25 January 2019

Tel Aviv Grand Prix 2018, Israel – DAY TWO

**Magical MUKI restores Israel's lead with sensational showing on day two**

Day two of the Tel Aviv Grand Prix showcased the men’s -73kg and -81kg judoka along with the women’s -63kg and -70kg athletes.

**FINAL RESULTS: WOMEN**

**-63kg: Dream start to 2019 for rising Italian CENTRACCHIO**

Tashkent Grand Prix silver medallist Maria CENTRACCHIO (ITA) won her first IJF World Judo Tour gold medal at the expense of Agadir Grand Prix bronze medallist Inbal SHEMESH (ISR) in the first final on day two. World number 59 CENTRACCHIO opened her IJF World Judo Tour medal account (silver) in Uzbekistan in November and imposed herself in Tel Aviv for another first in her career which looks set to take off in 2019. Only a shido against SHEMESH for passivity was handed out in regulation time as golden score was required to produce a winner and the home judoka was caught with a neat sumi-gaeshi for a match-winning waza-ari score.

In the first semi-final SHEMESH defeated Beijing 2008 Olympic bronze medallist Ketleyn QUADROS (BRA) by a single waza-ari which was the only score of their contest as Israel guaranteed one more medal on day two. In the second semi-final Antalya Grand Prix silver medallist Valentina KOSTENKO (RUS) was held down for 20 seconds by in-form Italian CENTRACCHIO.

The first bronze medal contest was won by KOSTENKO who submitted world number 70 Geke VAN DEN BERG (NED) with shime-waza at the halfway point of the contest. Russia’s world number 35 KOSTENKO won the opening medal contest in the final block to earn her second IJF medal as surprise package VAN DEN BERG finished a respectable fifth.

The second bronze medal was won by Junior World Championships winner Sanne VERMEER (NED) who forced world number 25 QUADROS to tap out. VERMEER secured her first IJF World Judo Tour medal outside of her homeland after fighting back from the deficit of a waza-ari score – a left-sided ippon seoi-nage from QUADROS – to quickly apply the shime-waza and to start the new season with a new honour in her young career.

**Final**
SHEMESH, Inbal (ISR) vs CENTRACCHIO, Maria (ITA)

**Bronze Medal Fights**
VAN DEN BERG, Geke (NED) vs KOSTENKO, Valentina (RUS)
QUADROS, Ketleyn (BRA) vs VERMEER, Sanne (NED)

**Final Results**

1. CENTRACCHIO, Maria (ITA)
2. SHEMESH, Inbal (ISR)
3. KOSTENKO, Valentina (RUS)
3. VERMEER, Sanne (NED)
5. VAN DEN BERG, Geke (NED)
5. QUADROS, Ketleyn (BRA)
7. GWEND, Edwige (ITA)
7. RENSHALL, Lucy (GBR)

**-70kg: Swedish success for BERNHOLM with silver lining for Junior world champion**

Osaka Grand Slam silver medallist Anna BERNHOLM (SWE) won her first Grand Prix title with a calculated performance against Junior World Championships gold medallist Alice BELLANDI (ITA). The experience of the Swede told as BELLANDI was overzealous and put everything into a hip technique but BERNHOLM blocked and countered to win by ippon in just 38 seconds. The Swede will now break into the world’s top 10 while BELLANDI can be content with claiming her first senior IJF medal at this early stage of her career.

In the first semi-final BELLANDI saw off world number 39 Emilie SOOK (DEN) who was penalised with her third shido in golden score which sent the Italian into the final and the Danish judoka into a fight for bronze. In the second semi-final BERNHOLM defeated world number 33 Sara RODRIGUEZ (ESP) after 75 seconds of golden score by ippon.

The first bronze medal was awarded to World Judo Masters bronze medallist Sanne VAN DIJKE (NED) who produced a buzzer-beating score in the very last second to surpass RODRIGUEZ. VAN DIJKE clinched her sixth Grand Prix medal just as the contest looked set for golden score as the Dutch star won her country’s third medal of the competition.

The second bronze medal was won by world number 34 Megan FLETCHER (IRL) who earned a much-needed prize to reinvigorate her qualification bid for Tokyo 2020. Team Bath judoka FLETCHER, who beat former world number one Kelita ZUPANCIC (CAN) in round two, defeated SOOK in golden score with a holddown and had to fight back the tears as she left the mat. Former Team GB international Megan’s interest in the Tel Aviv Grand Prix is far from over though as her younger brother and world number 14 Ben FLETCHER will campaign on Sunday in the -100kg category.

**Final**
BELLANDI, Alice (ITA) vs BERNHOLM, Anna (SWE)

**Bronze Medal Fights**
VAN DIJKE, Sanne (NED) vs RODRIGUEZ, Sara (ESP)
SOOK, Emilie (DEN) vs FLETCHER, Megan (IRL)

**Final Results**

1. BERNHOLM, Anna (SWE)
2. BELLANDI, Alice (ITA)
3. VAN DIJKE, Sanne (NED)
3. FLETCHER, Megan (IRL)
5. RODRIGUEZ, Sara (ESP)
5. SOOK, Emilie (DEN)
7. MATIC, Barbara (CRO)
7. MATNIYAZOVA, Gulnoza (UZB)

**FINAL RESULTS: MEN**

**-73kg: Rank outsider SHOKA wins his first IJF title for Belarus**

World number 47 Vadzim SHOKA (BLR) won his first IJF final as he beat former Junior World Championships gold medallist Giovanni ESPOSITO (ITA) with a late flurry in the last 30 seconds of their -73kg gold medal contest. SHOKA made a slow start as ESPOSITO looked composed and set about controlling his opponent with his superior kumi-kata and ashi-waza. Belarus’ unfancied winner opened the deadlock with 35 seconds left from an o-soto-gari and held on for a brilliant win at the first IJF competition of the season.

In the first semi-final SHOKA shaded world number 39 Behruzi KHOJAZODA (TJK) by a waza-ari which was the only score of the contest as the Belarus judoka grinded out a hard-fought win. In the second semi-final Tbilisi Grand Prix bronze medallist Nils STUMP (SUI) slipped to defeat against ESPOSITO by a waza-ari score after 13 seconds of added time. The Italian countered a ura-nage from his Swiss opponent for the smallest score possible which was enough to secure a place in the final.

The first bronze medal was won by Zagreb Grand Prix bronze medallist Tohar BUTBUL (ISR) over tai-otoshi expert STUMP. One-time Grand Prix medallist STUMP lost out to the three-time Grand Slam bronze medallist from Israel by a single waza-ari score as the world number 13 sent the crowd into raptures by winning his fourth Grand Prix medal.

The second bronze medal went to former Budapest Grand Prix bronze medallist Artem KHOMULA (UKR) who narrowly defeated KHOJAZODA. Ukraine's world number 25 doubled his IJF medal haul with an uchi-mata for a waza-ari score with 75 seconds left as KHOJAZODA, who finished seventh at the Asian Games last year, will have to wait to win his first IJF medal.

**Final**
ESPOSITO, Giovanni (ITA) vs SHOKA, Vadzim (BLR)

**Bronze Medal Fights**
STUMP, Nils (SUI) vs BUTBUL, Tohar (ISR)
KHOJAZODA, Behruzi (TJK) vs KHOMULA, Artem (UKR)

**Final Results**

1. SHOKA, Vadzim (BLR)
2. ESPOSITO, Giovanni (ITA)
3. BUTBUL, Tohar (ISR)
3. KHOMULA, Artem (UKR)
5. STUMP, Nils (SUI)
5. KHOJAZODA, Behruzi (TJK)
7. MELONI, Augusto (ITA)
7. JUMANYYAZOV, Shatlyk (TKM)

**-81kg: MUKI secures hero status with sensational win after highlight reel ippon**

European champion Sagi MUKI (ISR) produced the throw of the tournament so far as he catapulted the unsuspecting Ivaylo IVANOV (BUL) through the air with a textbook sode-tsurikomi-goshi in the -81kg final. Italy temporarily claimed top spot in the medal table after hitting the medal trail on day two but man of the moment MUKI provided the crowd with a magical finish to win his country’s third gold medal at their home Grand Prix. The Hague Grand Prix winner Ivaylo IVANOV (BUL) was expected to offer a stern challenge in what appeared to be a well-matched final on paper but MUKI was in no mood to wait around and dismissed the Bulgarian in just 56 seconds.

In the first semi-final Cancun Grand Prix winner Sami CHOUCHI (BEL) lost out to MUKI by ippon in the most eagerly-awaited contest in the opening session. MUKI shook his opponent with an o-soto-gari and stylishly finished with a tani-otoshi to secure a place in the -81kg final.

In the second semi-final Junior World Championships winner Christian PARLATI (ITA) was undone by IVANOV who has rediscovered his form at a crucial time in the qualification race for Tokyo 2020. Bulgaria’s IVANOV prevailed by ippon as PARLATI slipped down into a bronze medal contest.

The first bronze medal was won by PARLATI who defeated Junior European Championships bronze medallist and IJF newcomer Murad FATIYEV (AZE) as Italy’s staggering run went on during day two. PARLATI took his career to new heights by winning his first IJF senior medal as FATIYEV was disqualified in golden score after accumulating three penalties.

The second bronze medal went to CHOUCHI who threw Zagreb Grand Prix bronze medallist Anri EGUTIDZE (POR) after just 37 seconds for ippon with an emphatic o-soto-gari. Belgium talent CHOUCHI won his second Grand Prix medal to solidify his place among the world’s top judoka on the IJF World Ranking List and will be one to watch in the Paris Grand Slam in two weeks time.

**Final**
MUKI, Sagi (ISR) vs IVANOV, Ivaylo (BUL)

**Bronze Medal Fights**
FATIYEV, Murad (AZE) vs PARLATI, Christian (ITA)
CHOUCHI, Sami (BEL) vs EGUTIDZE, Anri (POR)

**Final Results**

1. MUKI, Sagi (ISR)
2. IVANOV, Ivaylo (BUL)
3. PARLATI, Christian (ITA)
3. CHOUCHI, Sami (BEL)
5. FATIYEV, Murad (AZE)
5. EGUTIDZE, Anri (POR)
7. ESPOSITO, Antonio (ITA)
7. BRIAND, Etienne (CAN)