**ZAGREB GRAND PRIX 2017, Croatia**

**DAY 1**

**FOR THE LOVE OF JUDO**

At ten o'clock sharp this morning, the first athletes showed up on the tatami of the Dom Sportova Stadium to launch the Zagreb Grand Prix 2017. For five consecutive years the top athletes of the world have been gathering together in Croatia for what the President of the Federation, Dr. Sanda Corak, likes to present as the most important senior event organised by the Croatian Judo Federation. Last August Dr. Sanda Corak received the ‘Best Development of a National Federation‘ award on the occasion of the IJF 65th anniversary gala in Budapest.

As the Sixth Grand Prix of the season, and despite falling only a few weeks after the World Championships in Budapest, the Zagreb Grand Prix has once again attracted a lot of top level athletes, who came here to glean precious points for the World Ranking List. The Olympic Qualification for Tokyo 2020 does not start until next year but it is important to already be able to rank among the best in the world.

The first five categories were in action today as the women’s -48, -52 and -57kg categories and the men’s -60 and -66kg were engaged and fought a fierce battle to reach the final block of the competition.

**INTERVIEW WITH Dr. SANDA CORAK, President of the Croatian Judo Federation**

**THE GRAND PRIX IS A SHOWCASE**

On the occasion of the first day of the Zagreb Grand Prix 2017, the IJF met the President of the Federation, Dr. Sanda Corak, who explained why such a worldwide event is important for the development of judo in the country and in the world: “This is the fifth edition of the Grand Prix in Croatia and it is for us the most important senior competition. Organising it helps our federation at least in one of our goals: to raise the awareness of people about judo. Ten years ago, Croatian people didn’t really know what judo was, but today judo has entered the ten most popular sports in the country. This is definitely a result of the Grand Prix and also of the performance of our athletes on the international scene.

“Croatia is a touristic destination and having a sporting event broadcasted worldwide, with live transmission and highlights helps to raise the awareness of people abroad and not only in judo but it give us also the opportunity to promote our country. This event is a positive showcase.

“For our athletes it’s also very important to participate in the Grand Prix, because they can meet the best competitors in the world.

“Of course we wouldn’t be able to organise such an event without the support of the IJF, our sponsors and the city of Zagreb. We are happy that for the next four years the Grand Prix will continue to be held here. This year we are particularly happy because athletes such as Paula Pareto (ARG), Olympic champion and Teddy Riner, who is a star, are participating. They will attract a new public and more young people while Ilias Iliadis (GRE) and Mark Huizinga (NED) will hold a special training session during the break.“

I LOVE JUDO

Dr. Sanda Corak also explained why judo is much more than organising an event: “We have an extensive program of judo at school. To date, we have judo as an extra-curriculum activity in more than 160 schools. You know we have, I would say only 80 clubs in the country, which is little compared to other big nations. But having judo at school helps us to develop judo because we can take advance of every single sports venue.

“I started myself judo when I was 13 and I must say that I love everything about judo, but what I love the most is the system associated with the sport. I love it’s complexity. You have to start by learning ukemis (break falls) and then step by step you learn more and more and you enrich your techniques. You have to adapt all the time and to make immediate decisions. You learn to win but also to lose and you can feel what it means. And ultimately, you learn discipline, which helped me throughout my life.“

Dr. Sanda Corak has been the president of the Croatian Judo Federation since 2005. She is also president of the National Olympic Committee. Beside her involvement in the development of sport, she does research in economy and tourism as well as in sport management. She started judo when she was 13 and became ‘Yugoslavia’ champion and 2nd in the Balkans, before becoming a club president and later on the leader of judo in Croatia.

**IJF ANNOUNCES RECORD PRIZE MONEY FOR THE OPEN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**

During the day, the International Judo Federation officially announced the amount of prize money that will be awarded during the next Openweight World Championships in Marrakesh, which will take place on 11 and 12 November in Morocco.

Distribution of the prize money

• 1st place: 100.000 x 1 = 100.000 EUR

• 2nd place: 50.000 x 1 = 50.000 EUR

• 3rd place: 25.000 x 2 = 50.000 EUR

• 5th place: 10.000 x 2 = 20.000 EUR

• 7th place: 5.000 x 2 = 10.000 EUR

• Best 16: 2.500 x 8 = 20.000 EUR

TOTAL: 250.000 EUR

Total Prize Money for men and women: 2 x 250.000 = 500.000 EUR

The parity is perfectly respected as men and women will receive the same amount of money and prize money will also be attributed to non-medalists as long as they enter the last 16 best athletes of the competition.

Mr. Marius Vizer said: “The Openweight World Championships, a historic and traditional competition within our sport, will return in 2017 with a two-day competition in Marrakech, Morocco from 11-12 November.

"The IJF is committed to developing judo in all parts of the world and taking IJF World Judo Tour events to Africa has moved from being a longterm goal to a realisation.

"Judo counts winners of Openweight titles among its greatest and most celebrated judoka and there are great expectations for the 2017 edition. We are very pleased to offer a record 100,000 EUROS prize money to the gold medallists as our sport moves forward on all fronts.“

**WORLD JUDO DAY 2017: COURAGE**

Today the IJF also published the first graphic elements of the 2017 edition of the World Judo Day, which will be held on October 28th. The previous themes if the WJD were JUDO FOR THE WORLD (2016), UNITY (2015), HONOUR (2014), PERSEVERANCE (2013), JUDO FOR ALL (2012) and RESPECT (2011) for the day which is dedicated to coaches, fans, judoka and everyone with a passion for one of the world’s most widely practiced sports.The World Judo Day takes place on the same date every year as 28 October is the birthday of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo. The logo of the event as well as posters and diploma can be downloaded at: http://worldjudoday.com/en/WJD-Graphics-61.html

**-48kg: ENDO Wins First Gold for Japan**

The first final of the day opposed the top seeded athlete of the category Milica NIKOLIC (SRB) and ENDO Hiromi (JPN) who was not among the favourites. However, as it was expected, Japan could put a first athlete in the finals, after ENDO defeated the curent Olympic champion, Paula Pareto (ARG) by penalty in the golden score, as Pareto was penalised with a shido for false attack.

In the final, the four first minutes of regular time were not enough for any of the athletes to score and only one shido was awarded to NIKOLIC but less than a minute was necessary to ENDO to turn the Serbian on her back and to immobilise her for ippon, proving one more time that the Japanese school in groundwork is one of the strongest in the world.

Pareto, who was coming back to competition today in Zagreb after one year away from the IJF World Judo Tour, was qualified for the bronze medal contest against Anne-Sophie JURA of Belgium. Obviously, after her absence from top level judo, PARETO seemed to lack precision throughout the day. Despite repetitive attacks that failed to score, she has this quality that makes great champions and in spite of her small size, she deployed an energetic style on the tatami from the morning until that last bout. This energy coupled with the lack of precision did not allow her to score any advantage during the four minutes of regular time. At the same time, Anne-Sophie JURA was not able to take the advantage. Pareto had to wait for the golden score to finally be able to score with a drop-sode-tsuri-komi-goshi for waza-ari offering her a well-deserved and significant medal. We will probably see the Olympic champion on tatami in the coming months again.

The second bronze medal contest saw Lucile DUPORT of France qualified against Maria SIDEROT of Portugal. The French did not offer any chance to her opponent and after a swift groundwork session immobilised SIDEROT for ippon and a first bronze medal for the French delegation.

**Final**

NIKOLIC, Milica (SRB) vs. ENDO, Hiromi (JPN)

**Bronze medal matches**

JURA, Anne Sophie (BEL) vs. PARETO, Paula (ARG)

DUPORT, Lucile (FRA) vs. SIDEROT, Maria (POR)

**Final results**

1. ENDO, Hiromi (JPN)

2. NIKOLIC, Milica (SRB)

3. DUPORT, Lucile (FRA)

3. PARETO, Paula (ARG)

5. JURA, Anne Sophie (BEL)

5. SIDEROT, Maria (POR)

7. CHIBANA, Gabriela (BRA)

7. POP, Alexandra (ROU)

**-60kg: PAPINASHVILI Confirms in Zagreb**

With no surprise, Amiran PAPINASHVILI (GEO), who was top seeded in the category, qualified for the final where he was opposed to the second favourite of the day, Robert MSHVIDOBADZE of Russia and the Georgian confirmed his position by winning with sasae-tsuri-komi-ashi for ippon.

The first bronze medal match opposed Mehman SADIGOV (AZE) and the second Russian athlete of the category, Albert OGUZOV. The first strong attack came after less than a minute, when OGUZOV applied a left handed tai-otoshi but for no score. A few seconds later, this time OGUZOV chose the right side to apply a drop seoi-nage, SADIGOV landing flat on his back for a clear ippon.

Turkey secured a place on the podium by qualifying both athletes in the second bronze medal contest: Ahmet Sahin KABA (TUR) and Bekir OZLU (TUR). Kaba scored the first waza-ari with an almost perfect ko-uchi-gari. But Ozlu evened the score with a counterattack a few seconds later. It was finally with a massive attack on the rear leg, that started as a o-soto-gari but transformed into a harai-goshi that Ozlu scored ippon to step on the podium.

**Final**

PAPINASHVILI, Amiran (GEO) vs. MSHVIDOBADZE, Robert (RUS)

**Bronze medal matches**

SADIGOV, Mehman (AZE) vs. OGUZOV, Albert (RUS)

KABA, Ahmet Sahin (TUR) vs. OZLU, Bekir (TUR)

**Final Results**

1. PAPINASHVILI, Amiran (GEO)

2. MSHVIDOBADZE, Robert (RUS)

3. OGUZOV, Albert (RUS)

3. OZLU, Bekir (TUR)

5. KABA, Ahmet Sahin (TUR)

5. SADIGOV, Mehman (AZE)

7. DIAZ, Adonis (USA)

7. MCKENZIE, Ashley (GBR)

**-52kg: VALENTIM Wins her First Grand Prix Gold**

Being second top seeded athlete, PUPP Reka (HUN) qualified for the final to be opposed to Eleudis VALENTIM of Brazil, who was ranked 3rd after the draw yesterday.

The first three minutes went by with both athletes neutralising each other, but PUPP, being less active than here opponent, was penalised with a shido for passivity, which should have pushed her to be positive, but this was the time that actually VALENTIM chose to attack and score a waza-ari with a left-handed tsuri-komi-goshi before holding PUPP with an immobilisation for ippon and a first gold on the occasion of a Grand Prix.

Angelica DELGADO was expecting a place in the final this time, but after having been eliminated by the Brazilian during the preliminary rounds, she qualified for the bronze medal contest where she had to face the other Brazilian Jessica PEREIRA. PEREIRA was close to score with a o-soto-gari attempt but DELGADO did not land enough on her side. Nevertheless, with the Brazilian being more active, DELGADO was penalised with a shido for passivity. Just before the last minute, it was the AMERICAN who put her opponent in danger with the same technique but again for no score. DELGADO was penalised a second time for holding the judogi on the same side too long without attacking. With only penalties on the scoreboard it was time for golden score. After 21 seconds in golden score DELGADO was penalised a third time giving the victory to PEREIRA and Brazil.

Slovenia secured a medal and qualified both athletes Anja STANGAR (SLO) and Petra NAREKS (SLO) for the second bronze medal match of the category. Half way to the end, STANGAR applied a powerful shime-waza technique for a ippon.

**Final**

VALENTIM, Eleudis (BRA) vs. PUPP, Reka (HUN)

**Bronze medal matches**

DELGADO, Angelica (USA) vs. PEREIRA, Jessica (BRA)

STANGAR, Anja (SLO) vs. NAREKS, Petra (SLO)

**Final results**

1. VALENTIM, Eleudis (BRA)

2. PUPP, Reka (HUN)

3. PEREIRA, Jessica (BRA)

3. STANGAR, Anja (SLO)

5. DELGADO, Angelica (USA)

5. NAREKS, Petra (SLO)

7. GNETO, Astride (FRA)

7. JIMENEZ, Kristine (PAN)

**-66kg: Japan Adds One More Gold with HASHIGUCHI**

Once again Japan qualified an athlete for the final of the men’s -66kg with HASHIGUCHI Yuuki, who was opposed to Sergiu OLEINIC (POR).

After a little more than thirty seconds, HASHIGUCHI executed a perfect o-uchi-gari in a pure Japanese style to score a first waza-ari. Exactly one minute before the end of the match, the Japanese suddenly dropped on his knees under OLEINIC’s centre of gravity for a second clear waza-ari as the Portuguese could avoid landing flat on his back. HASHIGUCHI just had to control with a strong kumikata (grip) to win a second gold medal in a Grand Prix, and the second gold for Japan on the occasion of this first day of competition in Zagreb.

The second Portuguese competitor Joao CRISOSTOMO qualified for the first bronze medal contest against Sinan SANDAL (TUR), who confirmed the good shape of the Turkish delegation here in Zagreb. SANDAL scored a first waza-ari after a few seconds with a drop-seoi-nage. Twenty seconds before the end of the match, SANDAL scored a second waza-ari as CRISOSTOMO tried to score with a ko-soto-gake that was countered by the Turkish to win a second medal for his delegation.

The second bronze medal match saw Matteo MEDVES (ITA) opposed to Anzaur ARDANOV (RUS). After one minute and a half, ARDANOV was penalised a first time for passivity but it was then the turn of MEDVES to receive a shido for stepping out of the tatami. The two athletes entered the final minute with only shidos to the scoreboard when MEDVES engaged a powerful harai-makikomi for waza-ari to take a strong lead and to put an option on the medal. A few seconds were left and the Italian had just to control, which he perfectly did to win his first medal on the occasion of a Grand Prix.

**Final**

HASHIGUCHI, Yuuki (JPN) vs. OLEINIC, Sergiu (POR)

**Bronze medal matches**

CRISOSTOMO, Joao (POR) vs. SANDAL, Sinan (TUR)

MEDVES, Matteo (ITA) vs. ARDANOV, Anzaur (RUS)

**Final results**

1. HASHIGUCHI, Yuuki (JPN)

2. OLEINIC, Sergiu (POR)

3. MEDVES, Matteo (ITA)

3. SANDAL, Sinan (TUR)

5. ARDANOV, Anzaur (RUS)

5. CRISOSTOMO, Joao (POR)

7. MARIAC, Alexandre (FRA)

7. SCHEIBEL, Manuel (GER)

**-57kg: Japan 3**

With her bronze medal obtained at the last World Championships in Budapest, Nekoda SMYTHE-DAVIS (GBR) was expected to enter the final even if she was not the top seeded athlete in Zagreb, and that is what she did. Very strong and concentrated throughout the preliminary rounds, she qualified against the third Japanese to enter the final, TAMAOKI Momo.

Nekoda SMYTHE-DAVIS was rapidly penalized with a first shido for stepping outside of the fighting area. One minute prior to the end, SMYTHE-DAVIS was penalized a second time for passivity as she seemed armless in front of TAMAOKI. But as shido don’t award the victory in regular time, both athletes entered the golden score, still with an advantage to the Japanese. The Golden score seemmed a little more balanced as neither TAMAOKI nor SMYTHE-DAVIS were able to put the danger on their opponent. But around 3 minutes and thirty seconds of extra time, the Japanese produced two strong attacks and kept on putting pressure on SMYTHE-DAVIS to make here penalized for the third time and win the third gold medal of the day for Japan.

The first bronze medal contest opposed Ivelina ILIEVA (BUL) and Daria MEZHETSKAIA (RUS). After two minutes and a half, there was only one shido awarded to the Russian and, second after second, the match seemed to approach to the golden score, when ILIEVA took advantage of a weak attack of MEZHETSKAIA to apply a shimmy-waza technique for ippon.

In the second bronze medal contest, the experienced KARAKAS Hedvig (HUN) was opposed to the top seeded athlete of the day, Theresa STOLL (GER), who was eliminated by TAMAOKI in the semi-final. As there was nothing written on the scoreboard, it is only ten seconds prior the final gong, that the Hungarian scored a waza-ari with a confused technique which was changed to no-score after having been reviewed with the video. It was then time for golden score. Two minutes later there was still nothing on the scoreboard and both athletes were still running after a score or a penalty to put a full stop to the bout. Two more minutes later the situation was still the same, but after a false attack from the German, she was penalized giving the victory to an exhausted but happy KARAKAS.

**Final**

TAMAOKI, Momo (JPN) vs. SMYTHE-DAVIS, Nekoda (GBR)

**Bronze medal matches**

ILIEVA, Ivelina (BUL) vs. MEZHETSKAIA, Daria (RUS)

KARAKAS, Hedvig (HUN) vs. STOLL, Theresa (GER)

**Final results**

1. TAMAOKI, Momo (JPN)

2. SMYTHE-DAVIS, Nekoda (GBR)

3. ILIEVA, Ivelina (BUL)

3. KARAKAS, Hedvig (HUN)

5. MEZHETSKAIA, Daria (RUS)

5. STOLL, Theresa (GER)

7. CRUDE, Tamires (BRA)

7. KAJZER, Kaja (SLO)