianca "Queen Bee" Walkden sealed a historic victory at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final in Cote d'Ivoire, while hometown hero and Rio Olympic gold medalist Cheick Sallah "Fearless" Cisse emerged victorious in one of the most dramatic taekwondo matches in recent memory - one that may become legendary in the sport.

As the last Grand Prix event of the year got underway, the sweltering heat in Abidjan's Palais de Sports de Treichville was matched by a sizzling ambience as the local crowd - including drummers, trumpeters and dance troupes - unleashed the kind of noise usually heard at Premier League football matches. But in defiance of the temperature - athletes coming off the mats were so drenched in sweat that they looked as if they had been swimming, rather than fighting - the players delivered some hyper action. WT President Chungwon Choue addressed the audience, noting that 2017 marked the first time a Grand Prix event had been held in Africa - in Rabat, Morocco - and also the first time that the Grand Prix Final had been held in Africa - in Abidjan.

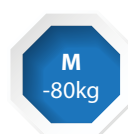
"The African continent is now a really important part of the world taekwondo family," Choue said. "I believe this Grand Prix Final will enhance the development not only of Cote d'Ivoirian taekwondo, but the whole African continent."

President of the Cote d'Ivoirian Taekwondo Federation Cheick Daniel Bamba reinforced the message. "Taekwondo is shining!" he said.

Cote d'Ivoire's Minister of Sport, Francois Amicha, received a plaque of appreciation from Choue, as did Governor of the Autonomous District of Abidjan, Robert Beugre Mambe.



Grand Prix Final Abidjan



In the final of the category, Maksim Khramtcov of Russia went into battle against local hero and Olympic gold medalist Cheick Sallah “Fearless” Cisse of Cote d’Ivoire – who danced onto the mats to rapturous applause and delighted chanting. What followed will be remembered in taekwondo’s collective memory as one of the sport’s all-time epics. Cisse, who had been fighting like a devil all day, attacked forward from the opening buzzer, but the Russian remained calm and took a three point lead – then shook the local hero with a molar-rattling head kick. Round 1 ended 8-3 to Khramtcov. Cisse drew first blood in the second round, before action stopped as both coaches furiously appealed points scored in a torrid clash. The board was reset: 9-6 to the Russian. What followed was some fine play, with Khramtcov visiting the mats and the board going to 9-9, then 10-9 to Cisse and the crowd exploding – before the Russian equalized. This was “game on” with a vengeance. Cisse landed a round kick to the head, then retreated from a leaping ax kick from the Russia. The drama the rose another notch with yet more coach appeals: This was a battle royale: The round ended 16-12 to Cisse, with the crowd roaring manically, stamping feet and sounding horns. Round 3 was war from the opening buzzer: A battle of cool Russian finesse versus scorching Cote d’Ivorian ferocity. The score went to 21-21,

but the Russian – finally – seemed to be tiring. Meanwhile Cisse, buoyed by the crowd, seemed to be hyper energized, taking the fight forward and going 27-21 up. He sent the Russian flying with a side kick, then buffeted him with a back kick. The two coaches were as animated as the fighters as the seconds counted down and the scoreboard rung up hits from both warriors like a pinball machine. Khramtcov connected with a head kick, taking the score 29- 29 – but it was disallowed for holding. The battle ended 33-28 with a gold for Cisse, a superb silver for Khramtcov – and with the referee probably deserving a bonus. “The most exciting game!” enthused WT President Chungwon Choue, shaking his head. “Amazing! Beautiful!” was all an emotional Daniel Bamba, president of the Cote d’Ivoire taekwondo federation, could say. In an unscripted moment, the tournament was briefly halted as Cisse, wielding a national flag, ran a lap of honor. Then – in an unprecedented move – he charged up onto the VIP stand to pay respects to his master, to Choue, and to Bamba. In the bronze medal match, Yassine Trabelsi of Tunisia and Nikita Rafalovich of Uzbekistan battled to a 13-13 draw. In golden point, the Tunisian launched an athletic, high-kicking offensive, but it was Rafalovich who connected with a body kick to take the match.



In the final, double World Champion Bianca “Queen Bee” Walkden of Great Britain took on Da-bin Lee of Korea. The Korean, giving away a height advantage to the British girl, scored first blood, but Walkden – who has won all three Grand Prix so far this year – soon showed her quality, racking up hits and ending the first 9-3. A grab by Walkden in the second cost her a penalty point, but she maintained her lead against Lee, who bought the score up to 7-9 against the Brit. In the third, a short, sharp spin back kick put Walkden up 11-7 as Lee attacked forward, but then the Korean fell. As combat continued, Walkden used her feet to keep her out of danger, playing a cool game against the attacking Korean. In a display of technical skill, tactical nous and mastery of both the long and the close range, the Queen Bee won 16-9 to take the gold, leaving Lee a well-merited silver. With her victory, Walkden had written a page in taekwondo history: Never before has a fighter won all four of a single year’s Grand Prix titles. The bronze medal match pitted Shuyin Zheng of China against Milica Mandic of Serbia. The Chinese player won 16-11.



Grand Prix Final **Abidjan**

M
-58kg

The final saw World Champion Tae-hun Kim of Korea, who has also won two of the year's three Grand Prix prior to Abidjan, face off against Farzan "The Tsunami" Ashourzadeh Fallah of Iran.

The Iranian is a nervy fighter with a wide arsenal of techniques, while Kim is perhaps the finest round kicker in the game – a weapon he wields ambidextrously. So this would be a clash of styles: The tricky Iranian against the deadly professional Kim. The first round ended with Lee 5-2 up. The second saw Kim unleash a jumping side kick – highly unusual in competition – before settling down and scoring again and again in a flurry, going 9-2 up. The Korean continued to stalk the Iranian, ending the round 12-2. In the final round, Ashourzadeh Fallah fought forward, but was hitting air as the Korean maintained critical distance, while keeping Ashourzadeh Farzan at bay with his counter kick. As the seconds counted down, an apparently disheartened Ashourzadeh Fallah seemed unwilling to press any more attacks – or even fully extend his kicks. It ended 14-2 with gold for Kim and silver for The Tsunami.

In the bronze medal match, Mikhail Artamonov of Russia lost to Spain's Jesus Tortosa Cabrera, 30-4.

W
-49kg

The high-kicking Panipak Wongpattanakit of Thailand took on defensive master-player and 2016 Olympic gold medalist So-hui Kim of Korea. In Round 1, contrary to her usual counter-attacking game, Kim charged out, putting the taller Thai on the back foot, but it was Wongpattankit's target radar that was locked on and she landed accurately, leveraging her height advantage and ending the first round 14-7 up. The second round saw long-range side kick dueling, then tense clinch work at the edge of the mats, ending 18-10 to Wongpattanakit. In the third, Kim chased the Thai across the mats, but could not match her kick placement and the Thai extended her lead: in the last minute, the board stood at 22-11. In the last 30 seconds, Kim fought forward in a surge of attacks, but fell mid-spin as she tried to land a high-scoring spin kick to the head. It ended 25-11, with gold for the Thai and silver for the Korean.

Thi Kim Tuyen Truong of Vietnam won the bronze after defeating Turkey's Rukiye Yildirim, 27-17



W
-67kg

In the final, Rio 2016 Olympic gold medalist and 2015 world champion Hye-ri Oh of Korea took on 2014 Asian Games Champion Yunfei Guo of China. The match would provide

the big surprise of the evening.

Guo landed first, going two points up, then Oh landed a crescent kick to the head from the clinch; it was disallowed for holding. She scored immediately after with a punch for a point, but Guo responded with accurate kicks, taking the board to 10-2. In the second, Guo's target radar remained locked on, and she went 14-2 up. Oh looked visibly shocked to be falling so far behind as Guo continued to score with a range of techniques. The round ended 21-3 to Guo. Oh is a master at coming back from behind, but she now faced a very wide point gap indeed.

Oh seemed to regain confidence in the third round, but Guo continued to score. Oh landed a head kick – again it was disallowed for holding, leading to a coach video replay appeal. Disallowed. Again, Guo scored, going 25-8. Oh desperately attacked forward, but was eating kicks. The match ended 31-9 to Guo – a tremendous victory for the Chinese girl over an opponent of Oh's quality.

Local heroine Ruth Gbagbi of Cote d'Ivoire beat Paige McPherson of USA for bronze.



W
-57kg

In the final of the category, Jade “The Welsh Wonder” Jones, Team GB’s double Olympic gold medalist, took on Marta Calvo Gomez of Spain. This match had a curious undercurrent: Marta’s sister, Eva, Jones’ longtime rival, had retired after losing to the Briton at the Rio 2016 Olympics. Could Marta win a revenge victory on her sister’s behalf? Jones’ stabbing side kick opened the scoring, then she piled into Calvo Gomez, establishing an early dominance. Racking up points with head kicks and side kicks she kept Calvo Gomez on the back foot, taking the first, 11-3. The second round continued in similar fashion. Jones battled forward with side kicks and heels hooking up into the Spaniard’s body protector. Calvo Gomez responded with front leg oblique kicks and round kicks on the mid-line, but was clearly being overpowered. The round ended 13-4 to Jones. In the third, Jones surged forward, forcing her opponent off the mats, then landing another of her trademark high kicks – another nickname for “The Welsh Wonder” is “The Headhunter.” The Spanish player was literally being outgunned and outfought, going into injury break after a facial clash. In the final seconds, Calvo Gomez tried some more muscular techniques, including spinning kicks, but Jones continued to blast forward, ending the game 26-7. It had been a display of fierce skill, granting Jones her second Grand Prix title in a row, following her gold medal at Series 3 in London. Calvo Gomez took silver, and in the bronze medal match, Tatiana Kudashova faced off against Russian team-mate Ekaterina Kim, winning in over-time after the two drew 9-9 in the regular rounds.



M
+80kg

In the final of the heavyweight category, Kyo-don “The Bear” In of Korea – who has recently won a battle against cancer – went to war against Vladislav Larin of Russia. The first round was an unsatisfying affair: A war of nerves in the center of the mats, interspersed with probing kicks and the referee imploring both fighters to fight. It ended 0-0. The second round started with a burst of action and some clinch work, then returned to psychological warfare; it also ended score-free. In the third, there were brief flurries of single-strike action and apparent connections – but no scores lit up the board. Remarkably, the round also ended 0-0. In golden point, In attacked forward – but it was Larin who scored on the retreat with a crafty round kick to the body – taking the gold medal with just two points scored in the entire match. Abdoul Issoufou of Niger defeated Sajjad Mardani of Iran for the bronze.



M
-68kg

The final was a dream match-up as Korea’s Dae-hoon Lee faced off against Alexey Denisenko of Russia. Lee is super-fit and a brilliant technician with a wide arsenal, while the Russian is one of the trickiest fighters in the sport, with a wide range of high-flying and unorthodox techniques. But the match was particularly special for Lee. He has already won two Grand Prix Finals – in Mexico City 2015 and Baku, Azerbaijan in 2016 – meaning that a win in Abidjan would give him a hat trick. Denisenko drew first blood with a heel hook kick to Lee’s head as the Korean charged forward, but Lee quickly got into his stride and connected as both men exchanged high kicks. The board rose 8-5 to Lee. In the second round, Denisenko bought the score up to 7-8 as he and Lee duelled with round, ax, side and hook kicks – a thrilling display of weaponry from both players. Lee landed an arcing ax kick to Denisenko’s head protector

that drew gasps from the spectators; the Russian responded with a jump spinning back kick and the board rang up to 12-10. The round ended on that score, with Lee ahead. Round 3 promised fireworks – and delivered. Lee landed his round kick to the body, upping his score to 14. Fighting forward, he kept Denisenko on the edge of the mats – sound ring control from the Korean. In the final 30 seconds, Denisenko tried jumping ax kicks as he surged into top gear and the seconds counted down. Lee was penalized and the scoreboard went to 13-14, but the Korean master player had timed it perfectly: The buzzer went. That meant a well-earned silver for Denisenko, gold for Lee – and his third Grand Prix Final title in a row; a historic achievement. Yu-jen Huang of Chinese Taipei defeated Jaouad Achab of Belgium for the bronze.



“Bianca is Great Britain’s gift to taekwondo. Not only is she a superb player, she also has that special something: charisma”

-WT President Chungwon Choue



SIMPLY UNBEATABLE

Great Britain’s gift to taekwondo writes history

Bianca Walkden

Great Britain

On the evening of Dec. 4, Team Great Britain’s Bianca “Queen Bee” Walkden crowned a perfect year by being named World Taekwondo’s Best Female Athlete of the Year at the federation’s fourth annual Gala Awards at Abidjan’s Radisson Blue Hotel.

The normally eloquent Briton seemed overcome with emotion as she took to the podium. “I want to say ‘thank you’ to everyone, I am still shocked, I am so pleased,” she said.

The glittering (and well air-conditioned) gala dinner was light years away from where she had written history just two nights earlier.

In the sapping heat of Abidjan’s Palais de Sports de Treichville, in the women’s +67kg category, the sweat-drenched 26-year-old wielded an arsenal of stabbing side kicks, killer round kicks and arcing ax kicks to win the 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final over Team Korea’s Da-bin Lee in convincing style, 16-9.

That win capped the “Queen Bee’s” earlier victories in the 2017 Grand Prix Series 1, 2 and 3, held respectively, in Moscow, Russia; Rabat, Morocco; and London, Great Britain. It marked the first time a fighter of either gender, in any weight category, had won an entire Grand Prix series – an elite-level series of four annual tournaments that invite only the top-ranked Olympic players.

“I was really emotional, I started crying,” Walkden said about the aftermath of her win. “I did not realize how much it meant to me, I did

not realize I would be that happy – I cried more here than when I won the Worlds.”

After a disappointing bronze at Rio in 2016, all Walkden’s stars have aligned in 2017. Unbeatable and totally dominant in her category, she successfully defended her world championship title in Muju, Korea this summer, on top of the historic Grand Prix run.

The Briton, who started taekwondo at age 11, is the full package: She combines a leonine physique with good looks, weapons-grade skills, a truckload of personal charm and a quirky Liverpool sense of humor. “Bianca is Great Britain’s gift to taekwondo,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “Not only is she a superb player, she also has that special something: charisma.”

But Walkden’s taekwondo odyssey has not been easy: The road to success has been paved with pain and despair.

From Agony to Victory

Walkden’s first major win was at the 2011 European Championships – but her career almost ended with a torn ACL that year. “That made me miss the London Olympics which I was devastated about,” she said; she was forced to watch from the sidelines as roommate Jade Jones captured gold. She was in recovery when – heartbreakingly – she tore the ACL on her other knee in 2014, just as she was gearing up for the 2015 World Championships.

Worse than the pain was the uncertainty. “The operations and the training and the rehab were not the hardest thing, it was the mental side: Trying to learn to walk and kick again and always thinking, ‘Could it snap again?’” Walkden recalled. “Taekwondo is a very complex game and it could go wrong at any time; I still have niggles.”

To “Queen Bee’s” credit, just eight months after her second ACL surgery, she was not only walking, she was fighting at the highest level. She won the heavyweight title at the 2015 Worlds against French taekwondo legend Gwladys Epangue, turning the match around in the last four seconds with an ax kick to the head. Since then, she has been on a surge.

Her success stems from a fanatical work ethic. “She wins a Grand Prix on Saturday evening and on Sunday morning, she is back working out,” said WT Technical Committee Vice Chairman Philippe Bouedo. “She has determination, she is a hard worker, she is a consummate professional,” added Team GB Performance Director Gary Hall. “She is one of the first into the gym and one of the last to leave.”

At the Pinnacle of the Game

Currently, Walkden is the toast of the sport. “Everyone respects her, she is ceaseless in fighting, exerting all her energy, always putting in her best effort,” said WT Technical Committee Chair Jin-bang Yang. “Most coaches envy that, they want to learn from her.” She is even the envy of the sport’s top team, Korea – from whence taekwondo originated as a domestic martial art in the 1950s, before morphing into a global combat sport in the 1980s.

There is now just one title remaining that Walkden lusts after: Olympic gold. “I want it all, and the last one is the Olympics,” she said. “I will give everything I have got for the entire Tokyo Olympic cycle.”

But can she maintain her current peak through 2020? “Nothing is guaranteed in a full-contact sport with injuries, so we make sure to review every event and assess and plan to make progress,” said Hall.

The Journey Continues

One person who will be alongside Walkden on the track to Tokyo is her superstar roommate, teammate and best mate – double Olympic gold medalist Jade Jones.

“There is something special in Bianca, though she was hidden in the

shadow of Jade Jones,” said Swiss referee Walid Younas. “She has got this positivity – this motor that drives her and which helps pull along the youngsters in the GB female team.” About Jones, Walkden has much to say. “We are on this massive journey together; we know the pressure, what it takes to train.” Walkden said. “We are friends for life and do whatever we can for each other: She is an inspiration to me as well as my best friend.”

Kind words are typical Walkden – one of the friendliest players in one of the world’s friendliest sports.

“The way she conducts herself off the mat is what is so endearing about her,” said TV Commentator John Cullen. “She is a very giving person.” “She plays with the young kids, talks with them, takes selfies with them,” added Bouedo. “She is very nice with the people who clean the venue, she makes jokes with the media and with colleagues: She is fun!”

The man who knows her best is her beau – former Great Britain international and current fighter for Moldova, Aaron Cook. “I love her personality, she is very funny, friendly and always thinks of others,” Cook said. “When she was fighting for her historic Grand Prix win, she was worrying about me.”

The two have been an item for 10 years. Both saw their dreams dashed at the London Olympics: Walkden suffered injury, while Cook faced non-selection. These experiences have bonded them. “We went through some hard times together but she kept trying,” said Cook. “Now look at her: She is the global poster girl!”

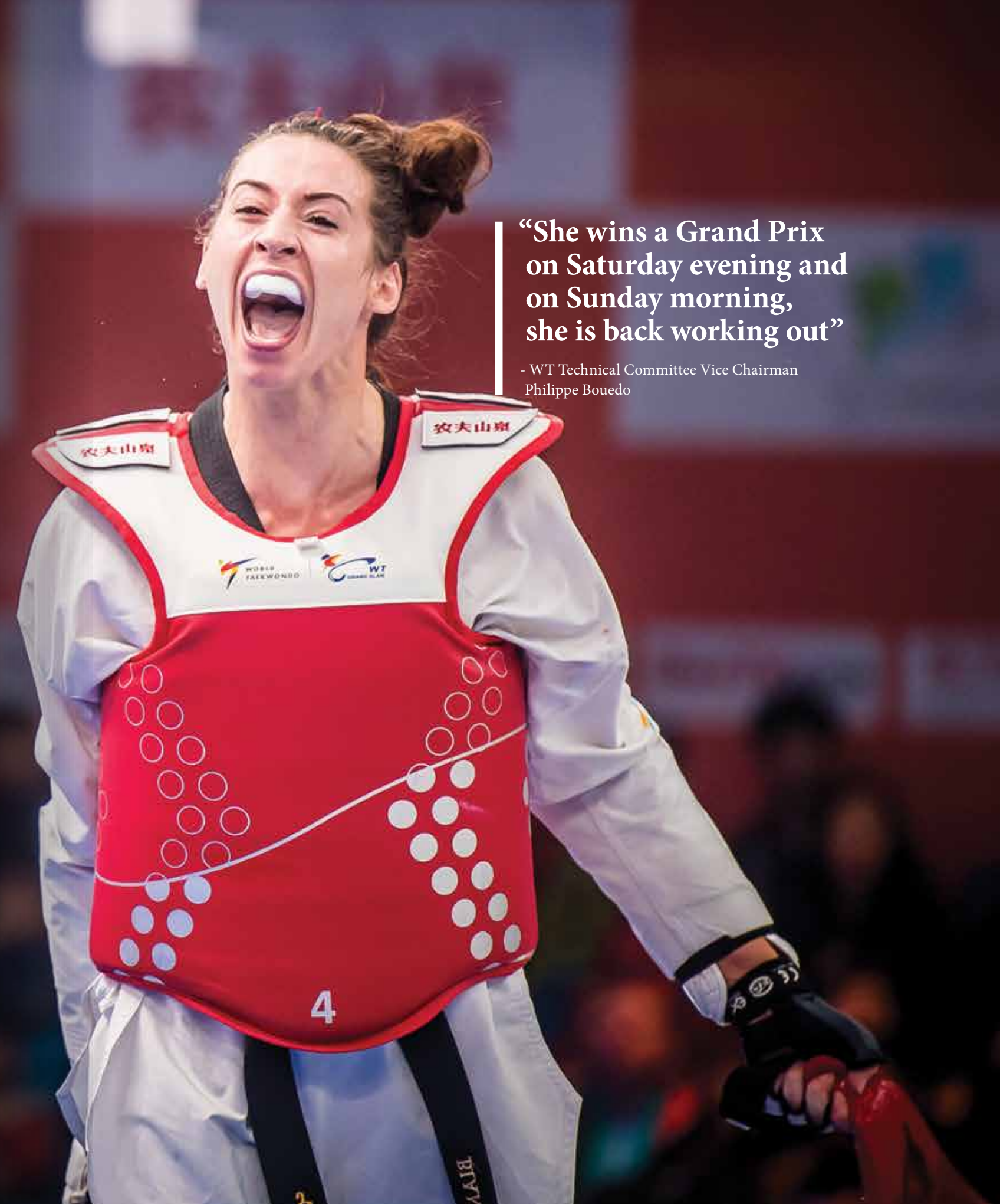
Walkden returns the love, though does not know when wedding bells might chime. “We have been together for so long, I love him to pieces,” she said. “If he asks me, he asks me – but if not, I am still here, still with him.”

So: What might taekwondo players of future generations say of Walkden? “I want to leave a legacy in the female heavyweight division,” Walkden admitted. “Never give up! Die trying!”

But former opponent Epangue reckons the Queen Bee’s legacy should be even broader. “I have a lot of respect for her as a fighter: even though I am older than her, she is an inspiration to me,” Epangue said. “We should show her fights in taekwondo schools around the world to teach girls what fighting spirit is.”

“She wins a Grand Prix on Saturday evening and on Sunday morning, she is back working out”

- WT Technical Committee Vice Chairman
Philippe Bouedo



DEVIL FIGHTER

Before home crowd, Olympic champ was not going to lose

Cheick Sallah Cisse

Cote d'Ivoire

The last match of the men's -80kg category of the 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final at Abidjan's Palais de Sports de Treichville had everything: noise, spectacle and drama. It helped that it also featured a local hero: Cheick Sallah Cisse.

In oppressive evening heat, to the roar of the crowd, backed by local drummers, the 24-year-old from Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire, loped onto the mats to take on Russian master technician Maksim Khramtcov. What followed will be remembered in taekwondo's collective memory as one of the sport's greatest fights, an epic clash.

Cisse attacked. The Russian stood off, stayed cool and seized a three-point lead, before shaking the local lad with a molar-rattling head kick. Round 1 ended 8-3 to Khramtcov. The drama rose in the second. Cisse drew first blood, but action halted as both

coaches furiously appealed points scored in a torrid clash. The board was reset: 9-6 to the Russian. Some fine play followed, with Khramtcov visiting the mats and the board going 9-9, then 10-9 to Cisse and the crowd exploding – before the Russian briefly equalized. This was “game on” with a vengeance. Cisse landed a round kick to the head, then darted away from Khramtcov's leaping ax kick. The drama rose another notch with yet more coach appeals. The round ended 16-12 to Cisse, with the crowd roaring manically, stamping feet and sounding horns.

Round 3 was war: Russian finesse versus Cote d'Ivoirian intensity. The score soared to 21-21, but the Russian – finally – seemed to be tiring while Cisse, buoyed by the crowd, seemed hyper energized, showcasing an

awesome kick rate. He went 27-21 up, sending the Russian flying with a side kick, then buffeting him with a back kick. The two coaches were as animated as the fighters as the scoreboard rung up hits like a pinball machine: battle royale. It ended 33-28 with a gold for Cisse, a deserved silver for Khramtcov – and with the referee probably deserving a bonus. “The most exciting game!” enthused WT President Chungwon Choue, shaking his head.

What happened next was unscripted: The tournament was delayed, as Cisse, national flag in hand, grabbed his first master and invaded the VIP stand to pay respects to the assembled WT executives and local politicians. “I am really happy and really proud that this fight went this way,” Cisse said the day following. “If I had

*“I am a warrior!
My physical
style is strong,
and I am a
360-degree
fighter”*





won 7-0, people would say, “Oh, he is Olympic champ, it is normal to win.”

Yet it was not the most important match of Cisse’s career. That honor goes to the final bout of his category at the Rio 2016 Olympics. “When you go to the Olympics, you don’t go for you, you go for your country, for your continent,” said Cisse. “I wanted Africa to be proud of me.”

In the final, Great Britain’s Lutalo Muhammad was ahead for the entire game. A single second remained before full time. In that critical moment – perhaps the most critical of his life – Cisse lashed out with a spinning heel kick. His foot brushed the Briton’s face. Score! The from-behind victory won Cisse Olympic gold, sportive glory and TV immortality.

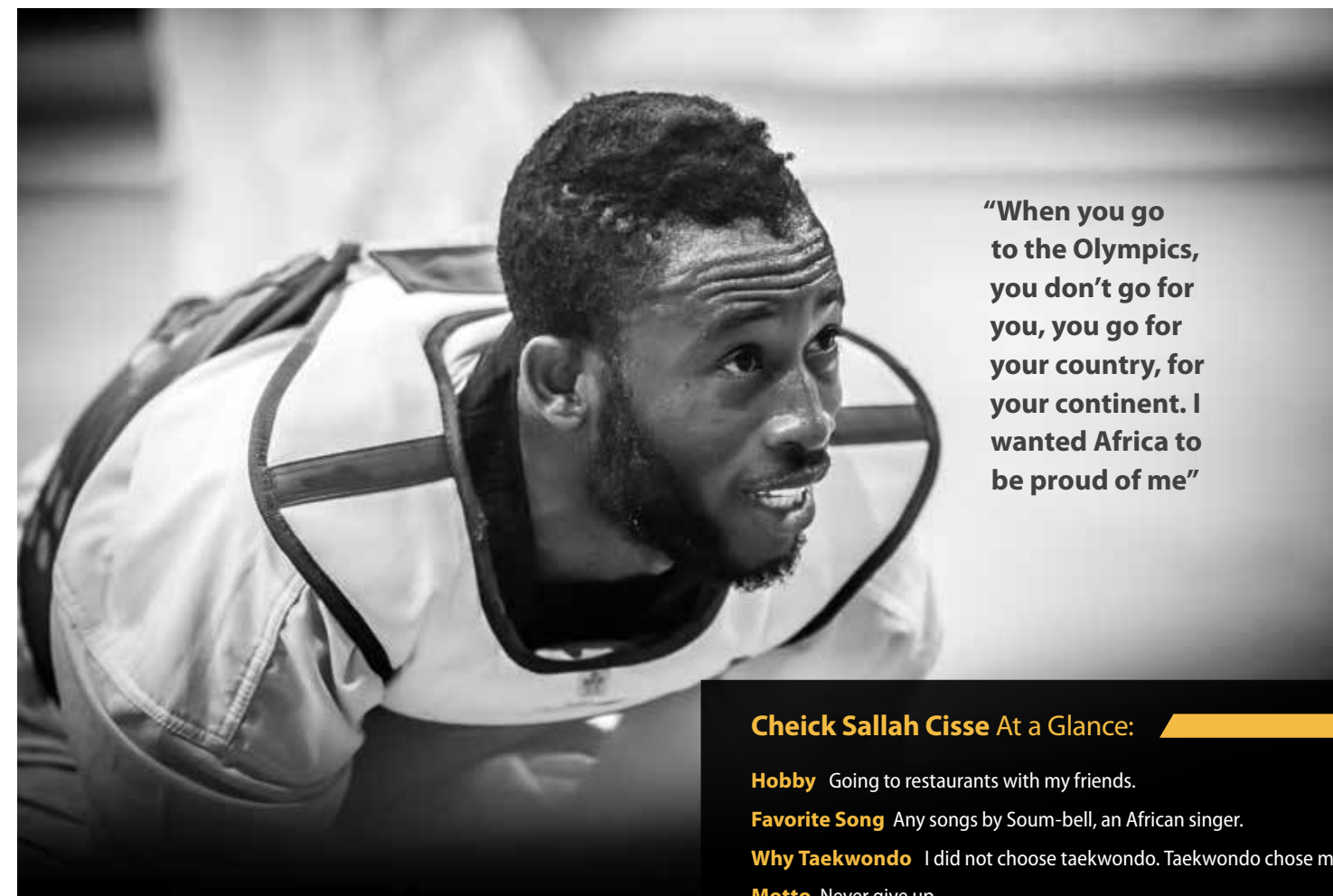
“I realized that, in one second, everything can change,” he said. “I was so happy, because I had achieved my dream.”

He returned home as a hero. As the recipient of the first Olympic gold medal ever won by a Cote d’Ivoirean, he and teammate Ruth Gbagbi (who won bronze) were greeted by the president, and toured the country to spread the joy. Subsequently, the two upgraded their training environment, relocating from steamy West Africa to the dojang of Spanish master coach Juan Antonio Ramos on the idyllic Mediterranean island of Majorca.

It would have been easy, after Rio, for Cisse to have kicked back, gotten lazy and fallen off the taekwondo radar. “It is very difficult for Olympic champions to get motivated,” said WT Technical Committee Vice Chairman Philippe Bouedo. “After the Olympics, you get media interest and sponsor interest, but then you have to come back to the venues, back to the training.”

At the first major post-Rio event, the 2017 World Championships in Muju, Korea, Cisse won nothing. In the first Grand Prix of the season in Moscow, Russia, he managed bronze. Then he shifted gear and since Moscow, he has blasted through the opposition. He took gold in Rabat, Morocco; gold in London, Great Britain; and finished the season with gold number three in Abidjan.

Today, he looks better and bolder than ever. In taekwondo, there are, broadly speaking, two types of athletes: “players” and “fighters.”



“When you go to the Olympics, you don’t go for you, you go for your country, for your continent. I wanted Africa to be proud of me”

Cheick Sallah Cisse At a Glance:

Hobby Going to restaurants with my friends.

Favorite Song Any songs by Soum-bell, an African singer.

Why Taekwondo I did not choose taekwondo. Taekwondo chose me!

Motto Never give up.

Cisse stands prominently in the latter category. On the mats in 2017, he has been fighting like the devil himself: Fearlessly attacking forward, wielding a full battery of kicks, and running on high-octane fuel, he looks unstoppable.

He also has an inner metronome. “He is a rhythmical fighter,” said WT Technical Committee Chair Jin-bang Yang. “He fights with rhythm and that gives him no limits on technical structure, so he gets unusual kicks, timings and strategies.” Yang adds: “And he is tough!”

The Cote d’Ivoirean has as much character off the mats as on. He dresses with attitude, stalking stadia wearing designer sportswear and a “Cheick Cisse” branded baseball cap. He also has the gift of the flamboyant

gesture. In the 2015 Grand Prix in Samsun, Turkey, he entered the field of play, then, dramatically, fell flat on his back, declaring “No, Mas.” (He had flown into Turkey from the African championships the day prior, he later explained, and was played out.) And in Abidjan, his storming of the VIP box was unprecedented in modern taekwondo – but classic Cisse.

“Before coming here I already had it in my mind to give homage to my master if I won,” he admitted. “Lucien Christian Kragbe was my first master – and was not only my master, he helped me very much. He is like my father.”

Asked to describe himself, Cisse says, “I am a warrior! My physical style is strong, and I am a 360-degree fighter.” And where does

his inexhaustible energy come from? “I am African, so I eat peppers!” he said, laughing.

Perhaps surprisingly, given his bravado and his style, Cisse has a thoughtful side. “I am now well known in my country and in Africa, and maybe the world,” he mused. “I am like an ambassador of Africa, so I set an example.” This can be challenging, he confesses. “I am only 24, and I cannot do all the things that people of my age do...I have to try and think and act like a great personality.”

His coach would agree with. For all the physical gifts of this demon fighter, Cisse’s real strength is inside. “Physically he is very good, but it is more of the mind,” said Ramos. “He has a formidable mentality.”

WALKING ON THE MOON

Korean newcomer hates to train, loves to fight

Da-Bin Lee

Korea



In competitive taekwondo, it is the fighters from Team Korea who boast the zaniest nicknames. 2017 World Champion Dae-hoon Lee, for example, is “The Quick-eyed Turtle,” while 2016 Olympic Champion Hye-ri Oh is simply “The Duck.” Even so, few people would expect a world-class combat sport athlete to be dubbed “The Cute Piglet.”

Yet, that is, indeed, the nickname of Team Korea’s up-and-coming heavyweight, Da-bin Lee.

“I used to be chubbier!” she laughs – though, as an elite-level taekwondo player, she is far from chubby today. And it is easy to see why this baby-faced 23-year-old with the boyish bob, stud earrings and bright personality could be described as “cute.” For one thing, she is clearly mommy’s little girl. Tattooed on her inner left arm are the words

“Mom and Dad.” “Dad visits the venues a lot, but Mom not so often, so I miss Mom and she misses me,” Lee said. “My Mom is a good mom, but I am not a good daughter!”

Still, Lee’s cute side was not in evidence when she strode onto the mats at the 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final in the Palais de Sports de Treichville stadium in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.

“I did not expect to win a medal,” admitted Lee, who had previously only competed in two Grand Prix tournaments. But after she had fought and defeated the Rio 2016 Olympic champion Shuyin “The Beautiful Giraffe” Zheng of China, her confidence soared and her feelings changed. “I really, really wanted to get gold,” Lee said.

However, a very formidable figure was standing in the way of Lee’s ambition: Bianca

“Queen Bee” Walkden of Team GB – possibly the most dominant fighter in the sport today, in any division.

It would be Lee’s second time taking on Walkden: the two had previously clashed at the semi-finals of 2017’s Grand Prix Series 1 in Moscow. “The first time, I had confidence against Bianca, but I lost faith,” Lee said. “So I studied her a lot.”

As action got underway in the women’s heavyweight final, the Korean player, despite giving away a height advantage to the British girl, scored first blood. But Walkden showed her quality, racking up hits and ending the first 9-3. A grab by Walkden in the second cost her a penalty point, but she maintained her lead against the game Lee, who bought the score up to 7-9 against the Brit. In the third,

a short, sharp spinning back kick put Walkden up 11-7 as Lee attacked forward – but then the Korean fell. As combat continued, Walkden used her feet to keep her out of danger, playing a cool game as Lee attacked, trying to close the distance and fight in the short range. In a display of technical skill, tactical nous and mastery of both the long and the close range, Walkden won 16-9 to take the gold – leaving Lee with a well-deserved silver.

“Bianca has very long legs and a very strong right kick, so I wanted to attack into her right-leg kick,” Lee said in a post-mortem on the match. “I lost due to that kick – I had to negate that right-leg kick.”

This means Lee will need to go back to the drawing board for the 2018 fighting season.

Lee, 23, holds a fourth dan black belt. Currently a senior at Korea National Sports University, she first took up taekwondo when she followed friends into her middle school club. There, she discovered a talent. That talent blossomed, and Lee first qualified for the Korean National Team in 2010. She won gold at the Incheon Asian Games in 2014 – then added to her stash with another top-level gold in Taipei at the 2017 Universiade.

Taekwondo favors long-range, open play at full leg extension, but Lee is one of the shorter fighters in her division, explaining

“I am more of an emotional fighter. I try to think, but...!”



why her favored techniques are up-close and personal. “Against a taller opponent, I get in close and punch, and I like to push, then kick,” she said. “At that time, I can get a lot of points.”

In physical terms, her advantage is speed. “I am small for this category, so I can move fast: good footwork!” she said, “When I am

fighting, I feel like I am flying.” As for her inner game, Lee confessed that she follows heart rather than head. “I am more of an emotional fighter,” she said. “I try to think, but...!”

Looking to the future – she graduates as a taekwondo major in two years – Lee is looking to join a company-sponsored team in Korea. And of course, she hopes and expects to continue to travel and fight with Team Korea. “Travels with the team are good memories, we always chat in our rooms after the matches with beers,” she said. “I am the junior in the team, so all the ‘older sisters’ in the team take care of me. We are all good mates!”

But fighting at the premier international level means Lee will continue her hate-love relationship with, respectively, the drudgery of fight preparation and the joy of actual fighting.

“I hate preparing for competitions, but I still like the game,” she said. “When I walk out into the arena, I feel like I am walking on the moon.”

Da-bin Lee At a Glance:

Hobby Hanging with friends.

Favorite Song ‘Energetic’ by 101.

Favorite Food Grilled pork belly.

Why Taekwondo Because for me, it is still fun to do!

Motto It’s all about friendship. I love friends!



Team Championships Light Up Abidjan

The sport's favorite format keeps getting better

In a day of lighting substitutions, spectacular offensive play and some very, very close matches at Abidjan's Palais de Sports de Treichville, Iran grabbed one and China seized two of the three gold medals offered in taekwondo's "Battle of the Nations" – the 2017 World Taekwondo Team Championships.



In the men's category, gold was won by Iran and silver by an unlucky Russia, while bronzes went to Cote d'Ivoire – a highly entertaining team – and Korea. In the women's category, defending champions China retained their title for the third consecutive year; silver went to a game Korea for the second consecutive year; and bronzes were won by Cote d'Ivoire and Morocco. In the nascent mixed-gender category, China won gold, while Russia – unlucky again – took silver, and bronzes went to Korea and Mexico.

Iran's Mahdi "The Terminator" Khodabakhshi – marking a triumphant return to premier-league taekwondo after a long, post-Rio

layoff – was named Male MVP. Female MVP was China's Pan Gao – a lynchpin on the Chinese female and mixed teams. Best Male Coach was Iran's Seyed Nemat Khalifeh. Best Female Coach was China's Jianmin Guan. Daniel Robert Khorrassanbdjian of Lebanon, Amely Moras of USA and Jeng Yen Lee of Malaysia were named Best Referees of the tournament.

Day 1 saw the championships' opening ceremony – a youth focused event that featured a first for taekwondo: A dancer in an elephant costume and dobok.

Eight male teams and five female teams did battle at the two-day event, with the African continent strongly represented. In the male

category, competing teams were: China, Chinese Taipei, Cote d'Ivoire, Iran, Korea, Morocco, Niger and Russia. In the female category, competing teams were: China, Cote d'Ivoire, Korea, Morocco and USA.

Teams comprise five or six fighters. The first round features opposite number versus opposite number; the second and third rounds are tag-team format, which generates fast-paced substitutions, explosive clashes and high scores. It is broadly recognized within taekwondo that the team fighting format is more spectacular than the individual format, which can be tactical and low-scoring.

Play on Day 1 was lively. The African teams,

composed of high-performance, non-stop kicking machines, were particularly entertaining to watch – with the men's teams from Niger and Cote d'Ivoire delivering incredible displays of flying feet. And while national coaches customarily keep their leading individual players well away from the high-octane, high-risk melee of team competition, this year proved exceptional.

The Russian Male Team fielded three top national stars – Rio 2016 silver medalist Alexey Denisenko, 2017 World Champion Maksim Khramtcov and Abidjan Grand Prix Final gold medalist Vladislav Larin. The Chinese Female Team featured 2016 Rio gold medalist Shuyin Zheng; the Cote d'Ivoire Female Team featured 2017 World Champion Ruth Gbagbi; and the Korean Male Team featured London Grand Prix gold medalist Kyu-don In. Taekwondo fans were pleased to see that the Iranian Male Team featured one of the great stars of 2014-2015, Mahdi Khodabakhshi, easing back into the game after a long, post-Rio layoff due to injury and rehab.

"I think anytime you watch a team it always gets exciting, I don't care what countries they are – something crazy is always happening!" said Team USA Individuals' Coach Juan Moreno. "From the point of view of spectators, team competition is the way to go – it is much easier for the average Joe to watch this, with all the action."

At 2016's World Team Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan won gold in the male division, followed by Korea with silver, and bronzes for Belgium and Turkey. In the female division, China took the gold while Korea won silver and Russia and Turkey went home with bronzes.

Five mixed-gender teams, each comprising two men and two women, were also represented at the championships: China, Korea, Mexico, Morocco and Russia.



Male Semi-finals



The first semi-final pitted the home-team heroes against Team Russia, which had a clear height advantage. While the Africans were fighting with force and passion, the Russians played a clinical game, fought by some of the top guns from their national team. End result 73-44 to the boys from Moscow.

Iran and Korea are two of the most technical teams in the sport. They looked well matched in terms of height – leg length being a critical issue in taekwondo. A pundit might have anticipated a win for Team Korea, given that Iran is noted for crafty, tactical play rather than high-scoring techniques. But in the event, it proved the opposite: The Iranians took an early lead, and extended it in every round, ending with a convincing 39-55 victory.

Male Final



In the finals, both teams looked well matched in height terms, and both are equally well respected in the sport, noted for professionalism and technical proficiency. Scoring started simultaneously at 2-2, then Russia went 3-2 up, and extended the lead, ending Round 1, 13-4 up. In the second, the Russians were the aggressors, scoring consistently and showcasing a higher work-rate, but as the seconds counted down, the Iranians showed their quality and clawed back points; the second ended 20-19, meaning there was everything to fight for in the third. Fighting was immediately fiercer as the last round got underway, with both coaches making swift substitutions, matching player for player and the intensity rising, with all athletes kicking with real venom. In mid-round

it was 25-25. Iran seized a lead, 27-25, before a jumping ax kick to the head put Russia back on top, 28-27. Then, remarkably, it went the other way, with Iran leading 29-28. Then it was Russia on top at 30-29 – the substitutions and reversals of fortune coming in rapid succession as the scoreboard rang up the points. It could have gone to either team, right down to the wire – but at the final buzzer, it was Iran who won it by a razor-thin margin: 34 points to 33.

A fine result demonstrating that Team Iran is truly back at the top of the game a year after their shock wipe-out in Rio 2016. “Finally, we have something to take back home,” said a happy (and relieved) team official. “Otherwise, the media would crucify us!”

Female Final



China are the defending champions in this category, having beaten Korea into second place in last year’s finals in Baku, Azerbaijan. Would history repeat itself? As the teams shook hands before battle commenced, it was clear that Team China had the height advantage in every single fighter, granting them superior head kick opportunities. They grabbed an early lead and maintained in, ending Round 1, 15-4. But at the end of the second, Team Korea had narrowed the gap: The board stood at just 26-22 to China. In the third, play continued with China ahead until, with just over a minute to go, Team Korea briefly seized the lead. Then the board went to 40-40, and suddenly it was anyone’s. Korea

went up 42-40 – then China evened it to 42-42. The final minute was marked by a series of fast substitutions and fluid action, but it was China who was scoring when it was needed, and the contest ended with the board 49-42. It had been a dramatic finale marked by a bold challenge from Korea – but ultimately, it had been a successful title defense by the 2016 champions.

Bronzes in the female category – which had a smaller number of entries than the men’s category, obviating the need for semi-finals – went to Cote d’Ivoire and Morocco.

Mixed Gender Semi-finals



The first semis of this new format – pioneered in Baku last year, and featuring two male and two female fighters, through the actual combats are only male-male/female-female – pitted China against Morocco. Morocco took an early lead, 4-0, and did not relinquish it in the first, ending Round 1, 11-9 up. Play got faster and fiercer in the succeeding

rounds, with both teams employing high kicks to good effect, and the board favoring first one team, then the other, but Round 3 ended with a draw – 22-22. That took the match to Golden Kicks overtime: The first team to score four points. It was China which struck first, taking points and match, 6-0.



Mixed Gender Semi-finals

China VS Korea

2

Defending champions Team Korea, who had benefitted from a by in the first round, took on Team China. Korea had the edge in stamina, given that Team China had already fought, but the Chinese had a slight edge in height. A high-scoring first round ended 15-11 to Korea. In the second Korea drew steadily ahead, ending the round 34-23. The third round featured the fastest series of substitutions the tourney had yet seen and China drew ahead 44-43. Korea mounted a desperate, last-seconds counter attack, but it ended 54-43 to China.

Mexico VS Russia

3

The Russians opened the scoring, going 10-0 before Mexico found the range; the round ended 14-6 to Russia. In the second, the Russian point storm continued; The Mexicans were trying spectacular techniques, but not landing. In the second, it was Mexican fire against Russian precision: Russian professionalism won out as the board rose 46-16 in their favor. In the third, Mexico continued to fight bravely, but were clearly out-gunned. Russia won a place in the finals with a massive 67-27 win.



Mixed Gender Final

China VS Russia

1

China had a height advantage, but as the first got underway, Russia drew first blood, going 4-0 up before China started to connect and draw ahead – but only briefly. Russia settled down and went to work, ending the round 14-8 up. The second saw see-sawing scores and multiple tactical substitutions with China narrowing the point gap then seizing a convincing lead, ending the round 32-20 – a nightmare for Team Russia, who had looked so assured earlier. Round 3 saw the Chinese maintaining their momentum making multiple fast tactical substitutions. The Russians were fighting like hell but the Chinese were not to be denied, fighting and changing players fast, to the apparent frustration of the Russians. With two minutes left, it was 45-40 to China, but with Russia looking more dangerous. A superb combination attack by Russia bought the score up to 44-45 – then Russia drew ahead. But when the buzzer went, the board read 53-53. The Golden Kicks round got straight down to business: In a center-of-ring kicking clash, China took gold with a score of 4-2.



2017 WORLD TAEKWONDO CADET CHAMPIONSHIPS

Taekwondo's rising generation takes flight in Egypt

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt
Aug. 24-27, 2017

Day 1 Saudi Arabia Makes History at 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships

Mohammed Alsowaiq secured Saudi Arabia's first ever gold medal in a major taekwondo event as he overcame Italian Andrea Riondino 12-6 in the men's under 65kg category on day one of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships.

There was also victory for Tae-hwan Son of Korea in the men's +65kg class, while in the female events Thailand claimed two gold medals as Sasikarn Tongchan and Ratatip Namsri won their respective under 51kg and under 33kg categories. Iran completed the list of opening day winners through under 29kg champion Masoumeh Ranjbar, who scored 34 points to beat Thai competitor Fasai Chaknok in a high-scoring contest.

Before the first event, the Egyptian hosts performed a traditional dance as part of the opening ceremony and all compet-

itors marched with their national flags. World Taekwondo's mission is unity through the sport and this was evident as each of the 420 athletes representing 46 countries showed great respect for their fellow competitors.

Alsowaiq's victory for Saudi Arabia is also a great success for World Taekwondo, who aim to make the sport accessible for global citizens all over the world. Combined with Africa's five gold medals at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, it is further evidence that every nation and region has the opportunity to compete and enjoy taekwondo.

Egypt won two bronze medals on the opening day, both in female categories.



Day 2 Hosts Claim Gold on Day Two of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships

Egypt registered their first gold medal of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships as Youssef Mansour won a thrilling final, beating Thai opponent Thawin Yaengkulchow 30-29.

Mansour's performance inspired the crowd, who erupted at the completion of the contest, celebrating the host country's first win at this year's event. Russian Khanmagomed Ramazanov and Luis Salazar from Mexico also won their nations' first golds of the tournament, in the men's under 53kg and under 33kg categories respectively.

In the female events, it was a show of dominance from Iran's Ghazal Soltani, who beat Isil Zafer from Turkey 22-2 in the final

of the under 47kg classification. The points difference was the biggest seen at these championships so far, as Soltani continued her excellent form from earlier rounds to secure Iran's second gold medal of the tournament, and earmark herself as a potential future star.

There was more success for Thailand, who currently lead the medal table with three golds. Chu Jongkolrattanawattana stormed to a 25-10 victory over Iranian Mobina Kalivand in the female under 41kg category.

Day 3 Turkey's Ergin Wows Crowds at 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships

Turkey won its first gold medal on Day 3 of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships as Huriye Nur Ergin claimed a 15-4 victory over her Iranian opponent, Yalda Ranjbar, in the under 59kg category.

Ergin landed two spinning head kicks and only conceded one head kick in return as her athletic performance impressed crowds at the Youth and Sports Olympic Hall. After coming through some close contests at the start of the day, Ergin's confidence grew and she began to take charge of each match. In the final, spectators and officials commended her dominant showing, and she will now look to build on this victory in future events.

Hosts Egypt had to settle for silver in the men's under 45kg classification as Adham Hussin was beaten 25-5 by Amirarsalan Khanzadeh of Iran. Elsewhere, Abilkhassan Bakhytzhan secured Kazakhstan's first gold of the event with a dominant 17-2 win against Russian Shamil Magomedov.

There were also maiden victories for the Philippines and Spain, who both won their first gold medals of this year's championships. Under 44kg champion Mary Angeline Alcantara survived a close semi-final before going on to beat Oksana Smirnova of Russia 18-4, while Spain's Cheyenne Brito Rico came out on top in the under 55kg category after a tightly contested 9-4 victory over America Comonfort from Mexico.



Day 4 Mexico and Thailand Come out on Top at 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships

Mexico secured their position at the top of the men's medal tally with two golds on the final day of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships, while Thailand's total of five medals ensured first place in the women's competition.

It was a fantastic last day for the Mexican team as Roberto Samuano was crowned under 61kg champion, after a captivating 40-29 win over Iranian opponent Amir Reza Ghasemi Halashi. Compatriot Emilio Cendejas Alfaro was then awarded victory in the under 49kg category, winning by superiority following an intensely-fought 11-11 contest with Shayan Rostami, also of Iran. The two wins on day four gave Mexico a total of three golds in the male disciplines, as well as two silver medals in the female events.

It was a hat-trick of silver medals for the Iranian team as Sedigh Rahiminiya was also beaten in the male under 57kg final, going down 27-12 to Aleksandar Dzhordzhev of Bulgaria.

In the female standings Thailand finished with three gold

medals, ahead of Turkey and Iran who both ended the championships with two. Azra Cavus of Turkey beat Arianne Espida by Golden Point to become under 37kg champion, after a guarded battle with her Filipino opponent went all the way to the golden point stage. Anna Pekonkina won Russia's second gold of the championships with a 17-11 victory over Pawilai Kobkuerkul of Thailand in the +59kg classification.

Male tournament MVP was Egyptian Mansour Hussin, who won the host nation's only gold of the championships on day two. Mary Angeline Alcantara won the female award after her dominant display in the under 44kg category on Saturday.

As well as topping the medal tallies, Oscar Salazar of Mexico and Wichit Sittikun of Thailand were honored with Coach of the Tournament awards for the men's and women's competitions respectively.



Sun, Sea, Sand and Taekwondo



1st World Taekwondo Beach
Championships take place on
the sunlit island of Rhodes,
Greece

RHODES, Greece

May 5-6, 2017



The top five honors among 26 nations competing in 26 categories at the first-ever WT Beach Championships, which took place at the Nautical Club in Rhodes, Greece, went to Thailand, Korea, Turkey, Vietnam, and China.

Drenched in Greek sun and back-dropped by the sparkling blue Aegean, there was no kyorugi; This, the, WT's first-ever outdoor championships, was poomsae-based, with an emphasis on fun, freestyle creativity.



World Taekwondo
Beach Championships

FUN *freestyle* CREATIVITY



An opening ceremony was held the day before the championships at the medieval Bastion of the Grand Master's Palace, a world heritage monument dating back to the medieval period: As a former fortress of warrior monks, it was a highly appropriate location for the taekwondo family to gather in. However, the ceremony's focus was not martial: A "white card campaign" - a collaboration between Peace and Sport and the ETU, the championships' organizing committee - took place as a symbolic gesture for global peace.

The championship was poomsae-based, featuring a range of traditional and freestyle poomsae and high kicking events. Rhodes also pioneered a duo of brand-new categories: "freestyle dynamic kicks and breaking challenge" and "technical breaking." Moreover, athletes' dress code was loosened to suit the summery environment and sunny ambience: Bronzed physiques were revealed and sunglasses were donned, offering a cool new look to a sport that often smothers its athletes in baggy dobok and

shapeless protective gear.

This funky and youthful new look for taekwondo was captured and broadcast live on the Olympic channel.

On the first day of competition, with gold medals in 11 divisions up for grabs, Korea and Turkey won three golds each, Thailand won two, and China, Denmark Spain took home one each. On Day 2, poomsae were to the fore, with the power, speed and synchronization of the teams combining to produce a spectacle of grace, artistry and athleticism. On the second and last day, Thailand won five golds, Korea and Vietnam won three, and China, Turkey and Denmark won one each.

"It is great to take taekwondo out of the stadia and into the sunshine, and I really enjoyed seeing the creative and colorful looks many of the athletes were sporting here in Rhodes", said WT President Chungwon Choue at the conclusion of the event. "WT is committed to expanding the opportunities for our poomsae players, and beach championships are one way we are doing this."

WT Sets up 'Stage for Superstars'

TV-centric new series takes taekwondo to next level of exposure, professionalism



30 Dec. 2017 -
6, 3, 20, 27 Jan. 2018

WUXI, China

Host: Wuxi, near Shanghai, is a city that, like Manchester in the UK, is transitioning from a manufacturing-based city to a city noted for sports and lifestyle. The organizers hope that – as a byproduct of the series – the Grand Slam will raise the level of Chinese taekwondo.

FOP: The field of play, set up inside a convention center rather than a sports stadium, was superbly designed. Featuring LED light panels and thunderous sound, it should provide a benchmark for future taekwondo events.

Audience: The audience was small but vocal, as this series was designed for TV, not for an in-stadium audience.

Showbiz Elements: Between match dancers added razzmatazz. Athlete walks-on with children and rock music between matches were adopted from the Grand Prix series.

Camera: A 4D camera rig – 97 cameras set up around the FOP – was pioneered for the first-time in taekwondo. This allowed "Matrix"/video-game style visual effects - eg freeze frame a kick, then do a seamless 360 degree scan around the players.

Endorsements: The OC executives put together victors with potential sponsors immediately after the matches.

Taekwondo took a giant leap forward in terms of athlete reward, sport presentation and media exposure with the inaugural ultra-elite Grand Slam Champions Series, held in the Wuxi Taihu International Expo Center in the city of Wuxi, near Shanghai.

"We have had a dream for this type of championships to take taekwondo to the next level, and that means more exposure to TV and other media platforms," said WT Technical Committee Chairman Jin-bang Yang. "We have been in the Olympics for nearly 20 years and made pretty good progress, but we are not at the highest level yet: For the next level of development, we need this type of game."

"The taekwondo calendar is already complicated, so the concept was not one more competition, it was one special competition," explained Grand Slam Technical Delegate Philippe Bouedo. "The venue looks like a TV studio, not a sports venue, and this will make a difference - we are expecting 5-8 million viewers to watch this online."

Rules were tweaked to make bouts as viewer-friendly as possible. Extra points were added for the most spectacular techniques, so spinning kicks to the body protector gained four points, and to the head, five points. To encourage powerful strikes, fighters who knocked down their opponents were awarded an extra five points, signaled by a standing count from the referee. (A gamjeom, or single-point penalty, was awarded for falls.) To penalize defensive play and back-pedaling, any player who set even one foot outside the matted area suffered a gamjeom. The monkey kick was disallowed. Finally, the men's bronze medal and final matches were five, two-minute rounds instead of the usual three two-minute rounds, which worked to the advantage of the best-conditioned players.

Coaches were urged to encourage their athletes to display maximal showmanship. "We want emotion – we want our athletes to be creative!" said Bouedo. "We want taekwondo to be a fashionable game," added Organizing Committee President Dejun Sun. "We want superstars on this stage!"

GRAND SLAM

Grand Slam Press Conference

Offering big-money prizes and a bespoke arena, the Grand Slam brings Hollywood-style reward and presentation to taekwondo

WT's finest athletes and senior officials got their first look at the bespoke venue at a press conference held in the Wuxi Taihu International Expo Center in Wuxi, China, prior to the series kicking off.

The Grand Slam Series – held over five consecutive Saturdays in the city in eastern China – offers the biggest prize money in taekwondo history: USD70,000 for first place winners, USD20,000 for second place and USD5,000 for third place. The venue has been optimally designed for television coverage, with a raised field of play, dry ice, multiple LED screens, audiences stacked close to the action, thunderous audio and dancers performing between matches. The event, to be captured on the most advanced camera rigs ever used for taekwondo, is expected to elevate the sport's presentation to a new level.

At the press conference, officials spoke, participating fighters were presented to the audience, and a sound and light show was performed.



"I believe this Grand Slam event is writing another new history of World Taekwondo," said WT President Chungwon Choue. "This means our athletes will be more busy – but will get a lot of prize money." Choue expressed his hope that other international federations would follow the lead of China, and invest in Grand Slam events.

"Global fans of taekwondo can see the world's top athletes performing in this place," said Chinese Taekwondo Association President Juanmin Guan. "We can better facilitate the development of taekwondo in the world, and in China." "This will be very impressive and successful," vowed Wuxi Vice Mayor Liu Xia. "We have made great preparations for this event!"

Noting that taekwondo is constantly evolving, Choue hinted that the event's amended rules could be applied to regular taekwondo competitions worldwide. "This event will enhance our sport and the new rules and regulations may apply to the Tokyo Olympic Games," Choue said. After reviewing the outcome in Wuxi, the WT General Assembly will make a decision on the matter on the sidelines of the World Taekwondo Junior Championships to be held in Tunisia in April, 2018.

At the conclusion of the press event, participants voiced their thoughts on the pioneering series.

"This looks really professional, it is very different to other venues we have had," said US athlete Jackie Galloway. "We have not had an opportunity like this before – it will be great to be exposed in the media."

"I think this is a first step to professionalize taekwondo," added Dragan Jovic of Serbia, WT's Coach of the Year. "This is really top level."

"It is a really cozy venue, the cameras will be able to catch the expressions on faces," noted Walid Younes, an international referee from Switzerland. "Nothing can escape!"

Week

1

Dec. 30

GB's Walkden, Russia's Khramtcov Win Gold and Big Bucks in Wuxi



Great Britain's Bianca "Queen Bee" Walkden and Russia's Maksim Khramtcov captured gold medals – and a cool USD70,000 each – in the inaugural edition of the World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series, held at the Wuxi Taihu International Expo Center in the city of Wuxi, near Shanghai.

Silvers (and USD20,000 each) were won by Team USA's Jackie Galloway and Team Korea's Hwan Namgoong, while bronzes (and USD5,000 each) went to Turkey's Nafia "The Amazon" Kus and Azerbaijan's Milad Beigi Harchegani in, respectively, the women's +67kg and the men's -80kg categories.

The final of the women's category pitted Galloway against Walkden. Galloway displayed some sweet footwork, but from the opening buzzer, Walkden was on fire: She scored two, then four then eight points with her sniper-like side kick. A penalty cost the American another point early in the second as Walkden dominated the center of the ring, forcing Galloway to try and cut into her perimeter. The round ended 9-1 to the Brit. As the action continued, Galloway tried high kicks, just



could not get past Walkden's stabbing side kick. Walkden's distancing and timing were impeccable, and the Brit won decisively, 10-2.

In the women's bronze medal match, Turkey's Kus beat Poland's Aleksandra Kowalczyk with a convincing 11-3 victory.

In the final of the men's category, Korea's 19-year-old Namgoong took on Russia's Khramtcov. It looked like a David and Goliath mismatch: The Russian towered over Namgoong by at least a head. He went up with a high kick – 3-0 – then sent the Korean flying with a body kick, before landing another head kick from the clinch. Khramtcov lost one penalty point, then ate a couple of Namgoong's body kicks; the first ended 11-4 to the Russian. In the second, the Korean went after his man, fighting a very physical match against his bigger opponent, mixing combination attacks to the body with kicks to the head. But the Russian's high roundhouse and crescent kicks kept landing, while his side kick kept Namgoong off balance. The second ended 23-9 to Khramtcov. In the third, Namgoong continued to take the fight to his opponent, trying to break into close range, and wielding a textbook back kick. But the Russian kept landing to the head and the third closed 32-19 to Khramtcov. Great action!

In the penultimate round, both lads looked tired, but the Korean landed effective body kicks around and under the Russian's high kicks and in the last even landed a head kick to his far taller opponent. But he finally gassed out, and Khramtcov took a deserved gold, with a score of 35-29.

In the bronze match, Azeri Milad Beigi Harchegani defeated Russia's Anton Kotov, 17-7.

Week

2

Jan. 6



Ruth Gbagbi, Dae-Hoon Lee Crowned Best of the Best at World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series II

A highly entertaining second Saturday of the super-elite World Taekwondo Grand Slam 2017/18 series, which pits the best twelve athletes in each Olympic weight category against each other, took place on Jan. 6, with athletes competing in the women's -67kg and men's -68kg categories.

In the unpredictable female competition, third seed Ruth Gbagbi of Cote d'Ivoire came out on top to win USD70,000 after impressively defeating dark horse Yunfei Guo of Team China in the final by 10-6. The Rio 2016 bronze medallist has been in excellent form recently and her fearsome, all-guns-firing combat style proved to be too much for her opponents again today. On her way to the final, runner-up Guo beat number 1 Seed and Rio 2016 Olympic Champion Hye-ri Oh of Korea, taking home USD20,000 in prize money. Oh secured the bronze medal and USD10,000 prize money.

WT's Male "Player of the Year" and top seed

Dae-hoon Lee of Korea continued his dominant form into the new year, taking the gold medal and USD70,000 prize money after defeating Shuai Zhao of China in the final by 53-4. Zhao moved up weight categories after his featherweight gold medal at Rio 2016 and performed excellently in front of lively home crowd support. Rio 2016 silver medallist Alexey Denisenko of Russia took third place, beating Iranian athlete Mirhashem Hosseini in the bronze medal contest.

The day was filled with high-quality action and produced a number of interesting moments, including the first knock down points, one of the new rule changes, made during the women's -67kg's bronze medal contest between Oh and Mengyu Zhang of China, providing added entertainment for the crowd. Another modified rule was seen today, with an additional five points awarded when the referee counts for a knock down.



Week

3

Jan. 13

Kyo-Don In and So-Hui Kim Triumph at World Taekwondo Grand Slam Series 3



WT Deploys Best-of-Breed 4D TV Cameras at Grand Slam



Millions of taekwondo fans across the world were able to step onto the field of play at the third edition of the World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions in Wuxi, China on Jan. 13, thanks to the deployment of a state-of-the-art 4D camera system that placed TV viewers right in the midst of the action. Ninety-seven high-tech 4-D cameras set up surrounding the field of play provided ultra-detailed 360-degree images, enabling "Matrix"-style broadcasting. Given their success in Wuxi, WT is strongly considering deploying the system at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The cameras are dual role. Not only did they showcase the spectacular acrobatic techniques of the elite taekwondo fighters for fight fans, they also provided ultra-accurate video replays for referees at the edge of the field of play. The decision to introduce the technology reflected WT's ongoing dedication to evolving the sport. "WT has a history of technological innovations, as seen by our introduction of the electronic Protector and Scoring System and Instant Video Replays to the game," said WT President Chungwon Choue. "This latest technological leap will improve transparency – but is also set to make taekwondo look more dynamic and more exciting than ever for TV viewers."

Team Korea dominated the third weekend of the World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series, as Kyo-don "The Bear" In shocked the field with victory in the men's +80kg division, while in the women's -49kg class, compatriot So-hui Kim fought valiantly to secure gold.

Reigning Olympic champion and tournament favorite Kim put on a master class to top the -49kg standings, overcoming Yuntao Wenren of China 19-18 in a captivating semi-final, before demonstrating her defensive prowess and fast footwork to beat current World Champion Vanja Stanokovic of Serbia 6-0 and claim the tournament's USD70,000 prize.

Thailand's Panipak Wongpattanakit, considered by many a strong contender after winning three of the four Grand Prix events in 2017, suffered an

early exit after losing 18-17 to Wenren in a highly skilled, high-scoring and exciting contest.

However, the Chinese athlete could not repeat the feat against Kim, who took advantage of her exhausting earlier battle to a tight victory in the finals.

Wenren went on to win the bronze medal match, defeating Nahid Kiyanichandeh of Iran.

In the men's heavyweight division, Team Korea's In took on Team Russia's Roman Kuznetsov. In a tightly contested but low scoring match, In won the gold - and the USD70,000 prize money - with a 2-0 victory.

Iran's Sajjad Mardani captured bronze after taking out Croatia's Vedran Golec with a solid 9-4 victory.



Week

4

Jan. 20



Irem Yaman and Tae-Hun Kim Claim Top Spots on Final Weekend

The final weekend of the super-elite World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series brought yet more excitement, thrilling action and shock defeats as Turkey's Irem Yaman won the women's -57kg and Korea's Tae-hun Kim took home gold in the men's -58kg.

Irem Yaman of Turkey, who qualified for the event through the qualification tournament, came into the Grand Slam as a relative underdog. Many predicted that it would be Jade Jones, Ah-reum Lee or Hatice Ilgun who would take home the gold. However, in the quarterfinal, Yaman managed the shock defeat of the day, beating Jones through a win by superiority. She went on to overcome China's Zongshi Luo in the semi-final, 24-6, and Lijun Zhou in the final, after a tense match which was decided by a golden point. The day's action reinforced the enthralling unpredictability of taekwondo and the strength of all the fighters as none of the favorites managed to get onto the podium, with Zhou taking the silver and Luo claiming bronze.

The men's -58kg, while no less thrilling, did not produce the same shock defeats. Tae-hun Kim has not lost a single major championship in 2017 and is a triple world champion; he went into the competition as a strong favourite. In the semi-final he faced a familiar foe in Mikhail Artamonov from Russia who was on good form having won the

2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 3 in London. It was a close match but Kim ultimately proved too strong and won 9-4, taking him through to the final against his relatively unknown compatriot Jun Jang. Jang secured his spot in Wuxi after winning the qualification tournament. Despite a good run to the final for Jang, Kim was too strong and won gold with a 37-16 victory. Certainly, the longer matches of five two-minute rounds, which are being pioneered in Wuxi, appeared to favour Kim who is known for his stamina and rapid kicks. But even he acknowledged after the fight he would need to train harder before the next Grand Slam. While Jang took home silver, Artamonov won his last match to claimed bronze in the men's -58kg.

Kim's gold capped off a very successful Grand Slam Series for Korea who finished top of the table in both the male and female medal tally. In the men's competition they finished top with three gold medals and two silver. Russia came second with one gold, one silver and two bronze medals while China finished third with one silver medal.

In the female category, Korea won one gold and one bronze medal, a feat which was matched by Turkey. In joint second place were Cote d'Ivoire and Great Britain, with one gold each; China came in third with two silvers and two bronzes.





Hosts China Win 2 Golds, Iran Wins 1 at World Cup Team Championships



An enthralling day of taekwondo team competition in Wuxi on Jan. 27 saw Iran crowned as the World Cup Team Champions in the men's event and China win gold in both the women's and mixed team events.

After four weekends of individual competitions in Wuxi, it was the turn of the world's best taekwondo teams this weekend. Huge crowds gathered, with China having a team in all three events: the men's, women's and mixed team. A number of special guests were also in attendance including IOC Vice President Zaiqing Yu who presented the medal to the mixed team winners.

In the men's team final, Iran, the winners of the Abidjan 2017 World Taekwondo Team Championships, faced competition hosts, China. Iran had overcome Russia, runners up in the Abidjan 2017 Team Championships, in a tactical semi-final with a score of 39-20; while, China beat Korea 76-63 in a high scoring semi-final match. Iran

went into the final as favorites but with the home crowd spurring them on, China could not be underestimated. A fierce opening round saw Iran take a 16-8 lead. China were able to reduce the gap in the second round but a strong third round from Iran saw them go into the fourth round with a 42-25 lead. Iran ultimately proved too strong and won 76-56.

In the women's team final, China, winners of the Abidjan 2017 World Taekwondo Team Championships, once again faced Korea who they met in the final of that competition. China came out stronger and took an early lead in the first round which they extended in the second. Korea fought back in the third round getting some valuable points on the score board but struggled to cut down China's lead and China went into the fourth round with a 36 point lead. In the final round, China's lead was reduced but not by enough and the hosts finished the match as

winners with a score of 53-17.

In the mixed team event, China met Russia in the final. Mixed team was first introduced at the 2016 World Team Championships as part of World Taekwondo's commitment to gender equality and staging the most exciting events.

Teams are made up of two male and two female athletes and matches consist of three rounds rather than four as in single gender competitions.

The final was a very close and tactical match with both teams evenly matched. In the first round both teams defended well and it finished 3-2 to China. In the second round Russia took the upper hand but with the score at 8-7 to Russia, the match was still very much in the balance. Both teams stepped up the intensity in the third round. China led for most of the round but a head kick saw Russia take a one point lead with 13 seconds to go. A gamjeom against Russia brought the score to 18-18 and

with just two seconds remaining of the match China landed a head kick to go 21-18 up and take the gold medal.

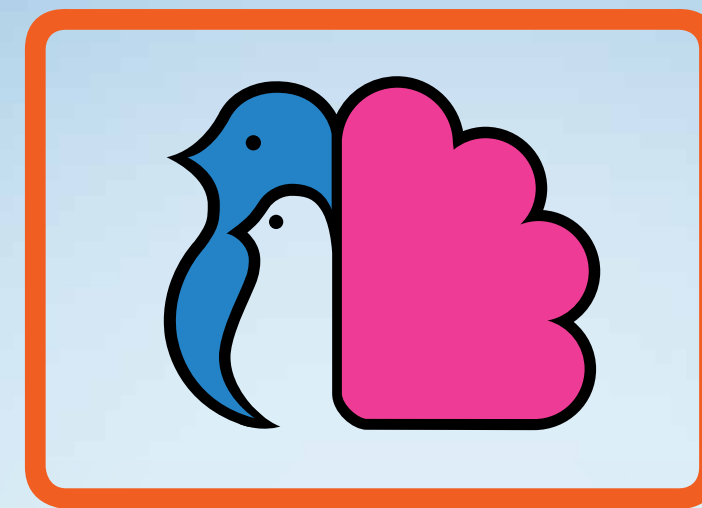
"Team Championships bring a completely different dynamic to the sport and we are seeing a real growth in the discipline's popularity around the world," World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue said. "Today showcased what makes team competitions so enjoyable to watch with many fast-paced and high-scoring matches."

Choue thanked Wuxi and the Chinese Taekwondo Association for hosting the Grand Slam over the last five weekends. The series sets the benchmark for future competitions, he added.

"I would also like to thank IOC President Thomas Bach and IOC Vice President Zaiqing Yu for the support they have shown for the Grand Slam," Choue said.

He also thanked the Chinese and international media who had covered the series.

Head to the world with Booyoung Group



사랑으로

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WT Global Partnership



taekwondo Peace Corps ceremony



Inauguration of taekwondo Center in Cambodia

PART.3

AROUND WT





2017's Elite

Gala Awards honor
the best of the best

Bianca Walkden of Great Britain was named Best Female Athlete of the year and Dae-hoon Lee was named Best Male Athlete of the Year as World Taekwondo honored the outstanding personalities, teams and countries of 2017 at its fourth annual Gala Awards in Abidjan's Radisson Blue Hotel.





The evening offered the game's players, coaches and referees the chance to let their hair down in black tie and evening wear against a ritzy, five-star backdrop. The dining hall was decked out in West African style, with brightly colored hangings and table wear – all rocking to the sound of upbeat tribal techno and traditional music.

In 2017, Walkden defended her World Championship title and won all four of the year's Grand Prix tournaments – a historic achievement, the first time this has happened, ever. "I want to say 'thank you' to everyone, I am still shocked, I am so pleased," she said on the podium. She added: "I've got one more left: I am going to win the Grand Slam – then I am going to take a break!" Her reference was to the Grand Slam Champions Series, a new, made-for-TV competition format introduced for the first time in Wuxi, China, at year's end.



Lee's receipt of the Best Male Athlete of the Year award was an extraordinary achievement: The soft-spoken, hard-kicking Korean has won the honor three out of the four times it has been awarded in total; no other athlete has won it more than once. In 2017, Lee won the World Championships, and three out of four Grand Prix titles – the only one he did not win, he did not attend. Clearly struggling with his English, Lee persevered to say, "I have always thought that there is something for me to learn from watching the people here; I have learned many things from watching you guys."

The Coach of the Year award was won by Serbia's Dragan Jovic, whose remarkable "Galeb" ("Seagull") dojang in Belgrade has produced a winning crop of female players including two Olympic medalists and two world champions. "I am very happy, of course, but I could not have done it without my ladies!" he said, before wishing all a merry Christmas.



The Best Kick of the Year award was won – for the second time – by Moldovan Aaron Cook, for his spinning heel kick to the head of Russia's Anton Kotkov at the Moscow Grand Prix Series 1. "I don't know what to say, I am just here to support Bianca," he said; Cook and Walkden have been romantically linked for a decade. "It is a great honor to get this award a second time."

Best Member National Association of the Year was won by Korea, which had successfully hosted the biggest world championships in history.

The Female Referee of the Year award was won by Julie Dib of Lebanon. "It is wonderful to be surrounded by the people I call my "Taekwondo Family," she said. "You are the best!"

The Male Referee of the Year award was won by Belgium's Abdelkhalek Chbib. "I am not alone in deserving this – it is with my colleagues, we always try to do a good job," he said.

World Taekwondo Africa was named Best Continental Union of the Year. Africa enjoyed its greatest-ever outing at the Rio Olympics in 2016, and has hosted a Grand Prix (in Rabat, Morocco) and a Grand Prix Final (in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire) in 2017 – both firsts for the continent.

Best National Team of the Year – ie. the team which has taken home the most medals in the World Championships and Grand Prix Series of 2017 – was won by Korea, followed by Russia in second place and Great Britain in third.

Earlier in the evening, following a performance by a local dance troupe, WT President Chungwon Choue had recounted the achievements of the year, focusing on the success of the 2017 World Championships in Muju, Korea;



the rising role of Africa in the sport; and the charitable efforts of the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation.

The President of the Cote d'Ivoirian Taekwondo Federation, Daniel Cheick Bamba, also spoke, thanking WT for giving his nation the chance to host the prestigious Grand Prix Final, Gala Awards and World Team Championships. "To see you all here at this ceremony, my heart is full of happiness," he told the crowd.

The ceremony was MCed by Pascal Gentil, the chair of the WT Athletes Committee.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the evening really got underway as a range of singers took to the stage, dinner was served, and the wine flowed.

Next year's Grand Prix Final and Gala Awards take place in UAE.

2017's Elite



Best CU
Africa



Best Female Athlete
Bianca Walkden, GB



Best Male Athlete
Dae-hoon Lee, Korea



Coach of the Year
Dragan Jovic, Serbia



Female Referee of the Year
Julie Dib, Lebanon



Male Referee of the Year
Abdelkhalek Chbib, Belgium



Best Kick
Aaron Cook, Moldova



Best MNA
Korea



Best National Team
Korea

WT President Re-Elected in Muju

Choue lays out challenges, sets forth future vision

MUJU, Korea

June 23, 2017

Chungwon Choue of Korea won his fifth consecutive term as the president of World Taekwondo, after the federation held its quadrennial leadership elections at the Muju National Sports Center in southern Korea.

“Thank you for your confidence in me,” Choue said, to a standing ovation as he was returned to office. In addition to its chief executive, elections also took place for the headships of World Taekwondo’s five Continental Unions and its Council. The newly elected and re-elected officers took up their duties after the conclusion of the World Taekwondo Championships, which took place in Muju from June 24 – June 30. There was only one candidate for the position of president, and two candidates for the two auditor slots. However, the Assembly was asked to cast their votes for these positions for the sake of credibility. They did so. The popular Choue was re-elected with significant support as were two auditors, Ali Sagirkaya of Turkey and Dalibor Krpan of Croatia. The current presidents of the Continental Unions were all re-elected, with no other candidates standing. They are: Ahmed El-Fouly of World Taekwondo Africa, Kyu-seok Lee of the Asia Taekwondo Union; Athanasios Pragalos of World Taekwondo Europe; John Kotsifas of the Oceania Taekwondo Union; and Ji-ho Choi of the Pan American Taekwondo Union. World Taekwondo Council Member Ivan Dibos of Peru acted as chairman of the election

committee. The election was overseen on the day by World Taekwondo Council Member and Ad Hoc Election Chair Anthony Ferguson of Trinidad and Tobago. Voting took place in polling booths using an Optical Mark Recognition system. The accuracy of the initial vote was confirmed with a recount. Choue, who came to taekwondo after a career in academia, first won the World Taekwondo presidency in 2004. He has enforced “fairness and transparency” in taekwondo, a strategy which has assured its future on the Olympic program. With that mission achieved, and with taekwondo having expanded its global member base to 208 MNAs, he has set forth a new mission: Ensuring that taekwondo “dazzles and excites,” making it as popular as a spectator sport as it already is as a participation sport. World Taekwondo must “convert our global presence into global power,” he said.



- There were 28 candidates for the 12 available Council seats.
- The newly elected/re-elected World Taekwondo Council members are:**
- Driss El Hilali of Morocco (re-elected)
 - Issaka Ide of Niger (re-elected)
 - An–chin Hsu of Chinese Taipei
 - Kook Hyun Jung of Korea (re-elected)
 - Hazem Ahmad Awwad Naimat of Jordan (re-elected)
 - Tae Kyung Kim of New Zealand (re-elected)
 - Jesus Castellanos Pueblas of Spain (re-elected)
 - Metin Sahin of Turkey (re-elected)
 - Anatoly K. Terekhov of Russia (re-elected)
 - Maria Borello of Guatemala (re-elected)
 - Inseon Kim of Canada
 - Juan Manuel Lopez Delgado of Mexico (re-elected)



Choue simultaneously serves as president of the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, a charitable initiative founded in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2016, with the mission of empowering refugees, displaced persons and orphans worldwide by teaching them taekwondo.

Prior to the vote, Choue noted in a speech the challenges the federation faces: The rise of new media supplanting the old; increasing regulatory oversight of sports; and the rise of new forms of sport and entertainment vying for public and media attention.

But in the face of these challenges, he insisted that the future of the sport is bright, given its proven capacity to evolve. "If we do not take the initiative on change, we will lose it," he said. "It is up to us to control

change and channel it in a positive direction."

He laid out his vision. World Taekwondo must be more focused on its athletes, he said; it must diversify its formats, to ensure that it is truly a sport for all; it must upgrade the spectator value of all events; and it must be optimally member-centric.

He made clear his faith in the World Taekwondo Council and General Assembly. "There is nothing we cannot achieve and no barrier we cannot overcome," he said. "Nothing will stop us further developing our great sport." Addressing the Assembly directly, he added, "Thank you for all you have done and for all that I know you will do. Taekwondo forever!"



Extraordinary Council Meeting

WT's top body looks ahead, sees bright future

LONDON, GB
Oct. 21, 2017



The World Taekwondo Council met in London for an Extraordinary Council Meeting which covered a wide range of strategic areas as the federation continues to optimize the development of the sport and ensure the best competitions for its athletes.

World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue explained that good governance was a priority for the federation and an action plan was presented on how the federation intends to further improve this. Following the results of the ASOIF Good Governance survey, World Taekwondo has identified a

series of reforms which will further enhance its governance with a particular focus on financial transparency.

The Council also received reports on a number of its competitions. The roadmap for Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was presented, outlining the plans to maximize engagement in the build up to the Games and implementing reforms which will deliver the best Olympic competition. The standing procedures for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games were also addressed. There will be 72 para taekwondo athletes in the K44 (+K43) class competing across six medal events (three

male and three female) in Tokyo. The competition will be held over three days with two medal events per day.

The other competition which was addressed was the inaugural Grand Slam Champions Series which was launched to take the sport's elite to the next level and maximize media exposure. The innovative new competition sees the world's best 12 fighters in each of the eight Olympic weight categories (four male and four female) battle it out for a new title and record prize-money.

The Council also observed a moment of silence in memory of Un Yong Kim, founder of World Taekwondo, who passed away this October.

A 2017 first half review on the World Taekwondo Development Program was also presented during the Council meeting. The ambition is to increase the number of practitioners around the world and not just increase the number of MNAs but also develop the operations of the existing MNAs.

Pascal Gentil, World Taekwondo Athletes' Committee Co-Chair gave a presentation on the committee's plans and emphasized their mission to ensure that athletes remain at the very heart of the sport.

The outcome of the WT Sustainability Committee, which is aligned with the IOC Sustainability Strategy, was presented as World Taekwondo aims to minimize its impact on the environment. There were also updates on the GMS, brand guidelines, Taekwondo Cares and the growing reach and importance of the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation

(THF). More than 120 MNAs have signed the Humanitarian Charter to commit their support to the THF.

A progress report on the 2018 World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Hammamet, Tunisia was given. It was explained that innovative new technologies to connect the sport with the next generation will be tested there.

Before the Council meeting began, newly elected Chair of GB Taekwondo, Julia Newton, gave a short presentation on the work of GB Taekwondo and UK Sport in developing a number of initiatives to further grow the sport in the UK. Newton also spoke about the work GB Taekwondo and UK Sport are doing with World Taekwondo to launch a development project in Nepal.

Speaking after the meeting, World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue said:

"Today we have heard many excellent updates and reports which have given us great confidence that we are moving forward in the right direction. Taekwondo's future is even brighter than its past. But we will not rest on our laurels. We will accelerate our efforts to innovate and evolve. We have so much to look forward to in the years ahead and by working together with the whole taekwondo family I have no doubt we will have great success."

The next Council meeting will take place on April 4, 2018, in Hammamet, Tunisia on the occasion of the WT Qualification Tournament for the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games and the 2018 World Taekwondo Junior Championships.

WT Head Lays Wreath at Las Vegas Shooting Site



World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue visited the site of the deadly Las Vegas shooting and laid a wreath for the victims yesterday.

On the evening of Oct. 1, a gunman opened fire on a crowded music festival in the city, killing 58 persons and wounding hundreds in what is being dubbed "the deadliest shooting incident in recent U.S. history."

Accompanied by a high-level delegation that included WT Secretary General Hoss Rafaty, Pan American Taekwondo Union President Ji-ho Choi, WT Council Members Maria Borello, Inseon Kim, Juan Manuel Lopez Delgado and Anthony Ferguson, and WT Referee Committee Chairman Songchul Kim, Choue laid a wreath on a lawn adjacent to the massacre site and observed a minute's silence.

A WT-branded card accompanying the wreath read, simply, "Family." Choue also left a personal message in a memorial book at the scene; the book will later be reproduced and a copy given to all affected families.

The delegation was briefed on the details of the tragedy, and preliminary plans for a memorial, by a local official. "The worst of humanity bought out the best," he said, noting how passers-by assisted in the evacuation of the wounded and dying.

"We laid a wreath on behalf of taekwondo practitioners across the United States, across the region and across the world," said a somber Choue. "The world taekwondo family extends its deepest condolences to all victims and to their family members, and joins them in their grieving."

Choue was in town for the Pan American Region President's Cup tournament, which takes place in Las Vegas from Oct. 5-8.

A separate minute's silence was observed during the tournament's opening ceremony in memory of Dr. Un Yong Kim, the founding president of WT, who passed away in Seoul.

Rebrand: From WTF to WT

Global Presence, Global Power, Global Prestige

The 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju were the occasion for the unveiling of the new WTF brand and its corporate identity.

Since its inception in 1973, the World Taekwondo Federation has, for convenience, used the acronym "WTF." For reasons that have nothing to do with taekwondo, that acronym has, in the Internet era, become a very negative term – one that we do not want associated with our sport! But that is not the main reason for the rebrand. The more important issue is this.

There are countless taekwondo federations around the world. Some are multinational, many are national, some are simply local. But there is only one World Taekwondo Federation.

The World Taekwondo Federation is the federation that has transformed taekwondo from a Korean martial art into a global combat sport. It is the federation that has grown the organization to 209 member national associations worldwide. It is the federation that has led taekwondo into the Olympic Games, and which administers taekwondo at the "Greatest Show on Earth." It is the federation that has introduced technological innovations such as the electronic protector and scoring system and video replays. It is the federation that has enabled taekwondo's inclusion in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. And it is the federation that is taking taekwondo beyond the realm of combat sports and into the field of humanitarianism.

2017
2005
1973



For this reason, a new brand that differentiates our federation from all others - one that incorporates the values of inclusiveness, innovation, universality and excellence - is called for.

Our new brand, "World Taekwondo," is it.

It makes clear that World Taekwondo is the undisputed leader of the global taekwondo movement. It is a brand that speaks of our global presence, global power and global prestige. The new brand also follows the lead of a number of our sister Olympic organizations, such as World Archery and World Wrestling.

In terms of the actual logo, the new corporate identity maintains the "kicking man" design that was the "T" in the "WTF." That provides a living link to our great heritage. But

instead of the acronym WT, the new brand stands boldly as World Taekwondo.

Since its official rollout at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju, the new brand is being incorporated in all official communications, marketing materials and branded merchandize. It is being disseminated to our continental unions and to our partner companies. As of June 2017, we, the World Taekwondo Federation, became World Taekwondo. The launch of the new brand was more - far more - than just a new design, a new look or a new name. It was the vanguard of our vision for an upgrade of the entire organization, based on the values of inclusion, innovation, universality and excellence.

The IOC Session has confirmed that taekwondo is on the core sports programme of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

We're In! Taekwondo at Paris 2024

Taekwondo gets thumbs up for Paris Olympics

The IOC Session has confirmed that taekwondo is on the core sports program of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. The IOC Session, which took place in Lima, Peru, confirmed taekwondo's place following the selection of Paris as the host city for the 2024 Games, and on the proposal of the IOC Executive Board.

Paris 2024 will be the seventh consecutive Olympic Games taekwondo has been a core sport at since its debut at Sydney 2000.

Speaking after the announcement World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue said:

"We are honored to have had taekwondo confirmed on the sports program for

Paris 2024. The Olympic Games is the pinnacle of elite taekwondo and we are committed to being a valuable partner to the IOC and the Olympic Movement.

"Rio 2016 was a great success for taekwondo and we are working hard to build on that success at Tokyo 2020. Now that Paris is confirmed as the host city for the 2024 Olympic Games we look forward to working with them and the IOC to deliver a fantastic taekwondo competition in 2024."

The IOC and World Taekwondo will undergo detailed discussions in due course with regard to the 2024 event program, athlete quotas and venue planning.

Now that Paris is the host city for the 2024 Olympic Games, we look forward to working with the IOC and the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee to deliver a fantastic taekwondo competition in 2024.

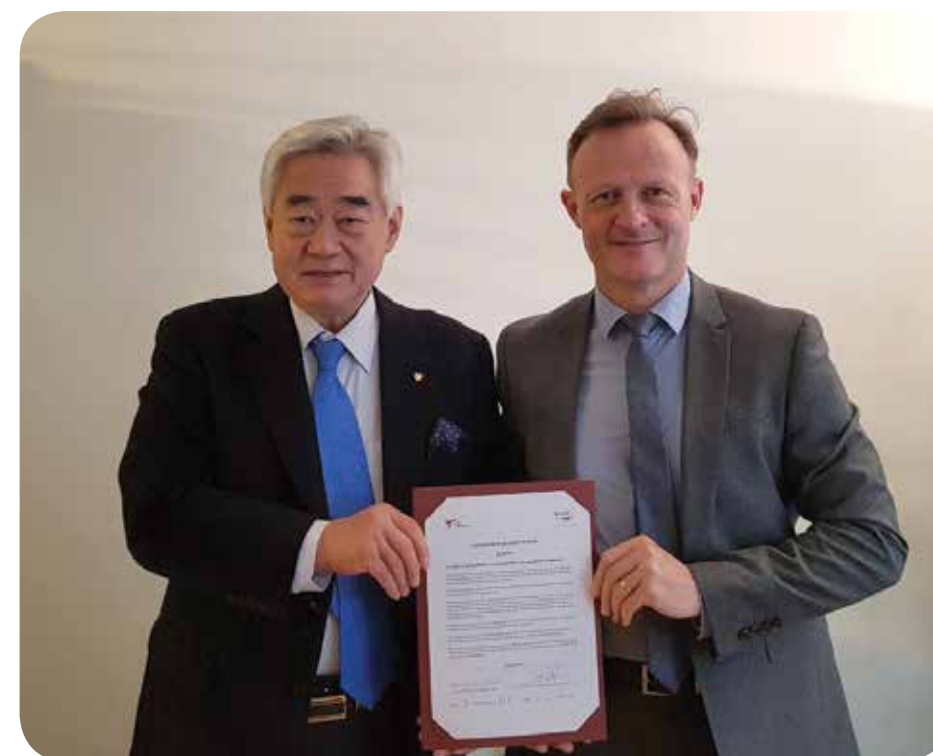


LEAD THE WAY

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Taking Taekwondo to Youth: WT signs memorandum with ISF



WT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International School Sport Federation (ISF) on Nov. 8 in order to increase collaboration between the two organizations and ensure the continued growth of youth taekwondo around the world.

The MoU was signed by WT President Chungwon Choue and ISF President Laurent Petrynka during an official signing ceremony at the World Taekwondo office in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The MoU highlights that the two organizations share the same values in respect of solidarity, friendship and youth education and both recognize the role played by sport as a factor in "ensuring the harmonization of socialization, integration and development and education." The ISF's mission is to educate through sport and WT has shown over the course of its history how the taekwondo philosophy extends beyond the field of play and teaches its practitioners universal values.

The MoU follows the ISF's announcement that taekwondo has been included on the sports programme of the ISF Gymnasiade 2018 in Morocco for the very first time. The Gymnasiade will take

place from 2-9 May 2018 in Marrakech, Morocco and will gather young students from all around the world to experience the spirit of international competition, fair play, friendship and cultural diversity.

Speaking following the MoU signing, World Taekwondo President Choue said:

"We are delighted to have signed this MoU with the ISF. Taekwondo is more than a sport: it is a philosophy. It teaches people self-discipline, respect and understanding while also keeping them physically active and healthy. This is why we believe it is such an important sport for young people to engage in and why so many countries around the world have taekwondo as part of their school curriculum. The ISF has a huge amount of experience and expertise in developing youth sport and through our partnership with them we look forward to developing youth taekwondo even further and harnessing its power to educate the next generation."



Pope Receives Taekwondo Honor

Black belt awarded to the Pontiff in the Vatican



There are moments when you are utterly thrilled: Rejoicing at a result, at the winning of a medal or at some other historic success that will remain forever in your memory. This was a moment like that.

On May 10, World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue, accompanied by WT Council Member & President of the Italian Taekwondo Federation Angelo Cito, was received by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Square in Vatican City. With them were ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Holy See Jong-hyu Jeong and honorary president of the Italian Taekwondo Federation Young-gil Park.

After a fraternal greeting, Choue awarded the Pope an honorary 10th dan black belt – the highest rank in taekwondo.

The Pope – a sports fan who is known for his passion for the Argentinean football club San Lorenzo – thanked Choue. At the World Conference on Sport and Faith hosted by the Pontiff at the Vatican in October 2016, the Pope had shown great interest in the WT Demonstration Team's performance during the opening ceremony. The team also performed for victims of the earthquake that took place in Amatrice, Italy in 2016.

The Pope expressed his interest in the humanitarian activities of the global taekwondo family, notably the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, or THF. The THF was established in Lausanne, Switzerland in 2016 with the mission of “empowering the powerless” – teaching taekwondo to refugees and displaced persons throughout the world.

The meeting ended with a traditional farewell. “Pray for me,” the smiling Pope Francis implored his guests.

“It was a tremendous honor to meet a man who has such immense moral stature worldwide,” said Choue after the meeting. “It was a great privilege to brief him on the sport of taekwondo, and on our humanitarian activities across the globe.”

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Awarded Taekwondo Black Belt

WT, UNHCR discuss cooperation on refugee assistance projects



The UN High Commissioner for Refugees was awarded an unusual honor: A high-level black belt in the combat sport of taekwondo.

World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue awarded Filippo Grandi, who heads the UNHCR, 8th degree honorary black belt rank at WT's Seoul headquarters Nov. 22.

In fact, the two organizations had much to discuss. World Taekwondo's in-house World Taekwondo Cares Program, or WTCP, and its Lausanne, Switzerland-based charity initiative, the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, or THF, are active helpers of refugees and displaced persons worldwide.

The UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding

with WT in 2016.

"Thank you for the cooperation that UNHCR has been providing us," Choue said. "You have granted us access to the refugee camps, and have assisted with the management of our programs within the camps."

"For refugees, uprooted from their homes and countries, sport helps provide focus and stability as they strive to rebuild their lives. It also proves a common language that helps build connections with local communities. Taekwondo has brought immeasurable benefits to many children and young refugees and is an economical and sustainable sport that has an important impact on the well-being of refugee communities," Grandi responded.

Taekwondo requires no bats or balls, nor pitches or pools, just the human body. Considering this advantage, WTCP and THF have had a positive influence by teaching the sport in refugee camps and earthquake disaster zones under the slogan "Empowering the Powerless." Refugees and displaced persons have embraced the broad suite of benefits - health, fitness, self-defense and self-belief - provided by taekwondo training.

Currently, the THF runs ongoing taekwondo programs in camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan and for Congolese refugees in Rwanda.

It has also run projects for Syrian refugees in Turkey, and for persons displaced by earthquake in Nepal. A future THF taekwondo academy is planned at a camp for Yemeni refugees in Djibouti.

Uzbek President Awarded Honorary Taekwondo Black Belt

In return, World Taekwondo head granted honorary doctorate, honorary citizenship of Tashkent



Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev was awarded an honorary 9th dan black belt by World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue, who was also granted two honors by the Central Asian state.

The awards took place against the backdrop of Tashkent hosting the 1st World Taekwondo President's Cup - Asian Region, which took place from Aug. 11 to 13.

Mirziyoyev was awarded the honorary 9th dan black belt by Choue in a ceremony at the Uzbekistan President's

Office in Tashkent. Other 9th dan black belt holders include Russian President Vladimir Putin and former U.S. President Barack Obama.

"I was delighted to present President Mirziyoyev with an honorary taekwondo black belt, that honors his continued support for the development of taekwondo in Uzbekistan," said Choue. The WT head requested the president to take an interest in the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF) that empowers refugees, displaced persons and orphans worldwide with the gift of taekwondo.

"Academic Young-seek Choue, father of President Choue, led the creation of the 'U.N. International Day of Peace,' and President Choue was granted an honorary doctorate from the National University of Uzbekistan Named After Mirzo Ulug'bek due to his great leadership and peaceful spirit in the sports world," said Mirziyoyev. "The university will run a taekwondo major and this class will start in October of this year."

Earlier, Choue had been granted the honorary doctorate from the National University of Uzbekistan Named After Mirzo Ulug'bek, and also been made an honorary citizen of Tashkent by Uzbekistan Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov. The ceremony took place at Tashkent City Hall in the afternoon of Aug. 10 in consideration of Choue's support for the development of taekwondo in Uzbekistan. Mayor of Tashkent Usmanov Rahmonkul and Minister of Education Madjinov Inom attended.

Taekwondo Heats Up 2018 Winter ‘Peace Olympics’ in PyeongChang

Taekwondo is not a Winter Olympic event, but our sport was central to inter-Korean reconciliation moves at the PyeongChang Games

Taekwondo players from both sides of the Korean Peninsula, representing World Taekwondo (WT) and the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) performed together at the pre-show of the Opening Ceremony of the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games.

The collaborative demonstration was an iconic moment for taekwondo and the Olympic Movement. Defying sub-zero temperatures, it took place on an open-air stage at the PyeongChang Olympic Stadium ahead of the opening ceremony. The demonstration set the tone for the official opening ceremony, which delivered a powerful message of peace to the world with athletes from North and South Korea marching out together behind one flag.

“Today is a historic moment for World Taekwondo, for the International Taekwondo Federation and for the Korean Peninsula,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “Sport has the power to bring countries together and open up dialogue.”

The WT demonstration team was the first to perform at the pre-show, smashing boards with high kicks. They were followed by the ITF members, who showcased a range of power moves. The two teams then carried out a joint demonstration. Throughout, the performers



Photo: IOC



Photo: Getty Images

Photo: IOC

enjoyed the vocal backing of 200 North Korean cheerleaders applauding every move.

WT and ITF signed a Protocol of Accord with the full endorsement of IOC President Thomas Bach in August 2014. The protocol was signed on the sidelines of the Youth Olympics in Nanjing, China.

Since then, the ITF Demonstration Team has joined the WT Demonstration Team to perform at the 2015 World Taekwondo Championships in Chelyabinsk, Russia and at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju, South Korea. On the sidelines of the Muju tournament, ITF President Yong Son Ri and WT President Choue discussed a joint performance at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

Amid a number of inter-Korean reconciliation moves underway at the 2018 Winter Games, the two teams also performed a demonstration in the coastal town of Sokcho on Feb. 10. While the PyeongChang demonstration had been a truncated performance, the Sokcho event ran for over an hour.

The demonstration took place at Gangwon Career Center, before a sellout crowd of enthusiastic locals and VIPs including former UN Secretary General Ki-moon Ban, IOC Vice President Dr. Ugur Erdener, ASOIF President Francesco Ricci Bitti, IOC Members Ivan Dibos, Aicha Garad Ali, Ung Chang, Poul-Erik Høyer, Jean-Christophe Rolland, President of the International Handball Federation Hassan Moustafa, FISU President Oleg Matytsin, WT Council Member Angelo Cito.

"This is the moment when we see the power of sports to unite people and countries," said Erdener. "Sport can make a difference in our world." "Sport is a powerful way to promote peace and reconciliation," added Ban, who joked about his 10th dan taekwondo black belt – an honorary rank. "We can witness how powerful sports are to promote, reconciliation, friendship and harmony...let us work together to make this world better."



Prior to the performance, a welcoming ceremony was held by the city's mayor at Sokcho City Hall. The ceremony was attended by senior WT officials including President Chungwon Choue and Secretary General Hoss Rafaty, as well as by ITF President Yong Son Ri and ITF Vice President Ho Yong Hwang.

The performance, which lasted slightly over one hour, took on the format of a WT demo, an ITF demo, then a joint demo to wrap up the event.

The WT demonstration started with a short film of recent humanitarian and social efforts made by the federation. It included footage of nations impacted by war and natural disasters, then showed work by WT and its charity affiliate, the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, in earthquake-struck Italy and Nepal, and at the Azraq Camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan. The film also included highlights of last year's joint ITF-WT demonstration at the 2017 Muju World Championships, and the honorary black belt presentation ceremony made by Choue to the Pope at the Vatican.

Then it was time for live action. The performance started with a fan dance performed by players in red and black dobok, followed by group poomsae, using the fans as weapons. Next was a swirling banner dance, which ended with a group tableau.

Next: Group poomsae in slow-motion, punctuated with fast moves and loud kiaps. Blindfold breaks were done to the sound of a tinkling bell, then that crowd favorite, aerial breaks, was performed. The athletes then picked up weapons – staffs and short-sticks – for both routines and two-man fights. Power breaks were performed, and then some very thick board were destroyed by the team's master coach.



The mood changed with flips, tricks and dancing, followed by an upbeat performance to the folk tune, “Arirang.” The demonstration finished with a line of ten boards being broken by a running series of jump spin kicks that was dizzying just to watch. Finally, a high-altitude break was undertaken, and a banner reading “One World, One Taekwondo” was unfurled from on high.

Next up from the ITF.

The ITF team marched on in traditional, all-white dobok. While the WT had used backing music, the ITF team were introduced by a female MC at the microphone, and moved in military-like coordination to shouted commands. The demonstration started with some crisp poomsae that made the stage shake with the jumps and stamps.

Flying high kick breaks and running kick breaks, as well as coordinated pattern breaks performed by multiple players, followed. Then came the most popular part of the performance: Power kicks smashing 6cm-, 7cm-, and even 10cm-thick stacks of wood, as well as roof tiles. The performance ended with a joint poomsae by WT and ITF team members, followed by the unfurling of another banner, reading “Peace is more precious than triumph.”

VIPs then mounted the stage – covered in splintered wood – for a photo opp and to congratulate the two teams. Then it was all over.

The WT and ITF teams performed two more demonstrations in Seoul before the ITF squad returned home.



Tonga's 2016 Taekwondo Hero Takes on Skiing Challenge in 2018

Photo: Getty Images



A lot can change in two years.

At Rio 2016, Tongan taekwondo athlete, Pita Taufatofua, made headlines around the world when he carried his nation's flag at the opening ceremony dressed in nothing more than a traditional Tongan mat around his waist. While it was his ripped physique which caught the world's eye, it was dedication to becoming Tonga's first ever Olympic taekwondo athlete that took him to Rio.

Taufatofua had to battle through four Olympic cycles before qualifying for the 2016 Games. Having had a taste of the Summer Olympics, he switched his attention to winter sport, choosing cross-country skiing. With no snow in Tonga, he learned using sand and wooden planks strapped to his feet. The discipline and hard work – not to mention the wicked physique – that were the result of a career in taekwondo held him in good stead, particularly given that taekwondo's torturous stance work is complimentary to cross-country skiing.

He qualified for PyeongChang as Tonga's first ever Olympic cross-country skier. At the Games' opening ceremony, Taufatofua once again had the honour of bearing his nation's flag. Once again, he wore just his traditional Tongan mat around his waist, relying on a coating of coconut oil to protect his torso from the freezing temperature.

And after PyeongChang? He is aiming for his third successive Olympics at Tokyo 2020. "I have unfinished business with taekwondo," he told reporters.

First-Ever Taekwondo Medical Conference Lays Solid Groundwork for Future

Meeting offers best medicine for sport's future

Among a number of very high-profile firsts at the recent 2017 World Taekwondo Championships – the first time a Korean president had attended; first time an IOC president had attended – one first might have been overlooked: The first-ever WT Medical Conference

In fact, the three-hour conference covered some very serious ground. Held on June 22, at the Tirol Hotel in Muju, participants including team doctors and coaches were briefed on matters as varied as sport safety data, injury management and anti-doping.

Six presentations were delivered. Dr. Paul Viscogliosi discussed “Trauma evolution in taekwondo, studied in relation to the new competition rules during the last six years on the basis of French insurance statistics.” Dr. Hassan Kamal presented on “Taekwondo injuries outside competition (during training); incidences and causes.” Professor Sae-yong Lee of the Yonsei Institute of Sport Science and Exercise Medicine gave a presentation on, “Taekwondo injuries statistics in the past three Olympic Games.” Professor Dae Hyoun Jeong of the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine presented on “Point-of-care ultrasound for injured athletes in the taekwondo competition.” Marco Ienna, the WT's Anti-Doping Manager, briefed participants on, “WT Anti-doping management and



new trends,” and the WT Sport Department wrapped up the conference with an overview of the WT's latest injury management procedures during competitions. The event finished with a question-and-answer session.

“What differentiates taekwondo from some traditional martial arts is that we have done away with secrets and superstitions; instead, we have embraced modern science and medicine,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “This conference provides a sound basis on which to build further efforts aimed at reducing and managing injuries in taekwondo, a dynamic and challenging combat sport.”

Meanwhile, the WT recorded and analyzed all athlete injuries that occurred during the week-long World Championships for further analysis, to gain knowledge about the effectiveness and weaknesses of existing programs.

IOC President Awards WT Diploma for its Gender Equality Efforts

IOC President Thomas Bach granted World Taekwondo a “Women and Sport” Achievement Diploma in recognition of its outstanding contribution to promoting the development and participation of women and girls in sport. It was received by WT on Dec. 6.

WT made specific efforts for gender equality at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. In Rio, in addition to the customary 50:50 split in taekwondo’s competitive categories (four female and four male weight categories), the federation, for the first time, had a 50:50 gender split in its contingent of international referees.

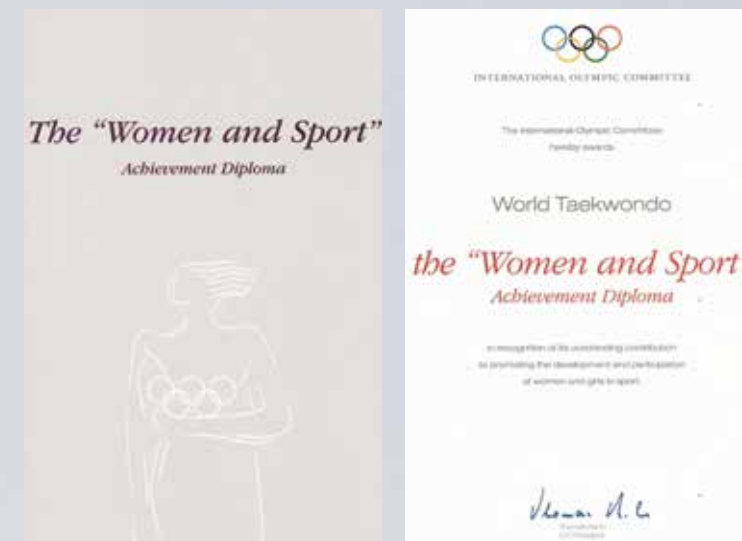
WT is also promoting a new category in its annual Team Championships: A mixed-gender

team. The category was first experimentally contested alongside the existing female team and male team formats at the 2016 World Taekwondo Team Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, and was most recently contested on the regular program at the 2018 World Cup in Wuxi, China.

“It is deeply rewarding to receive recognition from the IOC for our efforts to promote gender equality,” said WT President Chungwon Choue. “But our challenge now is not just gender equality, it is equality in all areas: World Taekwondo aspires to break all barriers of gender, race, religion and culture in order to truly become a sport for all.”

The federation continues to promote geographical equality. In 2017, it has hosted top-level events in Africa: The Grand Prix Series 2 in Rabat, Morocco, and the Grand Prix Finals and World Taekwondo Team Championships in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.

It is also promoting equality of opportunity. In response to the global refugee crisis, WT’s charity initiative the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation is operating taekwondo training and education programs in refugee camps in Jordan and Rwanda, with another program planned for Djibouti in the near future.



Guinea-Bissau Becomes World Taekwondo’s 209th Member National Association

On Dec. 12, 2017, World Taekwondo confirmed Guinea-Bissau Taekwondo Federation as its 209th Member National Association (MNA), as it continues to develop and grow taekwondo around the world.

Guinea-Bissau is situated in West Africa and its entry into the global taekwondo family reflects the ongoing growth of the sport in the continent. In 2017 Africa hosted the Grand Prix Series 2 in Morocco in September and the Grand Prix Final and World Taekwondo Team Championship in Cote d’Ivoire. As a sport which does not require any equipment, taekwondo is universally accessible to people of all ages and genders and can be easily practised in developing countries with limited sports infrastructure.

“We are delighted to welcome Guinea-Bissau into our taekwondo family. Taekwondo can be practiced by anyone, anywhere in the world, from the world’s largest countries to the world’s smallest,” said World Taekwondo President Chungwon Choue. “At World Taekwondo we are working hard to fulfill our vision of taekwondo for all, by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to engage in the sport.

“We are seeing dramatic growth in Africa and the MNA in Guinea-Bissau will ensure more people in the country get involved in the sport,” Choue added. “Taekwondo offers people opportunities to not only live healthier lifestyles but also teaches them values and disciplines which go well beyond sport.”



A Sharp Eye, a Strong Hand and Sound Judgment

Kim builds on platform of success



Songchul Kim

Referee Committee Chair

"I was a national level player and my dream was to be in the Olympics one day," said Songchul Kim, stating the hope of greatness that inspires every taekwondo athlete. His dream came true – but when he finally trod the Olympic mats, in London 2012 and later in Rio 2016, he was not attired in dobok and hogu, he was wearing a shirt and tie. "When I made it to the Olympics, it was as a referee – not as a player!" he said.

Refereeing clearly has its own rewards. And in September, the 49-year-old Canadian was rewarded with the ultimate position in taekwondo refereeing, when WT President Chungwon Choue appointed him Committee Chairman.

"I was honored," Kim, who had been a committee vice chairman since 2015, said of his appointment. "I was very fortunate to be given this opportunity, and I want to thank the peo-

ple all around me for giving me the chance to help develop the game."

Kim is shouldering a weighty responsibility, for his appointment comes at a time when taekwondo rules have undergone significant change.

Following controversies at the Beijing 2008 Olympics, WT adopted a range of technologies – notably the electronic Protector and Scoring System (PSS) and Instant Video Replays (IVR) – to obviate errors in refereeing and judging. The technologies were successfully deployed in both London 2012 and Rio 2016, but in early 2017, WT changed its rules to make a more dynamic, more free-flowing game. The new rules put more decision-making power into the hands of the referees. This means that referee judgment has to be better than ever.

"The referee has to be sure and confident about giving a gamjeom, otherwise the ref

should think twice as it is plus one point to an opponent right away," Kim admitted. With the new rules still in their early phase, a key priority is instilling consistency. "Calling gamjeoms and points for punches should be consistent," he added. "Consistency leads to fair judging. It is very important!"

However, WT's international referees are now so well trained, that there are few complaints from the mats, he added: "I think we are honest and well trained and the coaches appreciate this: We are getting minimal coach complaints, so I think it is good, and it is going to get better and better."

Kim himself started taekwondo for the classic reason that draws so many to the sport: "I started when I was five years old," he said. "I got beaten up by an older kid – like all kids are! – so my mom took me to a taekwondo school."

Kim's parents emigrated to Canada when

he was 16. Kim kept on with the martial art, becoming a national-level player in his adopted nation. Today, he owns and operates a taekwondo school in Burnaby, Canada – and indeed, Kim's behind-the-scenes connections led (in part) to the highly successful World Junior Championships being hosted by the Canadian city in December 2016.

He got his start in refereeing in 1994. "One of my seniors asked me to try refereeing as it is very important: without refs, there would be no competition," he recalled. "As I started, I guess I got addicted and I wanted to go further, onto a bigger stage."

He did indeed, move onto a bigger stage – once again, at the urging of a senior. "I was doing like national level refereeing and one of my seniors said, 'You are a pretty good ref, why not take it a step further?' I had a chance at the Edmonton 1999 World Championships, so I took the course and became an international referee."

In taekwondo – as in every sport – refereeing can be risky and thankless task. Firstly, the ref has no opportunity to win medals, prize money or national glory. Secondly, he or she is subject to the ire of coaches, players and fans every time he or she makes a controversial or unpopular decision. Thirdly, WT international referees are unpaid volunteers, so receive no financial reward. So why do they do it?

"Once you get into refereeing, there is enjoyment when you make the right call so that the better player wins the game, and then you look at them doing the joyful celebrations," he said. "Words cannot describe it – it is just a great feeling."

Moreover, taekwondo's referees are a tight team who clearly enjoy each other's company. "I enjoy watching taekwondo and I enjoy hanging out with people who enjoy taekwondo," Kim said – but emphasizes that refereeing is very much business before pleasure. "Like coaches and players, the referees spend a lot of time together, and the fun part is before or after the competition," he said. "But the fun part should not be the priority; our priority is officiating."



Kim currently has a pool of approximately 1,000 active international referees to choose from to officiate WT tournaments around the world. He sees his main task now as ensuring quality, rather than expanding quantity, but will also be focusing on equality in continental representation. "Global equality is important," he said. "I don't want referees just from Europe or just from Asia."

Two key issues he will be focusing on are gender – WT successfully employed a 50-50 gender ratio in its referee corps in Rio – and age – to ensure there is an ideal blend of youth and experience officiating on the mats. "Gender equality is very important," he said. "President Choue also emphasizes developing young referees to have a good harmony with all the experienced referees, like mentors."

Upgrading referee training and education courses, refreshers and certification will be critical parts of his role. And with taekwondo being a sport that offers the promise of health and fitness, audiences at WT events should expect to see not just fit-looking players, but also fit-looking referees. "Nowadays, the game is so dynamic, if you lose your focus for one second lots of things can happen, and when you get in to break the fight, you need to really move as quickly as possible," he said. "So physical

conditioning is important; a taekwondo referee has to move a lot."

Of course, the qualities of a good referee go beyond the physical; Kim lists ethics, fair play, knowledge, experience and mental focus. But whenever the subject of refereeing is mentioned, the possibility of human error has to be raised. Kim admits that referees will inevitably make mistakes. The key thing, he insists, is that these mistakes become learning opportunities.

"As time goes by, I can see things I could not see before through making

little mistakes here and there: Then it becomes mine," he said. "Just by hearing from others, you can't get it." He encourages all referees to discuss any errors they make openly so that all can benefit from their experience. "If you are honest, everyone can learn, but if you try to hide it or blame it on someone else, we are not going anywhere," he said. "That is how I want to educate my referees."

During his tenure, Kim has a clear aspiration. "I want worldwide innovation so that taekwondo is seen as a leading sport for objective and fair officiating," he said. "I want World Taekwondo to be viewed among other sports organizations as a leader for referee development and reputation."

Excellence and Execution Taekwondo's Top Priorities

Game management evolves as game changes



Mohamed Shaaban

Games & Equipment Committee Chair



Ranking Used	SEPTEMBER	# Referees
SEEDING		PSS
VR Quota		OVR
# Cameras		DRAW

Coming off the back of one of the best ever World Taekwondo Championships in Muju and the very successful Rio 2016 Olympic Games, there is a lot for World Taekwondo to celebrate. However, speaking to the World Taekwondo Games & Equipment Committee Chairman Mohamed Shaaban it is clear that the federation is taking nothing for granted as it focuses on evolving and improving the sport.

Speaking at London's Copper Box Arena during the World Para Taekwondo Championships and Grand Prix Series, Shaaban expressed the committee's dedication to "enhancing the game" and identifying reforms that "can make a big impact and make the sport more entertaining."

One such reform was trialled for the first time ever during this week's World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 3. During the semi-final and finals a visual "Power Bar" was displayed around the venue to show the spec-

tators the level of force with which an athlete hits his opponent. The power bar fills depending on the strength of the kick or punch, with the strongest strikes filling the bar completely.

"It is like in the video games," Shaaban explained. "Visually it tells the spectators if the hit is valid but is not at the level that will result in a point. We are trying to make the game more entertaining for spectators here in the stadium and also at home. Visual effects will make the game easier to understand for people who are not experts in taekwondo." To begin with, the power bar will only be used in the venues, but if it proves successful it will be rolled out into broadcast as well.

It is not just the introduction of new technologies that the committee is looking into but also the development of existing technologies. The Protector and Scoring System (PSS) has revolutionized the sport but

Shaaban explains they are still looking to see how it can be enhanced to eliminate the small number of errors the PSS produces. They are also exploring ways to develop it further.

"We are trying to develop the electronic system to match all the taekwondo techniques. This would be done in a way that assesses the technical difficulty of the technique and provides the scoring that is equivalent to that technique without any human intervention," he said.

From a more traditional standpoint, the committee is also reviewing the uniform and what changes might make it more engaging with fans. "We are looking at possibly changing the uniform in a more entertaining manner which also meets the taekwondo tradition." This could one day include allowing athletes to customize their own uniforms, making them instantly recognizable to fans.

Shaaban explains that the committee's commitment to enhancing fan engagement and entertainment extends beyond the field of play. They are also educating athletes on how to interact with the cameras when they come onto the field of play. "There is a lot of value as they come in, interacting with the game. It also adds some suspense. The music when they enter will of course continue."

Across the work of the committee and the numerous innovations and reforms they are trialling or discussing, Shaaban makes it clear that the focus is always on "excellence and execution."

"We are going to make sure that whatever competition we are running, it runs with the highest standards following our protocols and at the same time making sure it is smooth without any technological problems."

Taking Taekwondo into the Big League

The time is right for our sport to take its rightful place



Philippe Bouedo

Education Committee Chair

One of the most common sights on the sidelines of major taekwondo competitions is a glistening dome bobbing up and down behind the operations desk, directing events, managing crises and handling controversies.

The dome is mounted upon the frame of Parisian Philippe Bouedo, 55, an all-round taekwondo veteran who knows the game inside out – and given his vast experience in the sport, he should.

Muju 2017 was his 20th consecutive world championships. He attended five of those championships as a player, five as a coach, five as a national coach for his native France, and five as the Games Chairman of World Taekwondo. As French team coach and director, he produced six Olympic medalists and six world champions.

Today a 7th dan black belt, and a special advisor to the Moroccan Taekwondo Federation, he has recently passed the torch of WT

Games Committee chairmanship to Mohamed Shaaban of Egypt. His new position in WT – adopted as of the Rabat Grand Prix Series 2 in Morocco – is Education Committee Chairman. “All my life, I have liked creating structures,” he said. “As Games Chairman for 10 years, I created a lot of processes; now it is all fixed. Now, my challenge is to create real educational programs for WT.” Bouedo will be creating programs for athletes, coaches, officials and even doctors. Such as? “Take, for example, athletes,” he said. “We have top-level players, they become world champions, and suddenly they have to talk to the media. We need to guide them how to react: What is their own key message? What is the message of their international federation? Of the organization?”

His work will involve creating programs; certifying them; and eventually making them mandatory. The programs, and all knowledge contained therein, will be available to the entire

global taekwondo family via the Internet. “WT needs to increase online programs,” Bouedo said. “You can go to a seminar, but if you go to a seminar, afterward, you need to be updated online.” Program content will include powerpoint and video presentations. Bouedo is excited by the response so far. “I am looking to make a team,” he said. “I am impressed that a lot of people want to work with me.”

Given his own introduction to taekwondo, Education Committee chairman is an appropriate role.

“I was kind of a tough boy: I had some problems at school – some problems!” Bouedo recalled. “I made a lot of fights, so I wanted to learn boxing or karate to be a stronger fighter.” Aged 13, the young tough was introduced to a taekwondo master in Toulouse. His motive was to get tougher – but he found that the combat sport provided an education beyond combat. “My master was Lyuh Sung Koo and from him, I

learned ethics and respect,” Bouedo, who grew up without a father at home, said. “From that time, I totally changed: I was only focused on the sport.”

Bouedo went on to become a nine-time French national champion, took a gold at the 1987 Military CISM championships (while doing his national service) and a bronze in the 1982 Worlds. His high profile in taekwondo led to an unusual media opportunity for a combat sportsman: he was featured in the French edition of “Playboy” magazine. “My style of fighting was very good for pictures,” he said. “It was a report on ‘The Warriors of Taekwondo’

“We made one taekwondo: It is now the same in different schools, all over world, if you practice in Europe or Papua New Guinea,” he said.

Early taekwondo was rough. “There were very few protectors: only the hogu [body protector] and groin guard,” he recalled. “Then came the shin guards and helmets and we were competing on hard floors, so we put mats down.” Even today, some of the old guard continue to insist that the tougher, older version of taekwondo is “real” taekwondo. Bouedo disagrees. “What is ‘real taekwondo?’” he asked. “Everything that put taekwondo into the Olympics – that is the real taekwondo!”



and they had nice pictures of me.” He adds, “But not naked!”

Today, he is more respectable than in his wild youth, and is the father of two sons and a daughter. He splits his time between homes in France and Morocco, and in his spare time, enjoys moto-cross.

Over the decades, Bouedo has witnessed taekwondo’s evolution.

“When I began, the Korean masters were thinking it was going to be an Olympic sport,” he said. “This was the target.” The first element was an agreement on technical standardization that dissolved the differences between the early kwans, leading to integration in the sport’s homeland, Korea, and then globally.

After standardization, safety and Olympic entry, the next challenge was transparency. “Un Yong Kim did a great job to put taekwondo into the Olympics,” he said. “Under Chungwon Choue, suddenly we got the PSS. The PSS does not care about your nationality, it is just blue or red!” That, and the introduction of the IVR (Instant Video Replay) slashed the possibility of human error in refereeing and judging.

A downside to “techwondo” was the changes it created in the game. Knockouts and power strikes were no longer the priority; scoring points was. This led to tactical, but less spectacular, front-leg play, known throughout the game as “new school” taekwondo. In 2017, World Taekwondo changed its rules to bring

back the spectacle. Those changes, Bouedo judges, are a success. “I think we now have a very good standard, active game,” he said.

While taekwondo’s Olympic future looks secure – the IOC has confirmed its slot as a core sport in Paris 2024 – Bouedo, like other WT executives, is pushing a new format for the greatest show on earth. “I totally support mixed team competition,” he said. “It’s amazing: The players go crazy looking for points – the concept is maximum points in minimum time. For the general audience, for media and for the Olympics, it would be a real plus.”

WT’s next goal could be its greatest challenge yet: To become a mainstream, global spectator sport. “We have amazing players and wonderful stories, so we need to make stars,” Bouedo said. “WT needs to make efforts to let the world know these stories.”

This will be a massive leap, given that mainstream global sports viewers have very, very limited horizons. “For general media, there are only really five sports: football, basketball, Formula 1, tennis and boxing,” he said.

With family connections in basketball – both wife and his son, Arthur, had careers in the game – he suggests benchmarking the NBA. “They create a story, they make champions, they have highlights,” he said. A key element is building stories around top players. “In every game, they tell a story about a player who made the game,” he said. “They highlight one or two players, or number one against number one to create rivalries. We have this in every weight category: We can do the same!” Another element is the NBA’s best-of-breed camerawork and videography. “We need to capture the emotion, the close ups of faces,” he said. “We need cameras, we need all access for photographers and videographers to do better than the basics.”

Yet another element is energizing and capturing the crowd. “People come to see a show with the family, so during a break or a time out, there are pom pom girls, there is drawing of lots and someone in the crowd tries to shoot a hoop, and so on” he said. “They catch the fans when they dance and the fans try to make a show, too: The game is a show, and between the game is a show.”

Ultrasound Scanning, Injury Data Collection Central to New WT Medical Moves

IOC briefed on upcoming, long-term medical initiatives



Dr. Dae Hyoun Jeong

Anti-Doping and Medical Committee Chair

Under new medical procedures being trialed by WT, taekwondo athletes will be given free ultrasound scans, granting players, coaches, doctors and WT valuable micro and macro data about taekwondo-specific injuries.

This plan was revealed when newly appointed WT Medical and Anti-doping Committee Chairman Dr. Dae Hyoun Jeong briefed the IOC's Medical and Scientific Commission in Seoul. He made a strong case for the adoption of point-of-care ultrasound systems on the sidelines of sports.

He also laid out the future systemization of taekwondo-specific injury prevention processes and medical protocols, and improvements to protective gear.

Speaking at the commission's annual "IOC Research Centre's Meeting" in Seoul's Lotte Hotel, Jeong – assuming that attendees would be tired

by late afternoon – started his presentation in lively style with a video of taekwondo action. Reaction was positive, with many gasps and "wows," as most attendees were unfamiliar with the game. He also gave an overview of the sport.

Moving on, he briefed on his experiences as a doctor on the sidelines of the 2017 Muju World Taekwondo Championships. Regarding point-of-care (POC) ultrasound, employed for the first time in Muju, he noted that it "...played a wonderful role as an injury surveillance and pre-diagnostic tool." He delighted his medical-centric audience with scans taken during the competition. "Beautiful pictures!" murmured one participant as he examined the internal workings of an injured knee.

Modern ultrasound systems are portable, time-efficient and low cost, Jeong said. They offer high sensitivity and high diagnostic value - similar to MRIs. Their mobility enable dynamic examinations and ultrasound

guided procedures to be conveniently carried out in-venue. Today's portable systems are in some cases as small as smartphones, and can be plugged into laptops' or desktops' visual displays. The price of these systems starts at approximately USD10,000; they can also be rented.

POC ultrasound scanning, Jeong said, can effectively rule out certain injuries, making transfers of injured athletes to hospital emergency rooms (ERs) for x-rays or MRI scans unnecessary. ER transfers are always problematic at global sports competitions, given the problems of transport, language barriers and medical insurance. In Muju, Jeong continued, the use of POC ultrasound slashed the number of ER visits by approximately one third. "With ultrasound, we were able to make pretty good diagnoses and reassure athletes and coaches so they did not end up going to the ER," he said.

A further benefit of scans is that they identify hidden legacy injuries

that athletes and their coaches may be unaware of. Leveraging this data, Jeong said that in approximately two years a team of taekwondo specialists at Seoul's Yonsei University, working in collaboration with the WT Medical and Anti-doping Committee, will publish a manual for team doctors on taekwondo-specific injuries and injury management. "In the future, we need to work on developing a return-to-play protocol for taekwondo," he added.

Injury prevention is also in focus. "The team from Yonsei will work on injury prevention protocols," Jeong said. When completed, this information will be disseminated to all MNAs. In another preventative step, the WT Medical and Anti-doping Committee will collaborate with gear companies to produce specialized ankle braces, and upgrade gloves for added protection.



We will ROCK Para Sport

Para taekwondo on track for Tokyo 2020



Chakir Chelbat

Para Taekwondo Technical & Referee Committee Chair

With less than three years to go until Para Taekwondo makes its Paralympic debut at Tokyo 2020 the excitement among athletes and officials at World Taekwondo is clear. For athletes, the next three years could shape the rest of their lives. For Chakir Chelbat, the chair of the Para Taekwondo Technical & Referee Committee, and his committee, the next three years is a vital opportunity to ensure that the sport of Para Taekwondo is at the very highest level come 2020.

“All our focus is on how to improve,” Chelbat explained following the record-breaking 7th World Para Taekwondo Championships in London on Oct. 19.

“From a technical perspective, we are looking at the videos to see how we can improve. We need to grow the sport because at Tokyo 2020 we have

to deliver the best possible competition.”

The World Taekwondo Council has approved that the the World Para Taekwondo Championships will become an annual event, and this is a move that Chelbat strongly welcomes.

“It is a great idea. It will help the sport to grow and help strengthen para taekwondo around the world. Combining the event with the Grand Prix as we have done here in London is amazing. It provides great support for para taekwondo as everything is done at the highest level from an organizational perspective. It also gives great motivation to the para taekwondo athletes who see that they are equally important and treated equally.”

There is no doubt that the World Para Taekwondo Championships were a huge success. They were the biggest ever – 118 percent

bigger than the last edition in 2015 with more countries than ever before competing. But Chelbat recognizes there is potential for further improvement. Championships should be over two days rather than one. He believes the head of team meeting, classification and weigh ins should all be made more efficient so that the amount of time athletes and coaches have to wait around is greatly reduced. He wants to offer better conditions for athletes while they wait. Chelbat and his team have already been working on an education program for international referees which will be put in place from January and allow international referees to get a para taekwondo license. This will improve the level and quality of refereeing in para taekwondo matches. He also wants to improve the warm up areas for athletes and enhance



“Combining the event with the Grand Prix as we have done here in London is amazing”

education from WT to the Member National Associations (MNAs).

Communication with MNAs is key to Chelbat. “World Taekwondo is doing a lot of work with MNAs that have para taekwondo programs to help them strengthen their programs. But it is not just MNAs that have para taekwondo programs we need to communicate with; it is those without them as well. World Taekwondo is investing a lot of funding into para taekwondo at MNA level to ensure the sport grows around the world. We have 209 MNAs and we are sending the same message to all of them: we are here to support you.”

Taekwondo is such an accessible sport that Chelbat is in no doubts there is room for significant growth around the world. “The sport is global because it is so accessible. We see how medals go to many different countries, including poorer countries who wouldn’t traditionally have the same opportunities. With poomsae we are also providing further opportunities to athletes with different impairments. Athletes can explore their talent in poomsae if kyorugi is not for them. That is what makes para taekwondo such an amazing thing: it gives everyone a chance to be a champion.”

Despite being relatively new to the role it is

clear that his vast experience in taekwondo will only benefit para taekwondo.

“I am very grateful to be the chair of this committee. I discovered another world working with para taekwondo,” he explains. “When people think about para sport they think about disability, but it’s not about that. It’s about great sport! Para taekwondo is growing very fast. At next year’s World Championships it will be even bigger. We will keep working to make it the very best it can be. We will rock para sport!”

Athletes Get Own Committee

WT focuses on athlete-centricism

Nadin Dewani / Pascal Gentil
Athletes Committee Chairs

The newly reconstituted World Taekwondo Athletes Committee elected chairpersons on the sidelines of the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships at Taekwondowon on June 28.

The two chairpersons, are both retired athletes. They are Nadin Dewani, of Jordan, a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission and the first Jordanian to win an Asian title, and Pascal Gentil of France, a four-time World Cup champion, three-time European champion and two-time Olympic medalist.

Asked about the key agenda, Gentil said, "The most important is engagement, for the athletes to be aware of what is going on in taekwondo, and for them to know about the different educational programs, such as Olympic Solidarity. Many countries do not know about this program, so how can they use it? This is about giving back to the sport."

"For me it is about communications, about how to communicate with the athletes: Their voices need to be heard," added Dewani. "When we were athletes we spoke, but nobody heard us, so now it is for us to solve the issue."

Opening channels of communication with

the athletes is the committee's top priority, both agreed. "This is something we have to work on," said Dewani.

Early meetings between the committee and the sports' players could be ad hoc and informal, on the sidelines of upcoming events, Gentil added.

"Being here and being at the Grand Prix and the other main events in the different regions, we will take the opportunity to hold meetings to make the athletes aware of what we are doing, and to make short meetings," he said.

The two committee heads will serve four-year terms, starting on the last day of the championships, June 30, 2017. They both also became automatic members of the World Taekwondo Council on that date.

The World Taekwondo Athletes' Committee had long been dormant, but with the new mission to be more athlete-centric and more committee-centric, the committee was rejuvenated on the sidelines of the World Grand Prix Final in Baku, Azerbaijan, in December 2016.



PSS Donation Ceremony Takes Place at Olympic Museum

World Taekwondo delegates headed by President Chungwon Choue visited the Olympic Museum in Lausanne to donate a set of PSS (Protector and Scoring System) used at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

The ceremony was attended by staffers from both World Taekwondo and the Olympic Museum. Olympic Museum Director Francis Gabet said he appreciated the donation of the set of PSS, which had been signed by 28 taekwondo Olympic medalists including gold winners Cheick Sallah Junior Cisse, So-hui Kim and Ahmad Abughaush.

The PSS, which embeds electronic impact sensors in athletes' body protectors, was first introduced in official competition by World Taekwondo in May 2009 in an attempt to make judging more impartial and transparent. It was first used in Olympic competition at the 2012 London Games, and was used again in Rio 2016, with the addition of PSS in the head, as well as the body protector.



CUPRESIDENTS' MESSAGES



WTAF

**Gen.
Ahmed Fouly**

Firstly, let me wish all WTAF members and our extended taekwondo family a happy and successful 2018.

A highlight for Africa was being named "WT Best Continental Union 2017" which was awarded on Dec. 4, 2017, during the Grand Prix Final in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Let me thank the entire WT for its continued support of Africa. Without it, we could never have reached the incredible results we saw this year.

The hosting of two Grand Prix events in 2017 enhanced the status of African taekwondo: The Grand Prix 2 series in Rabat, Morocco from Sept. 22-24 2017 and the Grand Prix Final in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, from Dec. 2-3 2017, along with the WT Team Championship from Dec. 5-6 Dec. These championships were great successes. They also marked the first time WT Grand Prix events had been held on African soil.

The WT World Taekwondo Cadet Championships were held in Sharm-el-Seikh, Egypt, from 24-27 Aug. Two Continental Championships were held as well : The 1st WT President's Cup-Africa in Agadir, Morocco from 7-9 April and the 2nd African Para-Taekwondo Open in Kigali, Rwanda from April 1-2. In addition, we hosted several Open International championships: The 4th Egypt Open, in Luxor, Egypt from 17-19 Feb. 2017, as well as the Ghana International Open, in Accra, Ghana from 18-19 Aug. 2017.

In 2018, the Africa Senior Championship will be held in Agadir, Morocco from 28-30 March, and the 2nd WT President's Cup will be held from March 31-April 1. Moreover, Tunisia will host the Youth OG Qualification in Hammamat from 6-7 April, in addition to the WT Junior Championships from 9-13 April.

A final word to all Africa MNAs : You have made us Africans proud! Your achievements speak for themselves.



ATU

Kyu Seok Lee

Happy New Year!

As Lao-tzu said, "There is nothing in the universe that cannot be changed," and we are now passing from the old year and greeting a new year.

In 2018, the Asian Taekwondo Union will oversee the addition of poomsae as one of the official events in the 18th Asian Games Jakarta Palembang.

The ATU held New Poomsae Education and Demonstration events in Iran, Uzbekistan, India, Indonesia, Chinese Taipei, and Korea. In May 2018, we are going to hold the Asian Poomsae Taekwondo Championships with New Poomsae along with the Asian Taekwondo Championships and the Asian Para-Taekwondo Open Championships in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Then we move forward to the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta Palembang 2018.

This is all important. Poomsae demands creativity, with a combination of many fields of studies, culture and especially, the arts. Poomsae enables practitioner to showcase imagination, which is set to be one of the most critical human abilities as we move into the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

I would like to ask for everyone's attention and support to expand poomsae's position and prestige, so that it can become an event at the World Taekwondo Championships and the Olympic Games, and also contribute to human culture.

Dear Taekwondo Family Members:

I hope you achieve every wish and the happiness of your family with good health in year 2018.



WTE

**Athanasios
Pragalos**

It is my pleasure to convey my warmest wishes to you as we wrap up an eventful 2017. The past 12 months have been marked by noteworthy achievements.

In 2017 we expanded taekwondo's horizons. This could not be done without the support of our MNAs, the WT Executive Board and Council, our partner and gold sponsor Daedo and of course, our precious athletes.

Our objective is to be ever-more athlete focused. Among some of last year's outstanding events was the 2nd edition of the WT President's Cup in Athens, Greece, with 2,182 international athletes from 51 countries, including 14 Olympic medalists.

Being co-organizers of the inaugural 1st World Taekwondo Beach Championships was another accomplishment, as the opening ceremony was short-listed for the "Initiative of the Year" award category at the Peace and Sports Awards 2017. This successful championships will be organized in Rhodes Island, Greece once again in 2018. Introducing the 1st WTE Open European Master Championships gave participants a chance to claim a European title.

In between the seven WTE Championships, WTE organized five New Coaches Seminars across the continent.

In 2018, undeniably, the milestone event is the European Championships in Kazan, Russia. WTE will also introduce the Taekwondo Multi Championships, featuring all ages and styles of taekwondo together, while the 3rd President's Cup is expected to grow a lot bigger.

Together we will continue to build on the taekwondo we have dreamt of, embracing and passing its value on to the next generations.

I wish each and every one of you a very happy, peaceful, motivated and successful New Year 2018.



OTU

John Kotsifas

The last 12 months have been extremely busy for the OTU.

The OTU is pleased to report that the OTU board was elected unopposed. I am honoured and privileged to have been re-elected. The 2017 election also saw four new board members join – John Cholai (Treasurer. Papua New Guinea), Jason Kim (New Zealand), Alfred Lai (Tahiti) and John Alick, (Solomon Islands). The OTU board will continue to pursue our various initiatives for additional funding to be made available.

The OTU have appointed both a Poomsae Director and a Development Coach. Both have been working hard to finalise new accreditation courses for members, and have commenced assisting teams in the region with OTU member nation program development, talent identification and athlete preparation.

The 2017 World Taekwondo World Championships saw a record number of Oceania teams attend a training camp and compete. The OTU acknowledges and thanks WT and the OC for its financial assistance.

There were extremely positive performances from Oceania teams at the 5th Asian Indoor & Martial Arts Games in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Two bronze medals were won.

2017 also saw the appointment of Oceania members to WT committees, namely the WT Athletes Committee (Ryan Carnelli - Australia and Robin Cheong - New Zealand); the WT Marketing Committee (Maher Magableh - Australia); and Chairman of the WT Juridical Committee (Daniel Trenton - Australia).

In 2018 we see French Polynesia host the 8th Oceania Taekwondo Championships and the 4th Oceania Para Open Championships in August.

Again, I want to thank all member nations for their encouragement and support and I particularly want to thank the OTU Board Members for their hard work and dedication. I also thank the hundreds of volunteers, referees, technical officials, coaches and MNAs who have assisted the OTU over the past year.



PATU

Jiho Choi

I first thank you all for your undivided support. PATU celebrated the 2017 Pan Am Junior Poomsae and Kyorugi Championships and Pan Am Para Taekwondo Championships in San Jose, Costa Rica, with unprecedented success. PATU has also included poomsae in the Bolivarian Games, Central American Games, Central and Caribbean Games, and the Pan Am Games. In 2018, the following events are upcoming:

U.S. Open: G-2 / Jan. 29-Feb. 02 / Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Qualification Tournament for Barranquilla 2018 C & C Games: March 6-8 / Monterrey, Mexico

Mexico Open: G-1 / March 8-11 / Monterrey, Mexico

Pan Am Senior Poomsae & Kyorugi Championships: G-4/ June 6-8 / Spokane, USA

Pan Am Para Taekwondo Championships: G-2 / June 8-9 / Spokane, Washington, USA

Pan Am Open: G-1 / June 9~10 / Spokane, Washington, USA

Argentina Open: G-1 / August 03~05 / Buenos Aires, Argentina

Costa Rica Open: G-1 / August 30~September 02 / San Jose, Costa Rica

Canada Open: G-1 / September 13-16 / TBA

WT President's Cup: G-2 Premier / October 10~14 / Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Peru Open: G-1 / November 30~December 02 / Lima, Peru

PATU Instructor / Master Licensing Course: March 2-5 / Monterrey, Mexico, June 03~06 / Spokane, USA, Nov 23~27 / Lima, Peru

PATU Kyorugi Referee Certification Seminar: March 03~05 / Monterrey, Mexico, June 04~06 / Spokane, Washington, USA, Nov. 24~27 / Lima, Peru

PATU Poomsae Referee Certification Seminar: March 03~05 / Monterrey, Mexico, June 04~06 / Spokane, USA, Nov. 24~27 / Lima, Peru

PATU Para Taekwondo Coach Seminar: March 02~04 / Monterrey, Mexico, June 03~05 / Spokane, USA, Nov. 23-25 / Lima, Peru. PATU Regional Athlete Training Camps: TBA



Un Yong Kim, Founding President of World Taekwondo, Passes Away

Un Yong Kim, founding president of World Taekwondo and former vice president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) passed away on Oct. 3. He was 86 years old.

In 1971, Kim was elected president of the Korean Taekwondo Association. In 1972, he founded the Kukkiwon to operate as a brick-and-mortar “Mecca” for global taekwondo training and grading in Seoul’s Gangnam district. In 1973, he became the founding president of the newly inaugurated World Taekwondo Federation, or WTF. (Today, World Taekwondo, or WT.) The federation held the first World Taekwondo Championships at the Kukkiwon in 1973.

Under Kim’s stewardship, taekwondo unified and systemized domestically; internationally, its profile rose. It was a demonstration sport at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and 1992 Barcelona Olympics – indeed, the mass demonstration during the opening ceremony of 1988 Seoul Olympics became iconic worldwide – and became a program sport in 2000 in Sydney – where Kim also played a key role organizing the joint march-in of North Korean and South Korean athletes.

In addition to his role as a taekwondo administrator, Kim was an International Olympic Committee (IOC) board member and served as president of the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF), the Korean National Olympic Committee and president of the 2002 Pusan Asian Games Organizing Committee.

A funeral service for Kim was held at the Kukkiwon on Oct. 9.

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WT is delighted to bring you the official publication of the federation.

The WT Taekwondo magazine epitomizes our enthusiasm and progressive mindset in leading taekwondo and WT.

The WT Taekwondo magazine is published annually. It is a summary of the previous year’s events, competition results and happenings throughout the world of taekwondo. It provides the events of the year, interviews with taekwondo stars and useful information on taekwondo.

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Event Calendar

Last Updated: Feb. 9, 2018

Date	Place	Event	G
January 6	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series II	N/A
January 13	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series III	N/A
January 20	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions Series IV	N/A
January 27	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2017 World Taekwondo Worldcup Team Championships	N/A
January 28-February 2	Las Vegas, USA	2018 U.S. Open Taekwondo Championships	G2/G2
January 29	Las Vegas, USA	2018 U.S. Open Para Taekwondo	G-1
February 6-9	Istanbul, Turkey	European Clubs Championships 2018	G-1
February 10-14	Istanbul, Turkey	Turkish Open 2018	G1/G1
February 16-18	Fujairah, UAE	6th Fujairah Open	G-1
February 24-25	Alexandria, Egypt	2018 Egypt Open	G-2
February 24-25	Maribor, Slovenia	Slovenia Open 2018	G-1
March 1-4	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Malaysia Open Championship 2018	G1/G1
March 3-4	Sofia, Bulgaria	Sofia Open 2018	G-1
March 6-9	Monterry, Mexico	Qualification Tournament for 2018 Barranquilla Central & Caribbean Games	N/A
March 8-11	Monterry, Mexico	2018 Mexico Open	G1/G1
March 10-11	Eindhoven, Netherlands	45th Dutch Open Taekwondo Championships 2018	G-1
March 16-18	Lommel, Belgium	Belgian Open 2018	G1/G1
March 16-18	Kharkiv, Ukraine	Ukraine Open Cup 2018	G-1
March 25	Alicante, Spain	Spanish Open 2018	G-1
March 28	Agadir, Morocco	2018 Africa Para Taekwondo Open	G4/G2
March 28	Agadir, Morocco	2018 Africa Poomsae Senior Championships	G-4
March 29-30	Agadir, Morocco	2018 Africa Senior Championships	G-4
March 31-April 1	Agadir, Morocco	2nd WT Presidents Cup-Africa Region	G-2
April 6-7	Hammamet, Tunisia	World Taekwondo Qualification Tournament for the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games	N/A
April 7-8	Hamburg, Germany	German Open 2018	G-1
April 9-13	Hammamet, Tunisia	Hammamet 2018 World Taekwondo Junior Championships	G-6
April 20-22	Wuxi, China	Open Qualification Tournament for Wuxi 2018 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Series I	TBD
April 21-22	Tehran, Iran	29th Fajr Open	G1/G1
April 23-24	Tehran, Iran	8th Asian Taekwondo Club Championships	G-1
April 25-28	Rhodes, Greece	World Taekwondo Beach Championships	N/A
April 25-29	Athens, Greece	3rd WT President's Cup -European region	G-2
May 2-9	Marrakech, Morocco	ISF Gymnasiade 2018	N/A
May 10-13	Kazan, Russia	European Senior Championship	G-4
May 24	Ho chi minh, Vietnam	4th Asian Para Taekwondo Championships	G4/G2
May 24-25	Ho chi minh, Vietnam	5th Asian Taekwondo Poomsae Championships	G-4
May 26-28	Ho chi minh, Vietnam	23rd Asian Taekwondo Championships	G-4
May 26-27	Innsbruck, Austria	Austrian Open 2018	G1/G1
June 1-3	Rome, Italy	Rome 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix	G-4
June 2-3	Vienna, Austria	2018 Austrian Poomsae Open	G-1
June 6-8	Spokane, USA	2018 Pan Am Championships	G-4
June 8	Spokane, USA	2018 Pan Am Senior Poomsae Championships	G-4
June 8	Spokane, USA	2018 Pan Am Para Taekwondo Open	G4/G2
June 8-10	Spokane, USA	2018 Pan Am Open	G-1

Date	Place	Event	G
June 8-11	Xian, China	"Belt and Road" China Open International Taekwondo Championships	G-1
June 10	Plovdiv, Bulgaria	2018 European Para Taekwondo Open	G4/G2
June 16-17	Luxembourg	LuxOpen 2018	G-1
June 22-July 1 (TKD: 28-30)	Tarragona, Spain	Mediterranean Games Tarragona 2018	G-1
July 5-7	Amman, Jordan	2018 El Hassan Cup International Open	G-1
July 17-27	Algeria, Algeria	2018 Youth All African Games	N/A
July 18-24	Jeju, Korea	2018 JEJU Korea Open International Taekwondo Championships	G2/G2
July 20-23	Barranquilla, Colombia	2018 Barranquilla Central & Caribbean Games	G-1
July 27-29	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2018 World Taekwondo Worldcup Team Championships	N/A
August 2-5	Mahina City, French Polynesia	8th Oceania Taekwondo Championships 2018 2018 Oceania Para Taekwondo Open	G4/G4 G4/G2
August 3-5	Buenos Aires, Argentina	2018 Argentina Open	G1/G1
August 9-10	Sant Cugat, Spain	CPISRA World Games	G-6
August 10-12	Moscow, Russia	Moscow 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix	G-4
August 12-15	Seoul, Korea	Kimunyong Cup International Open Taekwondo Championships	G1/G1
August 14-16	Moscow, Russia	Russia Open 2018	G1/G1
August 18-September 2 (TKD: Aug. 27-Sept. 1)	Jakarta & Palembang, Indonesia	18th Asian Games Jakarta - Palembang 2018	G-4
August 27-September 3	Worchester, Great Britain	2018 IWAS Womens' World Games	G-6
August 30-September 2	San Jose, Costa Rica	2018 Costa Rica Open	G1/G1
September 13-16	TBD	2018 Canada Open Taekwondo Championships	G1/G1
September 14-16	Warsaw, Poland	Polish Open Warsaw Cup	G-1
September 15-16	Beirut, Lebanon	2018 Beirut Open	G1/G1
September 19-21	Taoyuan, Chinese Taipei	Taoyuan 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix	G-4
September 20-22	Ramalah, Palestine	3rd Palestine Championships	G-1
September 28-30	Cyprus	Cyprus Open	G-1
October 6-7	Riga, Latvia	Riga Open 2018	G-1
October 6-18 (TKD 7-11)	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games	G-10
October 12-14	Kigali, Rwanda	2018 Rwanda Gorilla Open	G-1
October 19-21	Manchester, UK	Manchester 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix	G-4
October 19-21	Athens, Greece	Greece Open 2018	TBD
October 26-28	Wuxi, China	Open Qualification Tournament for Wuxi 2018 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Series II	TBD
October 27-28	Belgrade, Serbia	Galeb Belgrade Trophy-Serbia Open 2018	G-1
November	Nigeria	2018 Nigeria Open	G-1
November 1-4	Bucharest, Romania	Dracula Open	G1/G1
November 10-11	Zagreb, Croatia	24th Croatia Open	TBD
November 15-18	Taipei, Chinese Taipei	Taipei 2018 World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships	G-8
November 17-18	Paris, France	14th Tournoi International de Paris	G-2
November 22-23	Fujairah, UAE	Fujairah 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix Final	G-8
November 24-25	Fujairah, UAE	Fujairah 2018 World Taekwondo Team Championships	G-2
November 24-25	Ramla, Israel	16th Israel OpenTaekwondo Championships	G-1
December 9-12	Wuxi, China	Wuxi 2018 World Taekwondo Grand Slam Series	N/A
TBD	TBD	European Kids Championships 2018	N/A
TBD	TBD	1st Asian Open Taekwondo Championships	G-1
TBD	TBD	2nd WT Presidents Cup-Asian Region	G-2



Peace is More Precious than Triumph

MARVEL



A NEW ERA OF TAEKWONDO
WITH MARVEL SUPER HEROES

