Para Taekwondo National Team returns home with two medals

KABUL: Four handicapped Para Taekwondo athletes of National Para Taekwondo team attended a five-day Asia Championship competition hosted by Lebanon.

Ali Sajad Hamraz, 61 Kg, Abdul Mateen Hotak, 61 Kg, Zakya Khodaidadi, 61 Kg and Zubair Haidari had actively took part in this great historical event.

Abdul Mateen Hotak a qualified representative of Afghanistan Para Taekwondo won a gold medal from Asia games for Afghanistan sport community particularly handicapped ones, while Ali Sajad Hamraz won third position with a bronze medal in this event.

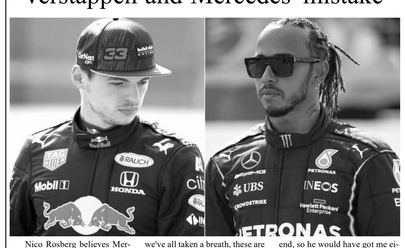
In his congratulating message, chairman of Afghanistan National Para Taekwondo Committee Abul Hussain Hessari said: "Sport plays effective role in creation of peace and security as sport is a social phenomenon, that has high impacts in friendship, solidarity and convergence of nations and tribes. I congratulate this great victory to brave Afghan people particularly sport community."

It should be said that one month before, Afghanistan Para Taekwondo Athletics Zubair Haideri, Abdul Mateen Hotak and Zakya Khodaidaddi gained three bronze medals from a competition hosted by Jordan.

The first handicapped Para Taekwondo athlete, Zakya Khodaidaddi opened her way into Tokyo, Japan 2021 Olympic games.

Nangialay Osmani

Nico Rosberg and Sky F1 pundits on French GP: Lewis Hamilton vs Max Verstappen and Mercedes 'mistake'



Nico Rosberg believes Mercedes were made to pay for strategy mistakes at the French GP while he also questioned Lewis Hamilton's "unusual" and "soft" defence from Max Verstappen, as the Sky Sports F1 pundits dissected a gripping race at Paul Ricard.

Rosberg, the 2016 world champion, and fellow former Formula 1 drivers Karun Chandhok and Paul Di Resta discussed the key talking points from the seventh race of the season, which has seen Verstappen and Red Bull extend their title advantages over Hamilton and Mercedes.

Mercedes' decision to only pit Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas once, with a two-stopping Verstappen eventually going on to win, was certainly key to the race. Toto Wolff said the team essentially had no option but to stop when they did for the first stop - after which Verstappen undercut Hamilton - while Hamilton says a one-stop race was his "only option".

But Rosberg said of his former team: "I think there some rather big mistakes from Mercedes on strategy."

Rosberg, who also highlighted Verstappen's mistake at the start of the race, believes Red Bull's form is forcing Mercedes - who have won seven straight team and drivers' titles - into them.

"This is absolutely awesome, that battle with Mercedes and Red Bull," he added. "Every detail matters.

"You can definitely see the pressure is there at Mercedes, because I've not seen them make so many mistakes in a long time. They're still an unbelievable force, a phenomenal team.

"But [Red Bull's pace] is such a boost, and they're really coming the dominant force more and more, which is putting so much pressure on Mercedes and we are seeing that Mercedes are making mistake after mistake.

"They need to be careful, they need to keep it together from now on to have a chance."

Di Resta, however, believes Red Bull's strategy - two-stopping with a mighty-fast Verstappen and extending Perez for a quick one-stop - left Mercedes with nowhere to go with their two drivers.

"I think Red Bull played a blinder," said Di Resta, who admitted Mercedes needed to "get their star man to step forward this weekend. Bale has shown moments of brilliance, particularly with his assists against Turkey, but his country needs him to be near-perfect in the knockouts to realise the dream. It's a challenge he will relish.

Roberto Mancini made eight changes to his Italy team against Wales but the replacements looked just as impressive in the Rome sunshine. The Azzurri have taken this tournament by storm - and on Sunday they showed they have the strength in depth required to go deep into the knockout rounds.

Also See:

we've all taken a breath, these are two teams and drivers under high pressure, and we're going to see some cracks. And it's just who cracks less."

Verstappen hunted down Hamilton towards the end of the race and was at least a second-per-lap faster than the seven-time world champion on his fresh tyres. His overtake came on the penultimate lap, darting down the inside of the chicane when aided by DRS on the straight.

But Rosberg, who's had his fair share of wheel-to-wheel battles with his former team-mate, felt Hamilton didn't put up enough a fight.

"Unusual from Lewis," he said. "Close the damn door.

"Usually Lewis is the best one-to-one racer and I'm surprised he didn't try... at least try. Brake late, keep him on the outside... so a bit soft there from Lewis."

Hamilton himself said: "Firstly, there's marbles on the inside, so I didn't want to make my tyres any worse than they already were. He had the DRS open, so if he didn't pass me there, he would have passed me the straight afterwards, so it would have made zero difference and I just had no front end, so he would have got me either way.

"It was pointless to defend any harder."

Karun also contested that Hamilton's tyres were a "long, long, long way past their best".

"Valtteri was erratic on team radio, saying we should have done a two-stop etc, yet Lewis was delivering pace, sometimes a second faster than Bottas," said Chandhok.

"That shows to me a guy who's still hungry to win, still trying to execute the best strategy he has under the circumstances. It's impressive."

Rosberg also had his say on Bottas' frustration over Mercedes' strategy, with the team not pitting him again despite his struggles. Bottas eventually finished fourth after being overtaken by both Red Bulls.

But Rosberg defended his former team, and criticised Bottas, on this occasion.

"As a driver you can't judge a situation out there," said Rosberg. "So the team has to make a decision and it was the right decision because they had to keep it out there just to try and protect the win.

New Zealand's Hubbard selected as first transgender Olympian

Weightlifter Laurel Hubbard will become the first transgender athlete to compete at the Olympics after being selected by New Zealand for the women's event at the Tokyo Games, a decision set to test the ideal of fair competition in sport.

New Zealand Olympic Committee chief Kereyn Smith said 43-year-old Hubbard – who was assigned male at birth but transitioned to female in 2013 – had met all the qualification criteria for transgender athletes.

"We acknowledge that gender identity in sport is a highly sensitive and complex issue requiring a balance between human rights and fairness on the field of play," Smith said in a statement.

Hubbard will compete in the super-heavyweight 87-kg category after showing testosterone levels below the threshold required by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The 43-year-old had competed in men's weightlifting competitions before transitioning.

"I am grateful and humbled by the kindness and support that has been given to me by so many New Zealanders," Hubbard, an intensely private person who rarely speaks to the media, said in a statement issued by the New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) on Monday.

Hubbard has been eligible to compete at Olympics since 2015, when the IOC issued guidelines allowing any transgender athlete to compete as a woman provided their testosterone levels are below 10 nanomoles per litre for at least 12 months before their first competition.

Some scientists have said the guidelines do little to mitigate the biological advantages of people who have gone through puberty as males, including bone and muscle density.

Advocates for transgender inclusion argue the process of transition decreases that advantage considerably and that physical differences between athletes mean there is never a truly level playing field.

Save Women's Sport Australasia, an advocacy group for women athletes, criticised Hubbard's selection.

"It is flawed policy from the IOC that has allowed the selection of a 43-year-old biological male who identifies as a woman to compete in the female category," the group said in a statement.

Weightlifting has been at the centre of the debate about the fairness of transgender athletes competing against women, and Hubbard's presence in Tokyo could prove divisive.

Her gold medal wins at the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa, where she topped the podium ahead of Samoa's Commonwealth Games champion Feagaiga Stowers, triggered outrage in the host nation.

Samoa's weightlifting boss said Hubbard's selection for Tokyo would be like letting athletes "dope" and feared it could cost the small Pacific nation a medal.

Belgian weightlifter Anna Vanbellinghen said last month allowing Hubbard to compete at Tokyo was unfair for women and "like a bad joke".

Australia's weightlifting federation sought to block Hubbard from competing at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast but organisers rejected the move.

Hubbard was forced to withdraw after injuring herself during competition, and thought her career was over.

"When I broke my arm at the Commonwealth Games three years ago, I was advised that my sporting career had likely reached its end," Hubbard said on Monday, thanking New Zealanders.

"But your support, your encouragement, and your aroha (love) carried me through the darkness."

Olympic Weightlifting New Zealand President Richie Patterson said Hubbard had worked hard to come back from the potentially career-ending injury.

"Laurel has shown grit and perseverance in her return from a significant injury and overcoming the challenges in building back confidence on the competition platform," he said.

Hubbard is currently ranked 16th in the world in the super heavyweight category.

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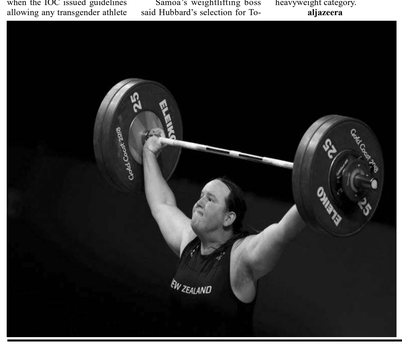

Hits and Misses: Wales can dream of Euro 2016 repeat and Italy show their strength in depth

Switzerland hit the post and Andrea Belotti forced Danny Ward into an important save after Gareth Bale had skied his unmarked volley over the bar. The Wales captain looked certain to grab a draw in Rome for his 10-man team when the ball fell kindly for a left-foot strike. But, like with his penalty miss against Turkey, he got it badly wrong. It could have been a costly error.

But that Swiss miss and Ward's sharp stop prevented Wales from surrendering their goal difference advantage and they battled hard in the heat to ensure a second-place finish in Group A - and a Saturday night in Amsterdam.

The party there will not be quite what it could have been, given the travel restrictions Welsh fans are facing, but, wherever they are watching, they can now start to plot a path through this tournament that would emulate the class of 2016.

Russia or Denmark are the likely last-16 opponents, unless Finland can get a result off Belgium, and then it would be back to Baku to potentially face the Netherlands. That city was a happy hunting ground for Rob Page's players in the group stage - and Wembley, the semi-finals and the chance to match the legends of Euro 2016 will be beckoning by then. It's not impossible.

But while Wales have shown in this tournament they have a strong supporting cast - stronger than 2016? - they need their star man to step forward this weekend. Bale has shown moments of brilliance, particularly with his assists against Turkey, but his country needs him to be near-perfect in the knockouts to realise the dream. It's a challenge he will relish.

US Open: Jon Rahm enjoys triumph after adversity just two weeks on from positive Covid-19 test

Jon Rahm believes his dramatic exit from The Memorial was beneficial to his temperament and mindset as he powered to his maiden major title at the US Open.

Rahm had already made progress on curbing his fiery nature since his disappointing finish to his third round at the PGA Championship last month, making careless mistakes that left him too far back to mount a serious threat to Phil Mickelson's title charge.

The Spaniard's refreshed composure had the desired effect on his all-round form at Muirfield Village a fortnight ago, when he was three-quarters of the way to a dominant victory before being told he would have to withdraw from the tournament after testing positive for Covid-19. Rahm revealed that supportive calls from Ryder Cup captain Padraig Harrington and six-time major winner Sir Nick Faldo had helped him cope with the crushing disappointment, and redemption was swift as he produced a spectacular finish to pip Louis Oosthuizen to the US Open title at Torrey Pines.

Clutch birdie putts on the final two greens sent Rahm into a fist-pumping frenzy that echoed his maiden win on the PGA Tour at the same venue in early 2017, although his "fairytale" win had looked an unlikely prospect when he headed off to self-isolation earlier this month. "I feel like coming in here without having practised much relaxed me a little bit," said Rahm, who revealed last weekend that he had been cleared to play after giving two negative tests for coronavirus.

"I thought, in case I play bad, I have an excuse, I have a bailout clause. Hey, I had Covid!

"But I feel like it relaxed me a little bit, and ever since the Sunday at the PGA, I felt a bit of a shift on the golf course mentally. I still had that grit, but it was almost like each miss bothered me less. I couldn't tell you why.

"I believe it's because I really set out myself to be an example for my son that he would be proud of, and I've done some stuff in the past on the golf course that I'm not proud of, and I wish I could eliminate it. "But I've accepted it.

I'm not saying it's going to be smooth sailing until the end, but I feel like that Sunday of the PGA changed things a little bit. My mental game was really good, and it was the same thing at Memorial. Mentally, I was really, really well, and that's what allowed me to play such good golf.

"It followed into this week.

In the past, I've been frustrated in the US Open. I've made a lot of birdies and a ton of bogeys and double-bogeys, and I was able to kind of switch it up this week and actually made more birdies than bogeys and get it done."

Rahm also thanked Harrington and Faldo for their support following his enforced withdrawal from The Memorial, with both having endured similar experiences in the past.