18 November 2017

The Hague Grand Prix 2017, Netherlands – DAY TWO

**POLLING PUTS ON DUTCH MASTERCLASS AS THE NETHERLANDS MOVE TOP**

The Hague Grand Prix 2017 attracted a capacity crowd on day two as the Dutch public showed their enthusiasm for the sport and judo’s return to the Netherlands for an IJF World Judo Tour event.

There were great expectations for the hosts on the second day with world number one Frank DE WIT and former world number one Kim POLLING (NED) among their stars aiming to win Dutch gold in The Hague after the team had managed a best finish of one fifth-place and three seventh-places on Friday.

Nine of the Netherlands’ 16 judoka in action on day two were able to progress into the final block and four went on to win medals to move the Netherlands to the top of the medal table.

**FULL HOUSE FOR THE RETURN OF THE IJF WORLD JUDO TOUR**

The first edition of The Hague Grand Prix has created both a welcoming and fanatical atmosphere in a brand new venue which already offers one of the best presentations of the sport on the IJF World Judo Tour.

The rich history and immense contribution of the Netherlands to the sport and it’s progression is beyond question but to the current crop of Dutch judoka they are in the present, in the moment and they want to make their own history.

They want to be judged on their own accomplishments and their talent and the capacity of their national federation has merited the opportunity for the country to return as a feature destination of the IJF World Judo Tour.

Hosting an IJF event is a matter of pride for the Netherlands and the reaction to the new Grand Prix in The Hague has been universal praise and, more evidently, tremendous warmth and enthusiasm.

The Sportcampus Zuiderpark venue was full up to the rafters and the Grand Prix is going to reach a new level in 2018 when it carries points towards Tokyo 2020 Olympic qualification which begins in May 2018.

**DUTCH LEGEND AND ISRAEL GREAT TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION**

Sydney 2000 Olympic champion Mark HUIZINGA (NED) and Olympic bronze medallist Yarden GERBI (ISR) linked in to form a dream coaching duo as they shared their skills, knowledge and smiles with the next generation of Dutch judoka.

Recently retired Yarden GERBI (ISR), who became her country’s first world champion in 2013, was only too happy to accept an invitation from the Dutch Judo Federation to don her judogi in The Hague and

Five-time European champion HUIZINGA – who briefly came out of retirement to win the Veteran World Championships in Amsterdam in 2015 - is one of the expert tutors on the IJF Academy and is one of the Netherlands’ most iconic judoka.

Stay tuned for in-depth interviews with Mark HUIZINGA and Yarden GERBI in Sunday’s press release.

**Women
-63kg: FRANSSEN first on emotional comeback for the Netherlands**World Judo Masters silver medallist Juul FRANSSEN (NED) returned with avengement on Saturday as she won the hosts’ first gold medal at their new Grand Prix by defeating European Championships bronze medallist Alice SCHLESINGER (GBR) in the -63kg final.

FRANSSEN came into the gold medal contest with a 2-1 lead in her head-to-head series with SCHLESINGER but has been in exile for one year as she plotted a solution to her training and competition programme which suited both herself and her Federation. The two judoka were almost going one-for-one with attacks in a lively final as SCHLESINGER pushed forward with her sode-tsurikomi-goshi and FRANSSEN retaliated with seoi-nage and tai-otoshi efforts. After 80 seconds of golden score SCHLESINGER looked like a spent force and was penalised for going out of the competition area to gift the title to her opponent who was overcome with emotion.

In the first semi-final SCHLESINGER scored six times to humble world number 120 Iris IWEMA (NED) at home. Free-scoring SCHLESINGER was irresistible and peppered the scoreboard at will to seal a place in the final after an incredible display.

In the second semi-final FRANSSEN beat teenage Junior World silver medallist Sanne VERMEER (NED) by a waza-ari which came with 23 seconds left in the contest and was the only score of the contest.

The first bronze medal contest was won by VERMEER who defeated Tashkent Grand Prix bronze medallist BEAUCHEMIN-PINARD. The first medal for the hosts came in the first contest in the final block as VERMEER earned her first Grand Prix medal at her first attempt. A failed ippon-seoi-nage from the experienced Canadian left VERMEER with the opportunity to counter and the 19-year-old home judoka took down BEAUCHEMIN-PINARD for a waza-ari to the delight of the home crowd.

The second bronze medal was won by Sofia European Open bronze medallist Stefanie TREMBLAY (CAN) who finished with her best result on the IJF World Judo Tour. Neither judoka had medalled on the Grand Prix stage before and that distinction went to the Canadian who first scored with an ouchi to ko-uchi-gari combination. With 10 seconds remaining the Canadian trapped her Dutch rival in osaekomi for 20 seconds to steal a march on her teammate TREMBLAY and deny the hosts a second medal from consecutive contests.

**Final**
SCHLESINGER, Alice (GBR) vs FRANSSEN, Juul (NED)

**Bronze Medal Fights**BEAUCHEMIN-PINARD, Catherine (CAN) vs VERMEER, Sanne (NED)
IWEMA, Iris (NED) vs TREMBLAY, Stefanie (CAN)

**Final Results**

1. FRANSSEN, Juul (NED)
2. SCHLESINGER, Alice (GBR)
3. VERMEER, Sanne (NED)
3. TREMBLAY, Stefanie (CAN)
5. BEAUCHEMIN-PINARD, Catherine (CAN)
5. IWEMA, Iris (NED)
7. POLIAKOVA, Iana (RUS)
7. TSEND-AYUSH, Tserennadmid (MGL)

**-70kg: Inspired POLLING makes a statement by winning domestic duel at home**Former world number one Kim POLLING (NED) stole a march on European champion Sanne VAN DIJKE (NED) as she bombarded her teammate with attacks and scores in a ruthless display which was full of heart and conviction. World number 18 POLLING has seen her standing as the Netherlands’ top -70kg judoka in jeopardy after world number seven VAN DIJKE has travelled far and wide on the IJF World Judo Tour this year while the former – who received the nod for Rio 2016 - has rested and picked a handful of tournaments to work her way towards returning to her best condition. The sprightly 22-year-old fell behind to a uchi-mata from POLLING and then a left seoi-nage before an osoto-makikomi added a third waza-ari as there was no doubt who was the best -70kg performer for the home team today. Classy in defeat, VAN DIJKE applauded her teammate and arch-rival after their embrace and acknowledged the support of the crowd with a wave to the home supporters.

In the first semi-final VAN DIJKE (NED) beat Rio 2016 Olympic bronze medallist Laura VARGAS KOCH (GER) by ippon at the halfway mark having already built a lead of one waza-ari. The German over committed and VAN DIJKE took full advantage to drive over her opponent for the maximum score and a home final in The Hague.

In the second semi-final POLLING defeated Abu Dhabi Grand Slam bronze medallist Miriam BUTKEREIT (GER) by a waza-ari from a left-sided seoi-nage.

The first bronze medal was awarded to BUTKEREIT who pinned down Bratislava European Cup winner Evelien BERNDSEN (NED). The Dutch needed to up the pace after a slow start but that never materialised and despite seeing regulation time through to force golden score the medal always looked destined to leave the country and travel to Germany. After one minute of golden score BUTKEREIT caught BERNDSEN on the ground and the local judoka was powerless to resist as the Netherlands’ ambitious aim of winning all four -70kg medals was ended.

The second bronze medal was won by VARGAS KOCH who edged past Hohhot Grand Prix bronze medallist Natascha AUSMA (NED). The German finished fifth at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam at the end of October in her first start since the Rio 2016 Olympics but was victorious in her bronze medal contest on this ocassion to win her 13th Grand Prix medal with the only score of the contest stemming from a ko-uchi-gari which yielded a waza-ari score.

**Final**VAN DIJKE, Sanne (NED) vs POLLING, Kim (NED)

**Bronze Medal Fights**BERNDSEN, Evelien (NED) vs BUTKEREIT, Miriam (GER)
VARGAS KOCH, Laura (GER) vs AUSMA, Natascha (NED)

**Final Results**

1. POLLING, Kim (NED)
2. VAN DIJKE, Sanne (NED)
3. BUTKEREIT, Miriam (GER)
3. VARGAS KOCH, Laura (GER)
5. BERNDSEN, Evelien (NED)
5. AUSMA, Natascha (NED)
7. MANSOUR, Lola (BEL)
7. KIREEVA, Taisia (RUS)

**MEN
-73kg: NARANKHUU steps up for in-form Mongolia at his 11th Grand Prix**Former Ulaanbaatar Grand Prix bronze medallist NARANKHUU Khadbaatar (MGL) stepped up a level today as he improved with every contest in The Hague and kept the scoreboard ticking over all day long. NARANKHUU needed to show something that we haven’t seen him from before in his previous 10 starts at a Grand Prix to overcome a high-quality and tactful judoka in two-time Grand Prix winner Victor SCVORTOV (U.A.E) and he managed that and more. NARANKHUU claimed Mongolia’s second gold medal in as many days with a booming ippon-seoi-nage with 56 seconds on the clock to beat SCVORTOV for the first time and to step up to the top spot on the Grand Prix medal podium for the first time.

In the first semi-final European u23 Championships silver medallist Akil GJAKOVA (KOS) lost out to SCVORTOV (U.A.E) who cleverly countered the judoka from Kosovo’s uchi-mata to turn him over for a waza-ari in golden score.

In the second semi-final NARANKHUU scored three times to beat world number 23 Sam VAN T WESTENDE (NED) in a breathless contest. The Mongolian broke the deadlock with a waza-ari from a tomoe-nage before adding a second from a seoi-nage and then concluded proceedings with another seoi-nage – this time for ippon – with 21 left.

The first bronze medal was won by Rio 2016 Olympian TSEND-OCHIR Tsogtbaatar (MGL) over VAN T WESTENDE after exactly one minute of golden score. Two-time Grand Prix bronze medallist TSEND-OCHIR, 21, who has moved up not one but two weight categories from -60kg to -73kg since being the surprise pick for Mongolia at the Olympics last year, was on top for the entire contest and did everything except score. In added time VAN T WESTENDE was reprimanded with a third shido for passivity as two-time Junior world silver medallist TSEND-OCHIR somersaulted his way out of the field of play and got a pat on the back from Mongolian legend and now coach KHASHBAATAR Tsagaanbaatar.

The second bronze medal went to world number 59 Anthony ZINGG (GER) who bested GJAKOVA. ZINGG was successful in his first audition for a Grand Prix medal as he rolled over GJAKOVA who had failed with a weak uchi-mata which was also how he lost in his semi-final.

**Final**SCVORTOV, Victor (U.A.E) vs NARANKHUU, Khadbaatar (MGL)

**Bronze Medal Fights**TSEND-OCHIR, Tsogtbaatar (MGL) vs VAN T WESTENDE, Sam (NED)
GJAKOVA, Akil (KOS) vs ZINGG, Anthony (GER)

**Final Results**

1. NARANKHUU, Khadbaatar (MGL)
2. SCVORTOV, Victor (U.A.E)
3. TSEND-OCHIR, Tsogtbaatar (MGL)
3. ZINGG, Anthony (GER)
5. VAN T WESTENDE, Sam (NED)
5. GJAKOVA, Akil (KOS)
7. BOUCHARD, Antoine (CAN)
7. NJIE, Faye (GAM)

**-81kg: World number 107 VOROBEV victorious for talent-rich Russia**Former Tyumen Grand Slam winner Ivan VOROBEV (RUS) repaid the faith that Russian team manager Ezio GAMBA, who has been present in The Hague, continues to show in him by winning his inaugural Grand Prix title on Saturday. VOROBEV won his 12th Grand Prix outing in sensational fashion as European silver medallist Dominic RESSEL (GER) was on the receiving end of a beautiful tani-otoshi which will be played over and over again. The Russian moved one way and then caught the German totally unaware as he was planted by the 29-year-old with power and precision to put Russia in fourth position on the medal table.

In the first semi-final Abu Dhabi Grand Slam winner and The Hague Grand Prix poster boy Frank DE WIT (NED) was surprised by VOROBEV (RUS) after 15 seconds of golden score. As DE WIT attacked the Russian took control and used just te-waza to send over the Dutchman for a waza-ari to take some shine off the Netherlands’ fortunes of day two during the preliminaries as it was the last contest of the first session.

In the second semi-final Junior world champion Matthias CASSE (BEL) fell to RESSEL who countered the young Belgian after three minutes of golden score for a waza-ari score.

The first bronze medal was won by CASSE, 20, who upstaged South American veteran and Cancun Grand Prix winner Emmanuel LUCENTI (ARG). The 33-year-old three-time Olympian lost out to a single waza-ari score while Belgium’s new kid on the block at -81kg is now on the brink of selection to one of judo’s five Grand Slams and looks set for a full year on the IJF World Judo Tour in 2018.

The second bronze medal saw the world number one DE WIT take on the world number two Saeid MOLLAEI (IRI). It was the visitor who secured a place on the podium with a sasae-tsurikomi-ashi scoring a waza-ari with five seconds left on the clock and DE WIT tapped out while stuck in a hold down as he had no time to fight back. MOLLAEI raised the hand of his beaten opponent for him to lap up a home ovation before both judoka signed autographs for young fans before leaving the field of play.

**Final**VOROBEV, Ivan (RUS) vs RESSEL, Dominic (GER)

**Bronze Medal Fights**LUCENTI, Emmanuel (ARG) vs CASSE, Matthias (BEL)
DE WIT, Frank (NED) vs MOLLAEI, Saeid (IRI)

**Final Results**

1. VOROBEV, Ivan (RUS)
2. RESSEL, Dominic (GER)
3. CASSE, Matthias (BEL)
3. MOLLAEI, Saeid (IRI)
5. LUCENTI, Emmanuel (ARG)
5. DE WIT, Frank (NED)
7. STEPIEN, Damian (POL)
7. REKHVIASHVILI, Zebeda (GEO)

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