Misenga: A DRC refugee hoping to inspire millions at the Olympics

In 2001, Popole Misenga's mother was murdered during Democratic Republic of Congo's civil war.

He was nine at the time. After walking alone for a week, he was finally rescued and brought to Kinshasa where he was first introduced to judo.

Later this month, Misenga will represent the Refugee Olympic Team for a second time after making his debut in 2016 in Brazil, where he has been living since 2013.

Misenga's life changed in 2013 when he was in Brazil for the world judo championship.

He fled the DRC team camp without money, passport or food. He said it was his only chance and opportunity to escape after he was mistreated by his coaches and the abuse he experienced for not winning medals.

Surviving the civil war in DRC and living a challenging life in Brazil, Misenga says he never forgot his dreams and just wants to show the world that anything is possible.

Al Jazeera spoke to the judoka about life in Brazil, how judo has helped him physically and mentally and how he stands so close to seeing his dream come true.

Al Jazeera: You have not been back to DRC since 2013. What is it that you miss most about your country?

Misenga: I only miss my brother. We normally talk on the phone but we have not met since 2013. Al Jazeera: You escaped from the team camp in 2013. How difficult was that decision and, looking back, you think it was the right one?

Misenga: I didn't decide to stay in Brazil, it just happened. At that moment, the pressure of the coaches in the national squad was so high. They were not treating us well, they didn't care about us, everything was bad and they never stopped.

We were hungry. We had no money. They didn't pay us. Once, I went three days without eating and I couldn't stand that situation any more. In DRC, the situation was the same. I didn't have a place to sleep, I didn't have a house or a family. So I just decided that since I did not have anything to lose, I can stay here in Brazil and start a new life.

It was the right decision. Today, I have a wife and children who I love. I never imagined I could become a father.

Al Jazeera: What was the experience of living in a Rio favela?

Misenga: It was not easy. I left my country in the middle of the war and when I got here I was living inside another war. These wars were happening all the time with a lot of confusion and gunshots everywhere. Innocent people were also being killed. People would barge into my house to shelter from stray bullets. Even then, I decided to stay.

I ran from a system of heavy abuse to stay in a country all alone. I spent some time sleeping on the streets of Rio, skipping meals till I found shelter in the north of the city where there was a small Congolese community.

I lived there for a few years, surviving on informal jobs.

Now, I want to have a chance to leave Brazil one day and give my children the opportunity to study abroad and give them a good path in life and a better future.

Al Jazeera: When did you start training in Brazil?

Misenga: I started training at Reacao Institute, an NGO founded by the former athlete Flavio Canto. At this centre, I also got help from co-founder and veteran Olympic coach Geraldo Bernardes, who coached the Brazilian national judo team.

That is when I started dreaming about being at the Olympics.

Al Jazeera: How has your life changed since you took part in your first Olympics in 2016?

Misenga: Everything has changed. Fortunately, I had financial support from the International Olympic Committee and International Judo Federation until I managed to get out of the favela where I was living before. Now, I live in a safe place where I don't hear gunshots all the time.

There were some days when I couldn't reach or leave my house because of gang wars. I hadn't got used to it but I couldn't leave either because I couldn't afford to do that then.

Al Jazeera: How has the experience of being part of the Refugee Olympic Team been?

Misenga: We, refugees, have dreams, just like everybody else. We dream to be someone, to do something we like and we can never give up. I am an example of many refugees that are now able to go to school.

I have managed to work on my dream and I would like to remind millions of refugees around the world to dream more and make things happen.

Al Jazeera: What are your expectations at Tokyo 2020? How did you prepare for it and what were the challenges?

Misenga: The biggest challenge was the coronavirus pandemic. I took a lot of care, keeping my hands clean all the time, washing them with alcohol gel, wearing masks and during lockdowns when I could not train with my colleagues, I trained alone at home. It is something happening not only with me but everyone across the world.

For me, I just want to reach my dream of competing and winning a medal. This is where my mind is: Win a medal for our team.

Al Jazeera: Your story has inspired many people around the world. How does that make you feel and what is your message for millions of refugees around the world?

Misenga: My message is simple. Never let your dreams die. Make sure you pursue them. I dream a lot about winning a medal for my team and have more beautiful stories to tell for the millions of refugees around the world. Now I stand very close to that.

Olympic gymnast Simone Biles praised for mental health stance

US gymnastics superstar Simone Biles shocked the 2020 Tokyo Olympics by withdrawing from women's team and individual all-around contests, in which she was considered a top contender, over what she said were "mental health concerns".

The 24-year-old has received widespread praise for bringing attention to mental health, dispelling the stigma that remains around the issue, and highlighting the immense pressure put on elite athletes.

National figures, including former US First Lady Michelle Obama, fellow athletes, and commentators have supported the decision taken by Biles, often lauded as the best gymnast of all time.

Spanish basketball star and Olympian Pau Gasol said Biles' decision underscored an important reality: "Mental health is a key component of our health, and it MUST be a priority always".

"We need the sports world to focus on emotional and mental well-being a lot more," he wrote on Twitter. "Thank you for using your platform, you are a true champion!"

Sarah Hirshland, US Olympic and Paralympic Committee chief executive officer, Tweeted: "Simone, you've made us so proud. Proud of who you are as a person, teammate and athlete."

"We applaud your decision to prioritize your mental wellness over all else and offer you the full support and resources of our Team USA community as you navigate the journey ahead."

Biles, who won four golds at the 2016 Rio Olympics, on Tuesday withdrew from the women's team competition – in which the best scores of a country's team in the four main gymnastics events are combined to determine a winner – after an uncharacteristically shaky vault.

She detailed her decision in a post-event press conference.

"At the end of the day, we're human, too, so we have to protect our mind and our body rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do," she said. "With the year that it's been, I'm really not surprised how it played out."

The US women's team went on to take silver in the event, with the Russian Olympic Committee team taking gold. On Wednesday, it was announced that Biles would also not compete in the individual all-around event – in which individual athletes are judged cumulatively in all four main events: vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor.

It was not yet announced if Biles would compete in the coming days in the individual events for each of the skills, with the athlete saying she was taking things "day by day".

'Not superhuman'

Biles has spoken openly about the pressures of being one of the most visible athletes on the US Olympic team.

The revelation that she was one of hundreds of young women abused by former USA gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar has compounded that public attention.

Several observers have likened Tuesday's decision to that of tennis star and fellow Olympian Naomi Osaka, who withdrew from the French Open in May, citing her mental health and "bouts of depression".

Following the example of Biles and Osaka, Washington Post columnist Alyssa Rosenberg wondered if spectators can change their own expectations of greatness.

"Maybe we fans can learn to embrace more expansive definitions of excellence and courage," she wrote.

New York Times columnist Lindsay Crouse, meanwhile, wrote that Biles was part of a growing group of young athletes who are taking more agency over their careers and unrealistic public expectations.

"Obviously, everyone wants to win. So it's exciting that many of these stars are also recognising that being the greatest means knowing your own variable limits and when to push through the pain – and when not to force it," she wrote.

"How many Olympians have we seen push, persevere and then crumble when the Games are over?" "These young women and men have extraordinary talent and perform under incredible pressure, but they are not superhuman," she added. **aljazeera**

Charlotte Dujardin becomes Great Britain's most decorated female Olympian with bronze in individual dressage

Charlotte Dujardin became Great Britain's most decorated female Olympian as she claimed bronze in the individual dressage aboard Gio at the Tokyo Games.

Dujardin had joined rower Dame Katherine Grainger and tennis player Kathleen McKane Godfree on five medals when Team GB took bronze in the team dressage event on Tuesday, and she added her sixth Olympic medal at the end of a dramatic day at Equestrian Park.

Dujardin and her horse Gio were in third place after the penultimate ride of the day, and there was an anxious wait as Germany's Dorothy Schneider and Showtime FRH took to the arena. However they could not do enough to overtake the British pairing and the bronze medal was secured.

Dujardin has now claimed three gold medals, one silver and two bronze medals in her Olympic career, which started at London 2012 and while her nine-year reign as Olympic individual dressage champion ended on another night of German domination, a podium finish saw her break the record of five Olympic medals.

It was a remarkable performance by 36-year-old Dujardin, given her horse Gio was contesting in his first major championship. She won double gold at London 2012, then individual gold and team silver in Rio, before collecting two bronze medals in Tokyo.

F1 drivers' chief Alex Wurz on the respect between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen

The chairman of Formula 1's drivers' association, Alex Wurz, says "tremendous respect" exists between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen despite their tense championship battle.

Wurz, meanwhile, felt the collision between them on the opening lap of the British GP was a "racing incident" with neither driver clearly to blame.

The push-up underpants to flaunt your figure in tight-fitting clothes.

"They have real tremendous respect from each other," said Wurz, the chairman of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, to Sky Sports News.

"I've been in meetings with both of them. I respect them dearly. Sensational drivers, we are witnessing some of the best drivers in motorsport history fighting it out.

"But, of course, the pressure will get to their team bosses, to their managers, to themselves, and therefore there will be or might be some interviews, some exchanges in words, gestures, or whatever which come from the emotion.

"But the bottom line is I guarantee you that each and every racing driver respects the other one, and especially if they are as talented as Max and Lewis."

Stewards found Hamilton to have been 'predominantly' at fault for the collision at Silverstone and imposed a 10-second penalty on him. But whereas Mercedes felt Hamilton had done nothing wrong, Red Bull argued strongly that the world champion should have been given a harsher penalty.

Red Bull have since activated their right of a review into the incident and both teams will meet with stewards via video link on Thursday. Red Bull have to present a "significant and relevant new element" of evidence for stewards to consider re-opening the matter.

The incident and penalty imposed has continued to stoke debate in the sport around wheel-to-wheel combat and penalties.

Asked if the rules on overtaking were clear enough in general, Wurz felt "that's a really difficult one because there is just an infinity amount of possibilities" to consider but believes the stewarding process "works reasonably well and it's getting more and more consistent".

"The GPDA are sitting down with the FIA and running through many situations, accidents and incidents and helping to have a joint understanding of what is acceptable and not acceptable," added Wurz.

"But, of course, there is the 'racing incident' and in my opinion this is what happened in Silverstone. These two drivers were racing hard, and they had contact and, in my opinion, it was a racing incident.

"There is always a spectrum of percentage who is more at fault or less at fault, but bottom line is it's not very clear and therefore it's a racing incident."

Wurz added: "If it is in this grey line territory that's where I personally think the description racing incident is the best one to use."

The Austrian said the GPDA was working with the FIA to ensure penalties became as consistent as possible.

"We do talk amongst the drivers and there is a little bit of room for improvement to make it more consistent between the different stewards and between situations. But, honestly when you then start looking in detail of situations, many times they look and appear the same but they are different," Wurz said.

"Can there be more consistency? Yes. This is what we are really working on with the FIA and we are saluting their effort to have multiple meetings between all the stewards to come together, to look at the incidents, and then give a judgement between themselves and try to improve the collective output.

"Will it always be a million per cent fair? No, we are not there yet, but of course the aim is to be as fair as possible."

Luke Campbell retires from boxing nine years after Olympic gold medal at London 2012

Luke Campbell has called time on a boxing career which saw him sensationally claim an Olympic gold medal at London 2012.

The Hull fighter retires aged 33 with 20 professional wins and four losses - he fell short of becoming a world champion on two agonising occasions.

Campbell firstly lost a split decision to WBA lightweight champion Jorge Linares on away turf in California in 2017 after recovering from an early knock-down.

He revealed afterwards that his father had passed away in the days prior, but Campbell opted to go ahead with the fight without making his grief public.

Two years later, Campbell had the difficult task of challenging pound-for-pound phenom Vasiliy Lomachenko for the WBA, WBC and WBO lightweight titles.

Campbell engaged in a technical duel with Lomachenko before being knocked down in the 11th round and emerged with credit from a unanimous decision defeat at The O2 in London.

The skilful southpaw has brought an end to his career after a January stoppage loss to Ryan Garcia, who finished the fight with a body shot in the seventh round after Campbell had floored him in the second. But the memory of his Olympic gold dream will be immortalised forever, particularly in his home city of Hull where it is remembered by a golden letterbox, the gesture afforded to every successful Team GB Olympian at those Games.

He was a part of a GB team in 2012 that included Anthony Joshua and Natasha Jonas.

Campbell shot into the pro ranks and stopped local rival Tommy Coyle in Hull, while he also notably beat Derry Mathews, avenged his first loss to Yvan Mendy and won a Commonwealth title.

Reflecting on his career in a statement, Campbell said: "Every fight, right the way from my debut on 13th June 2013, up to my last on 2nd January 2021, the cheers and messages of encouragement have always been monumental. Throughout my career I've tried to test myself against the very best in the industry and never shied away from anyone. I'm so grateful this hasn't gone unnoticed from supporters and I appreciate you all.

"The past year in boxing though has been tough. An extremely long training camp away from family meant I was only able to spend a few days with my newborn child and also resulted in me having Christmas apart from them on the other side of the world.

"It's in these moments that you realise what is truly important in life. I've lived my dreams and accomplished more than I ever imagined I would.