24 January 2019

Tel Aviv Grand Prix 2019, Israel - DAY ONE

Hosts Israel lead the medal table as four countries claim gold on day one

Israel’s first every IJF World Judo Tour event lived up to its high expectations on the opening day as the stars of the sport raised their performance level in the season opener in front of an electric atmosphere from the sell-out crowd.

Four countries won Grand Prix gold on day one but the opening day of the new IJF season belonged to the hosts who won two gold medals to take control of the medal table ahead of Belgium, Italy and Kosovo who each won one gold medal in Tel Aviv.

Judo has been thrust forward into the spotlight in Israel in recent years through the stellar accomplishments of their national judo team who have long had a strong presence on the IJF World Judo Tour and today epitomised their high standing in the thriving Olympic and Paralympic sport.

With Olympic and world medallists among their star-laden team, judo is now widely regarded as one of Israel’s leading sports with their champions now established as household names in the host country of the 2018 European Judo Championships.

The inaugural edition of the Tel Aviv Grand Prix featured five weight categories on Thursday as the men’s -60kg and -66kg categories were contested along with the women’s -48kg, -52kg and -57kg categories.

Israel won gold in two of the three women’s categories as Shira RISHONY (-48kg) and Timna NELSON LEVY (-57kg) finished were the heroes for the hosts.

Ahead of a thrilling final block, the opening ceremony saw luminaries from sport, politics and international organisations gather on the stage to officially raise the curtain on the new Grand Prix competition.

Mr. Marius L. VIZER, IJF President, World Jewish Congress Deputy CEO, Ms. Sonia Gomes de MESQUITA, Ms. Miri REGEV, Israel’s Minister of Culture and Sports and Mr. Moshe PONTE, Israel Judo Association President shared the stage moments before the medal contests started on day one,

Mr. Marius L. VIZER, IJF President, said: “Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear IOC member Mr. Alex GILADY, dear Mr. PONTE, dear guests and officials, I welcome you all to the first Tel Aviv Grand Prix. It’s a great pleasure for the International Judo Federation to be here in Israel.

“Sport is a way of offering the world unity, friendship and peace. Nelson MANDELA said that ‘sport has the power to change the world’. The way is long but we have to go step by step, the IJF has made a important step for unity and friendship and I wish a lot of success to you all and I hope you enjoy Tel Aviv.”

World Jewish Congress Deputy CEO, Ms. Sonia Gomes de MESQUITA, awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to the IJF President to recognise the efforts of the International Judo Federation and in particular for the historic Abu Dhabi Grand Slam 2018 which saw Israel participate with their flag on their judogi and with their anthem.

Ms. MESQUITA, of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), an international federation of Jewish communities and organizations, which was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in August 1936, said: “IJF President VIZER and IJA President Mr. PONTE, are at the forefront of the struggle to ensure that hate and intolerance are forever removed from sport.

“They have made an immense contribution in this regard and will have a long lasting effect for athletes from Israel and from all around the world. Israel’s anthem was played in Abu Dhabi and the Israel flag was raised and for this we are grateful.”

After receiving the award from the World Jewish Congress, Mr. VIZER, said: “Thank you very much, it’s a great honour for the IJF and great recognition for judo, the Israeli judo team and the Ministry of Sport which made huge work in this way and as well as officials from United Arab Emirates which opened a very important door for the future.”

**Women
-48kg: Israel’s RISHONY wins opening final at the first Tel Aviv Grand Prix**

Hohhot Grand Prix bronze medallist Shira RISHONY (ISR) gave her country a dream start for their inaugural Tel Aviv Grand Prix as she defeated The Hague Grand Prix winner Maryna CHERNIAK (UKR) to win -48kg gold. The home crowd did not have long to wait to see their judoka clinch top spot on the podium as RISHONY won her second Grand Prix title and first since 2013 to star in the first final on day one. Both judoka had one previous Grand Prix win on their respective records but it was the Israeli who doubled their golden medal tally by throwing after 24 seconds with an o-soto-gari for a waza-ari score.

In the first semi-final London 2012 Olympic bronze medallist CSERNOVICZKI Eva (HUN) lost out to CHERNIAK in golden score. With the scoreboard delicately poised at two shidos apiece, the Ukrainian countered the tired Hungarian with an o-soto-gari for a waza-ari score to advance to the final.

In the second semi-final World Judo Masters bronze medallist Marusa STANGAR (SLO) tapped out to home judoka RISHONY to guarantee her country’s first medal at their first IJF event.

The first bronze medal contest was won by two-time Grand Slam bronze medallist Nathalia BRIGIDA (BRA) who outlasted STANGAR after four minutes of golden score by the margin of a single waza-ari. The world number 132 from Brazil claimed the opening contest of the final block to return to the IJF medal podium for the first time since 2016.

The second bronze medal was won by CSERNOVICZKI who scored a waza-ari with five seconds left on the clock to deny world number 37 Maria SIDEROT (POR) her first IJF World Judo Tour honour. World number 10 CSERNOVICZKI is on course for her third successive Olympic Games and could again be a contender having finished third in 2012 and seventh in 2016.

**Final**RISHONY, Shira (ISR) vs CHERNIAK, Maryna (UKR)

**Bronze Medal Fights**STANGAR, Marusa (SLO) vs BRIGIDA, Nathalia (BRA)
CSERNOVICZKI, Eva (HUN) vs SIDEROT, Maria (POR)

**Final Results**

1. RISHONY, Shira (ISR)
2. CHERNIAK, Maryna (UKR)
3. BRIGIDA, Nathalia (BRA)
3. CSERNOVICZKI, Eva (HUN)
5. STANGAR, Marusa (SLO)
5. SIDEROT, Maria (POR)
7. MINSKER, Noa (ISR)
7. GILIAZOVA, Sabina (RUS)

**-52kg: Olympic champion KELMENDI powers to glory 36 seconds into the final**

Rio 2016 Olympic champion and two-time world champion Majlinda KELMENDI (KOS) won her 10th Grand Prix gold medal with a unstoppable showing in Tel Aviv. KELMENDI threw former Grand Slam winner Gili COHEN (ISR) twice in 36 seconds, scoring a waza-ari each time, to show the world that she means business this year and is getting back to her best after returning from a long injury lay-off in October.

In the first semi-final **former Grand Slam winner Gili COHEN (ISR) dismissed her teenage teammate** PRIMO by ippon.

In the second semi-final three-time world medallist Andreea CHITU (ROU) was second best against KELMENDI who prevailed after 14 seconds of golden score by ippon.

The first bronze medal was awarded to CHITU who launched ne-waza ace Alesya KUZNETSOVA (RUS) for ippon after just 29 seconds. Romania’s CHITU rushed to victory with a comprehensive win from a koshi-guruma for the maximum score to provide her country with their first IJF medal of the new season.

The second bronze medal was won by world number 44 Fabienne KOCHER (SUI) who absorbed all 18-year-old hotshot PRIMO had to offer before edging past the home judoka by a waza-ari score. Swiss judoka KOCHER scored with 57 seconds left on the clock, and against the run of play, but showed her shrewd tactics to defend her advantage and secure the final place on the -52kg podium.

**Final**KELMENDI, Majlinda (KOS) vs COHEN, Gili (ISR)

**Bronze Medal Fights**CHITU, Andreea (ROU) vs KUZNETSOVA, Alesya (RUS)
PRIMO, Gefen (ISR) vs KOCHER, Fabienne (SUI)

**Final Results**

1. KELMENDI, Majlinda (KOS)
2. COHEN, Gili (ISR)
3. CHITU, Andreea (ROU)
3. KOCHER, Fabienne (SUI)
5. KUZNETSOVA, Alesya (RUS)
5. PRIMO, Gefen (ISR)
7. LOPEZ SHERIFF, Estrella (ESP)
7. DELGADO, Angelica (USA)

**-57kg:** NELSON LEVY sends hosts Israel top of the medal table

Abu Dhabi Grand Slam bronze medallist Timna NELSON LEVY (ISR) defeated former Junior World Championships bronze medallist Daria MEZHETSKAIA (RUS) to steer her country to the top of the medal table. The last contest on day one went in the favour of the hosts as they scored a waza-ari with 50 seconds left from a counter and ‘Timna’ chants rang out around the arena.Agadir Grand Prix gold medallist NELSON LEVY bested her in-form Russian opponent for a momentous win which brought the crowd to their feet and showed the world the strength of Israeli judo.

In the first semi-final MEZHETSKAIA shocked former world bronze medallist KARAKAS Hedvig (HUN) by throwing with ippon to continue her riveting run through the rounds in Tel Aviv. The Russian utilised her sode-tsurikomi-goshi to win by ippon.

In the second semi-final NELSON LEVY surprised former world bronze medallist Helene RECEVEAUX (FRA) in golden score by a waza-ari score to the delight of the home crowd.

The first bronze medal was awarded to double world bronze medallist Nekoda SMYTHE-DAVIS (GBR) after RECEVEAUX was disqualified in golden score. SMYTHE-DAVIS, who was urged on from the stands by her club coach and long-time mentor, Jo CROWLEY, of Ealing Judo Club in London, profited from an error-laden display by her French rival who was penalised for dropping after two minutes of added time.

The second bronze medal was won by world number 30 Ivelina ILIEVA (BUL) who outfought veteran KARAKAS. Bulgaria opened their medal account for 2019 with a narrow win over Hungary’s KARAKAS as ILIEVA scored a waza-ari in the closing 30 seconds to capture a place on the podium and her third Grand Prix medal.

**Final**MEZHETSKAIA, Daria (RUS) vs NELSON LEVY, Timna (ISR)

**Bronze Medal Fights**SMYTHE-DAVIS, Nekoda (GBR) vs RECEVEAUX, Helene (FRA)
KARAKAS, Hedvig (HUN) vs ILIEVA, Ivelina (BUL)

**Final Results**

1. NELSON LEVY, Timna (ISR)
2. MEZHETSKAIA, Daria (RUS)
3. SMYTHE-DAVIS, Nekoda (GBR)
3. ILIEVA, Ivelina (BUL)
5. RECEVEAUX, Helene (FRA)
5. KARAKAS, Hedvig (HUN)
7. KOWALCZYK, Julia (POL)
7. CYSIQUE, Sarah Leonie (FRA)

**MEN**

 **-60kg: First IJF victory for Belgium’s** VERSTRAETEN

Former Cancun Grand Prix bronze medallist Jorre VERSTRAETEN (BEL) struck IJF gold for the first time in his young career as he beat Cancun Grand Prix gold medallist Tornike TSJAKADOEA (NED) ing golden score. The battle of neighbours and young talents in the men’s lightest weight category was an exciting affair was you’d expect despite failing to produce a winner of regulation time. VERSTRAETEN reigned today after TSJAKADOEA picked up his third penalty for going out of the area in added time.

In the first semi-final Antalya Grand Prix winner Albert OGUZOV (RUS) received his marching orders after picking up three shidos against Dutch hope TSJAKADOEA.

In the second semi-final two-time European Championships bronze medallist Ashley MCKENZIE (GBR) narrowly lost out to VERSTRAETEN by a waza-ari score as the younger judoka progressed to the gold medal contest.

The first bronze medal was won by three-time Grand Slam bronze medallist Cedric REVOL (FRA) who tapped out MCKENZIE. Five-time Grand Prix medallist MCKENZIE was undone on the ground by the Frenchman who completed his Grand Prix hat-trick.

The second bronze medal went to OGUZOV as his compatriot and world number 116 Sakhavat GADZHIEV (RUS) could not compete due to injury.

**Final**TSJAKADOEA, Tornike (NED) vs VERSTRAETEN, Jorre (BEL)

**Bronze Medal Fights**REVOL, Cedric (FRA) vs MCKENZIE, Ashley (GBR)
OGUZOV, Albert (RUS) vs GADZHIEV, Sakhavat (RUS)

**Final Results**

1. VERSTRAETEN, Jorre (BEL)
2. TSJAKADOEA, Tornike (NED)
3. REVOL, Cedric (FRA)
3. OGUZOV, Albert (RUS)
5. MCKENZIE, Ashley (GBR)
5. GADZHIEV, Sakhavat (RUS)
7. GERCHEV, Yanislav (BUL)
7. DIAZ, Adonis (USA)

**-66kg: Junior world champion from Italy wins clash between first-time IJF finalists**

Junior World Championships gold medallist Manuel LOMBARDO (ITA) stepped up to deliver the finest performance of his young career on the senior stage as he brushed aside Budapest Grand Prix bronze medallist Bogdan IADOV (UKR) in the -66kg final. In an unlikely final, which pitted two first-time finalists against each other, the Italian threw with a **modified kata-guruma for a waza-ari score with 19 seconds left on the clock.** Israel’s **two top-rated judoka, Baruch SHMAILOV (ISR) and Tal FLICKER (ISR) were expected to be the decisive characters in the -66kg category, but it was two new names who who made their mark at the first IJF stop in the new season.**

In the first semi-final Budapest Grand Prix bronze medallist Bogdan IADOV (UKR) defeated Tashkent Grand Prix silver medallist Sardor NURILLAEV (UZB) by ippon with a ura-nage.

In the second semi-final Junior World Championships gold medallist Manuel LOMBARDO (ITA) defeated GAITERO MARTIN (ESP) in golden score after the Spaniard picked up his third penalty for passivity in added time.

The first bronze medal was won by GAITERO MARTIN who dispatched IJF World Judo Tour debutant Ibrahim ALIYEV (AZE) with an ippon-seoi-nage after 26 seconds of golden score. Former Cancun Grand Prix silver medallist GAITERO MARTIN beat the spirited 19-year-old Azeri debutant in added time to continue his steady climb up the rankings at -66kg.

The second bronze medal went to world number 61 Islam KHAMETOV (RUS) who defeated World number 27 NURILLAEV by ippon with an o-soto-gari with 26 seconds left on the clock. Former Ekaterinburg Grand Slam bronze medallist KHAMETOV won his second Grand Prix medal to add to his coutnry’s medal account on the opening day in Tel Aviv.

**Final**
IADOV, Bogdan (UKR) vs LOMBARDO, Manuel (ITA)

**Bronze Medal Fights**ALIYEV, Ibrahim (AZE) vs GAITERO MARTIN, Alberto (ESP)
NURILLAEV, Sardor (UZB) vs KHAMETOV, Islam (RUS)

**Final Results**

1. LOMBARDO, Manuel (ITA)
2. IADOV, Bogdan (UKR)
3. KHAMETOV, Islam (RUS)
3. GAITERO MARTIN, Alberto (ESP)
5. ALIYEV, Ibrahim (AZE)
5. NURILLAEV, Sardor (UZB)
7. BOUCHER, Mathias (FRA)
7. SAFAROV, Orkhan (AZE)