**ZAGREB GRAND PRIX 2017, Croatia - DAY 3**

**Japan 5 Gold - Hungary 3 gold - Brazil 2 gold - France, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 gold**

**APOTHEOSIS IN ZAGREB**

*Three days of intense competition have just ended in Zagreb, Croatia, with the last five weight classes: women’s -78 and +78kg; men’s -90, -100 and +100kg.*

Everyone had eyes only for Frenchman Teddy Riner, nine times world champion and double Olympic champion who had chosen Zagreb in order to fine-tune his preparation for the next Openweight World Championships that will take place in Marrakech in November.

Following his last title in Budapest, the French giant was involved in the attribution of the 2024 Olympic Games to Paris and was short of training in September. For the first time in years he was put in danger at the Budapest World Championships, especially in his semi-final against Georgian Guram Tushishvili and therefore the Zagreb Grand Prix, to the delight of the spectators and of the organisers, had become an obligatory passage for him.

It was very interesting also to follow the other weight categories present on tatami today, with for instance a particularly explosive -100kg weight class in which athletes such as Elkhan MAMMADOV (AZE), 2013 World Champion, Karl-Richard FREY (GER), world medallist, Elmar GASIMOV (AZE), Olympic silver medallist, Varlam LIPARTELIANI (GEO), recent world silver medallist and NISHIYAMA Daiki (JPN), two times world silver medallist. This plethora of great champions did not exclude surprises, which actually happened.

Mr. Vladimir Barta, IJF Head Sport Director said: “At every IJF event we see new faces and this was again the case here in Zagreb, which shows the vitality of our sport and that we are able to produce new generations at a constant pace. Zagreb has now become a big organiser of IJF events. This is not easy but they have done an amazing job during this Grand Prix and I am confident that they will do again everything possible during the Junior World Championships. Of course today we were also happy to see Teddy Riner back in competition. Between Rio and Budapest he did not compete and only three weeks after the Worlds he is already back in action. This is good for him and for judo, especially prior to the Openweight World Championships in Marrakesh.“

Dr. Lisa Allan, who is the IJF competition manager and who was elected as a new IJF Executive Committee member in August said: “It was really a big pleasure to come back to Zagreb for the fifth edition of the Grand Prix. I want to address a big thank you to all the organisers and the volunteers, who made of that event a big success. After so many years of hard work, it is like going back to your family. Actually the organising committee has gained a lot of experience over the past years and in partnership with our team they have done everything to welcome all the delegation in the best way possible. I am really looking forward to being back here in a few weeks for the Junior World Championships. To date, we already have 86 countries and 641 athletes registered, which is really amazing.“

**BUSY PROGRAMME**

The lights of the Dom Sportova stadium in Zagreb have faded and the IJF World Judo Tour has already set out and is on its way to the next destination. In a week, the world's best judokas will meet again in Asia for another edition of the Tashkent Grand Prix in Uzbekistan. On the occasion of this seventh Grand Prix of the season, the circuit will have a little perfume of the Silk Road and Central Asia and will stop for three days on 6, 7 and 8 October between the mountains of Chimgan and the irrigated valleys of Tchirtchik and Syr-Daria.

Less than ten days later, the International Judo Federation will return to Zagreb, but this time for the Junior World Championships which will take place from October 18-22 in Croatia. October is a particularly busy month since another major is awaited, with the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam, which will take place on October 26, 27 and 28, in the United Arab Emirates.

IN THE MEAN TIME IN OLBIA, THE VETERAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS ARE IN FULL SWING…

<https://www.ijf.org/news/show/veteran-world-championships-2017-olbia-italy-day-2>

**-90kg: TOTH TOPS THE GRAND PRIX PODIUM FOR THE FOURTH TIME**

As the top seed, Aleksandar KUKOLJ (SRB), was prematurely eliminated, it was finally the Brazilian Rafael MACEDO, who had defeated KUKOLJ, who entered the final against the other favourite of the tournament, the Hungarian, 2014 silver world medallist, TOTH Krisztian who, despite intense matches, managed to pass through the preliminary rounds.

The final started with a moderate pace as both athletes were observing one another. Half way to the end only one shido was awarded to the Brazilian, who had to attack. TOTH, who his well known for his counterattacking abilities, took his chance and after having firmly blocked MACEDO’s attack, counterattacked him with a superb hip movement, for a perfect ippon and the fourth Grand Prix golden honour for him.

The first bronze medal match opposed the bronze medallist of the 2017 Ekaterinburg Grand Slam, Magomed MAGOMEDOV (RUS) and Nicholas MUNGAI (ITA), whose best result so far was a bronze medal at the Bucharest European Open 2017. Half way to the end, MUNGAI was penalised with a first shido after having dropped on his knees to avoid being attacked. Then MAGOMEDOV was also penalised with a shido as he was blocking the arm of his opponent. Only a dozen seconds before the end of the match, MUNGAI applied a yoko-tomoe-nage, which did not score but which he could follow up with an arm-bar for ippon to win his first medal on the occasion of a Grand Prix.

In the second bronze medal match the 24-year-old Japanese, KOBAYASHI Yusuke, who had never obtained a medal on the IJF World Judo Tour, faced Tural SAFGULIYEV of Azerbaijan, silver medallist at the Cancun Grand Prix last June. Halfway to the end, SAFGULIYEV was penalised twice, when KOBAYASHI had only one shido to his name. As the last thirty last seconds were approaching, KOBAYASHI applied a o-soto-otoshi for waza-ari, immediately followed by an immobilisation for ippon and a first Grand Prix medal for the Japanese judoka and already the sixth medal for team Japan.

**Final**

MACEDO, Rafael (BRA) vs. TOTH, Krisztian (HUN)

**Bronze medal matches**

MAGOMEDOV, Magomed (RUS) vs. MUNGAI, Nicholas (ITA)

KOBAYASHI, Yusuke (JPN) vs. SAFGULIYEV, Tural (AZE)

**Final Results**

1. TOTH, Krisztian (HUN)

2. MACEDO, Rafael (BRA)

3. KOBAYASHI, Yusuke (JPN)

3. MUNGAI, Nicholas (ITA)

5. MAGOMEDOV, Magomed (RUS)

5. SAFGULIYEV, Tural (AZE)

7. DEDEIC, Rijad (BIH)

7. KUKOLJ, Aleksandar (SRB)

**-78kg: HAMADA IMPOSED HER POWER**

France's Sama Hawa CAMARA was the favourite of the competition this morning, but her entry into the final was not guaranteed. Second in Tbilisi and third in Paris at the beginning of the season, she nevertheless had the advantage of the experience of IJF World Judo Tour events and without blinking, she qualified for the final against the specialist of uchi-mata, Japanese HAMADA Shori.

Only ten seconds were necessary for HAMADA to win a second gold medal in a Grand Prix. She immediately forced CAMARA to kneel down, upturned her and applied a arm-bar for ippon.

The two top seeds in the final, Valeria FERRARI (ITA) and Yahima RAMIREZ (POR) were left to compete for bronze in the first of the two matches for a podium finish. The last minute of the match started with a first shido given to FERRARI. A last action from the Portuguese on the final gong was not counted and therefore it was time for golden score. After 24 seconds, RAMIREZ was penalised for stepping out of the competition area. One minute later, she finally produced her effort by overpassing the foot of FERRARI and throwing her for a waza-ari with a sasae-tsuri-komi-ashi.

The second bronze medal contest was 100% German, as Maike ZIECH (GER) and Luise MALZAHN (GER) faced off for the right to step onto the podium. After four minutes, the scoreboard was still to be breached, except for two shidos against Ziech. After 24 seconds MALZAHN used her experience at the international level to counterattack her teammate for a waza-ari and one more Grand Prix medal.

**Final**

CAMARA, Sama Hawa (FRA) vs. HAMADA, Shori (JPN)

**Bronze medal matches**

FERRARI, Valeria (ITA) vs. RAMIREZ, Yahima (POR)

ZIECH, Maike (GER) vs. MALZAHN, Luise (GER)

**Final Results**

1. HAMADA, Shori (JPN)

2. CAMARA, Sama Hawa (FRA)

3. MALZAHN, Luise (GER)

3. RAMIREZ, Yahima (POR)

5. FERRARI, Valeria (ITA)

5. ZIECH, Maike (GER)

7. LEON, Karen (VEN)

7. SHMELEVA, Antonina (RUS)

**-100kg: CIRJENICS OVERCOMES FONSECA FOR GOLD**

The -100kg weight category proposed a particularly high level of top class judoka, but surprisingly the top three athletes of the category, Elkhan MAMMADOV (AZE), Elmar GASIMOV (AZE) and Varlam LIPARTELIANI (GEO) were eliminated during the preliminary rounds opening the road to less well ranked athletes to reach the final, which opposed the explosive Jorge FONSECA (POR) and CIRJENICS Miklos (HUN).

The first in action was FONSECA with his homemade seoi-nage for a superb waza-ari, very close to ippon, but something was missing to produce one of the throws of the competition. The Portuguese was then penalised for stepping out of the tatami and again a few seconds later. The least that can be said is that the amount of power that was developed on both side was enormous, but at the end, it was CIRJENICS who attacked, then was counterattacked by FONSECA, but luckily left his foot inside the legs of the Portuguese to throw him with a ko-uchi-gari for ippon.

The first bronze medal contest opposed another world class athlete, Karl-Richard FREY (GER) and Giuliano LOPORCHIO (ITA), who was already medallist in Croatia in 2013, but that was when the Grand Prix was held in the city of Rijeka. LOPORCHIO was penalised twice and Karl-Richard FREY, even if he couldn’t score seemed to have full control over the match, being more powerful and more dominant than his opponent. But in judo one must score to win and that is what LOPORCHIO did a few seconds before the end of the bout to snatch the medal from FREY.

The second bronze medal match could have been a final of the world championships as Varlam LIPARTELIANI (GEO), current Olympic and world silver medallist was opposed to Elkhan MAMMADOV (AZE), the current European Champion and former world champion. After 50 seconds of mutual observation, both athletes were penalised with a shido. Halfway to the end, a second shido was given to the two champions, meaning that no more mistakes were allowed. But MAMMADOV made one more as he deliberately pushed LIPARTELIANI outside of the competition area and therefore received a third and last penalty. LIPARTELIANI won his ninth medal on a Grand Prix.

**Final**

CIRJENICS, Miklos (HUN) vs. FONSECA, Jorge (POR)

**Bronze medal matches**

FREY, Karl-Richard (GER) vs. LOPORCHIO, Giuliano (ITA)

LIPARTELIANI, Varlam (GEO) vs. MAMMADOV, Elkhan (AZE)

**Final results**

1. CIRJENICS, Miklos (HUN)

2. FONSECA, Jorge (POR)

3. LIPARTELIANI, Varlam (GEO)

3. LOPORCHIO, Giuliano (ITA)

5. FREY, Karl-Richard (GER)

5. MAMMADOV, Elkhan (AZE)

7. BORODAVKO, Jevgenijs (LAT)

7. PACEK, Martin (SWE)

**+78kg: CERIC WINS IN CROATIA**

The two top seeded athletes of the category Larisa CERIC (BIH) and Santa PAKENYTE (LTU) qualified for the last female category of the tournament.

After one minute, CERIC was the first in action as she scored a first waza-ari with a makikomi technique, while PAKENYTE was also penalised with a shido. In less than a minute, PAKENYTE changed the score to 1-1 by scoring also a waza-ari. With only five seconds left on the scoreboard, CERIC launched a last attack that failed but that she could immediately follow with an arm-bar for ippon.

The first bronze medal contest opposed the 2015 World Junior silver medallist, Camila YAMAKAWA (BRA) and three times Grand Slam gold medalist INAMORI Nami (JPN). In less than two minutes, the Japanese imposed her rhythm and concluded with an immobilisation for ippon to win a second bronze medal on the occasion of a Grand Prix.

The second bronze medal match saw Sarah ADLINGTON (GBR) opposed to Anne Fatoumata M BAIRO (FRA), as both were not among the top seeded athletes of the day. In a little bit more than one minute, the French, who was put in danger a couple of times earlier during the match, scored a waza-ari with a counterattack, immediately followed with an immobilisation for ippon to win her very first medal on the IJF World Judo Tour.

**Final**

CERIC, Larisa (BIH) vs. PAKENYTE, Santa (LTU)

**Bronze medal matches**

YAMAKAWA, Camila (BRA) vs. INAMORI, Nami (JPN)

ADLINGTON, Sarah (GBR) vs. M BAIRO, Anne Fatoumata (FRA)

**Final results**

1. CERIC, Larisa (BIH)

2. PAKENYTE, Santa (LTU)

3. INAMORI, Nami (JPN)

3. M BAIRO, Anne Fatoumata (FRA)

5. ADLINGTON, Sarah (GBR)

5. YAMAKAWA, Camila (BRA)

7. CHIBISOVA, Ksenia (RUS)

7. KARPATI, Emese (HUN)

**+100kg: RINER REMAINS THE KING**

As expected, Teddy Riner (FRA) qualified for the final of the men’s heavyweight category. Even if it was not his best day, in terms of physical condition and technique, he went through the preliminary rounds without any trouble and won two of his fights with penalties and the third with a superb ippon. The surprise came from the second half of the draw as KAMIKAWA Daiki, who is the last athlete who defeated Riner (2010 Open World Championships in Tokyo), was expected to meet again the French in the final. But the very young Austrian Stephan HEGYI, only 19 years old since July, produced an amazing effort to defeat the Japanese, which he did in the golden score after KAMIKAWA was penalised a third time. HEGYI had already defeated another Japanese, the Olympic Silver medalist, HARASAWA Hisayoshi, on the occasion of the last World Championships in Budapest.

Teddy was the first to be penalised with a shido as Stephan HEGYI was not afraid by the difference in size and was attacking fearlessly. But it was written that it was not today that the French giant would be defeated and he won his 138th fight in a row and added a fifth Grand Prix title to his resume after having scored the last ippon on the tournament with a outstanding arai-goshi. Teddy RINER’s statistics are simply impressive: 2 Olympic titles (+ one bronze medal), 9 world titles, 3 world masters titles, 5 grand slam, 4 continental titles, 5 grand prix and 2 world cups.

The first bronze medal contest opposed Benjamin HARMEGNIES (BEL) who was eliminated by Riner in the morning and KAMIKAWA Daiki (JPN). After one minute and fifteen seconds a first shido was given to both competitors for passivity. One more shido on both sides was given one minute later. The only strong attack came from the Japanese side and was the perfect attack. KAMIKAWA blocked his opponent in the corner before applying a superb sasae-tsuri-komi-ashi in a pure Japanese style for ippon.

The second bronze medal match opposed Vladut SIMIONESCU (ROU) and Zarko CULUM (SRB). After one minute, one shido was given to both athletes for passivity. They entered the last minute with one more shido each as neither SIMIONESCU nor CULUM were attacking, but with 11 seconds remaining, SIMIONESCU could finally score a waza-ari with a counterattack to win his fourth Grand Prix medal.

**Final**

RINER, Teddy (FRA) vs. HEGYI, Stephan (AUT)

**Bronze medal matches**

HARMEGNIES, Benjamin (BEL) vs. KAMIKAWA, Daiki (JPN)

SIMIONESCU, Vladut (ROU) vs. CULUM, Zarko (SRB)

**Final results**

1. RINER, Teddy (FRA)

2. HEGYI, Stephan (AUT)

3. KAMIKAWA, Daiki (JPN)

3. SIMIONESCU, Vladut (ROU)

5. CULUM, Zarko (SRB)

5. HARMEGNIES, Benjamin (BEL)

7. ALLERSTORFER, Daniel (AUT)

7. HORAK, Michal (CZE)