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Elder Lorincz Grabs Greco 77kg Gold; Evloev, Mensah Stock Cruise to Olympic Titles

By Ken Marantz

CHIBA, Japan (August 3) -- The Lorincz family of Hungary is halfway toward a double Olympic celebration.

Veteran Tamas LORINCZ (HUN) made his fourth and final Olympics a triumphant one by defeating rising star Akzhol MAKHMUDOV (KGZ) 2-1 in the Greco-Roman 77kg final on Tuesday night at Makuhari Messe Hall A.

Two other reigning world champions also secured their first Olympic golds, with Musa EVLOEV (ROC) triumphing over a less-than-100-percent defending champion at Greco 97kg and Tamyra MENSAH STOCK (USA) taking the women's 68kg crown.

Earlier, Lorincz's younger brother Viktor advanced to the final at 87kg, keeping alive their dream of taking home golds together from the Tokyo Olympics. It nearly happened at the 2019 World Championships, where Tamas won his lone world gold but Viktor lost in the final.

"In the last five years we have trained hard," Tamas Lorincz said. "Even during the pandemic I trained with my brother. So there is a reason we are both in the final of this Olympics. This is my final Olympics."

The 35-year-old Lorincz, who also won a silver medal at the 2012 London Olympics, showed his experience and savvy by doing exactly what was needed to advance through each round. After receiving a first-round victory by default, he won all of three of his subsequent matches by one point.

"I just thought no, I can't lose, especially after I managed to defeat the Iranian," Lorincz told m4sport in Hungarian, referring to his semifinal win over Mohammadali GERAEI (IRI). "It gave him so much power that no one here could stop me. I am very glad that this won by me."

In the final against the 22-year-old Makhmudov, Lorincz was put in the bottom of the par terre in the first period, but held firm and did not give up any points. In the second period, he scored with a stepout, then received a passivity point himself. While he couldn't turn his young opponent, he did enough to preserve his lead.

"Incredible," Lorincz said. "I made it to my fourth Olympics, almost 35 years old. I don't want to believe this. I'm so happy."

Makhmudov, the 2018 Asian champion, had been aiming to become Kyrgyzstan's first-ever Olympic champion in any sport. Instead, he will have to settle for being the nation's fifth medalist in history (the sixth came a short time later in the women's 68kg), while establishing himself as a force to be reckoned with in the future.

Evloev added the Olympic gold to his two world titles when he defeated rival Artur ALEKSANYAN (ARM) 5-1 at Greco 97kg in a repeat of the 2019 world final in Nur-Sultan.

Rio 2016 and three-time former world champion Aleksanyan was visibly hampered by a leg injury he suffered in the semifinals, and while bravely fighting on, never really threatened the Russian.

Evloev, gaining the par terre position first, got a 2-point leg penalty that was given through a challenge, then added a 2-point throw for a 5-0 lead. In the second period, Aleksanyan was put on top, but could not put enough power from his legs to lift his opponent.

"I was nervous of course, every athlete is," Evloev said. "I was sure of myself, my strength, endurance. I have done this before. I tried to show whatever my coaches invested into me. I had some luck as well. I wanted to prove that I am the strongest in this category. This was a collective effort."

Asked how he felt about beating Aleksanyan for a third time, Evloev said, "I came here to grab my Olympic gold medal. I have no emotions, honestly. It was the same at the world championships, I was calm when I won. I don't feel anything. I am just glad. I have worked a lot for it."

Evloev said the postponement of the Olympics had little effect on him.

"There is no difference for me," he said. "In 2020 I wrestled with the same guys, and won them all. If the coaches agree, I will be glad to participate in the World Championships [in Oslo] in two months."

The 28-year-old Evloev is also already talking about going for a second gold in Paris in 2024. Not surprising, given his obsession with the sport--although he's not so crazy about training.

"I go to sleep thinking about wrestling, I wake up in the morning thinking about wrestling," Evloev said. "It's the easiest to wrestle at the competition, although the toughest parts is the preparation for me personally. The training [sessions] are crazy, after them you can't fall asleep at night, then you wake up in the morning and all your body is in pain. So, I enjoy wrestling."

In the women's 68kg final, Mensah Stock proved she is truly in a class of her own with a steady 4-1 victory over Blessing OBORUDUDU (NGR), the first-ever Nigerian to make an Olympic final.

The 29-year-old American scored a defensive takedown, but was reversed as she tried to turn Oborududu over to make it 2-1. Undaunted, Mensah Stock went on the attack and scored with a powerful single-leg takedown.

Mensah Stock was never in danger in the second period as she became the second American woman in history to win an Olympic wrestling gold with a near repeat of her 6-1 win over Oborududu in the first round at the 2019 worlds.

"I am so happy and I want to cry but I am controlling it," Mensah Stock said.

The American has lost just once since her triumph in Nur-Sultan, a loss to Feng ZHOU (CHN) at the Matteo Pellicone tournament in January 2020 -- which she avenged with a technical fall in the quarterfinals on Monday.

The six bronze medals on offer each went to a different country, with the biggest surprise coming at Greco 77kg, where unheralded Shohei YABIKU (JPN) upended two-time world bronze medalist Gerai.

Yabiku, whose lone international achievement of any note was a world junior bronze medal from 2013, rallied from an 0-3 deficit to score a 13-3 technical fall that ended with 6 seconds left in the match.

Yabiku needed a late 4-point throw to beat Demeu ZHADRAYEV (KAZ) 5-3 in his opening match before losing 3-2 to Lorincz, and came up big again against Gerai.

Yabiku in the par terre position trailing 2-3, he lifted and flipped the Iranian for 5 points. At the end, Gerai tried a disparation jump over the top of Yabiku, but the Japanese dumped him to the mat for 4 points to end the match.

"I lost in the second round, and I wanted to feed off that disappointment to win the bronze medal, and I'm glad I could do it," said Yabiku, who is only the second athlete in Japanese history from the southern islands of Okinawa to compete at an Olympics.

"I hope this medal inspires kids on Okinawa to follow their dreams," he said.

The medal also fulfills the dream of his parents. His father was an Asian bronze medalist who was injured during qualifying for the 1992 Barcelona Games and never appeared in the Olympics, and his mother was a nationally ranked javelin thrower.

While the host country could celebrate a new hero, an older one will be looking for a way to turn around a recent run of misfortune.

Rio 2016 champion Sara DOSHO (JPN) came into the Tokyo Olympics aiming for a second Olympic gold, but will head home empty handed after losing in the women's 68kg bronze-medal match by fall to 2018 world champion Alla CHERKASOVA (UKR).

Cherkasova caught Doshu in a barrel roll that put her on her back, then clamped down for a fall in 2:33 to win the bronze in her second Olympic appearance.

It was Cherkasova who won the 2018 world gold after Doshu was unable to defend the title she won the previous year after undergoing shoulder surgery. That injury and later knee problems curtailed Doshu's preparations for Tokyo, although the one-year postponement helped her recover somewhat. Still, it was obvious that she was not the same wrestler who won the gold in Rio.

The other third-place match at 68kg also ended in a fall, with Meerim ZHUMANAZAROVA (KGZ) decking Battsetseg SORONZONBOLD (MGL) at 5:06 after building a 10-1 lead. That made Zhumanazarova the first Kyrgyzstan woman in history to win an Olympic medal, albeit because Tynybekova will have to wait until Wednesday to receive hers.

Iran picked up a bronze at Greco 97kg when 2020 Asian champion Mohammadhadi SARAVI (IRI) went on a second-period tear to defeat Arvi SAVOLAINEN (FIN) 9-2.

Tadeusz MICHALIK (POL) won the other 97kg bronze with a 10-0 technical fall over Alex SZOKE (HUN). It was Poland's first medal at Greco-Roman in Olympics in 25 years.

Two-time European champion Rafiq HUSEYNOV (AZE), the 2019 world silver medalist at 82kg, won the other Greco 77kg bronze with a 4-1 victory over Karapet CHALYAN (ARM).

Tynybekova sets up clash with Kawai

In semifinals held earlier in the session, Aisuluu TYNBEKOVA (KGZ) stayed on track to become Kyrgyzstan's first Olympic champion in any sport, but she will face a tough challenge from local rival Yukako KAWAI (JPN) after they both advanced to the women's 62kg final.

Tynybekova, who became her country's first-ever world champion in 2019, put on a technical clinic in disposing of Iryna KOLIADENKO (UKR) by 10-0 technical fall in 3:57.

Tynybekova swept up three single-leg takedowns, then finished up the match with consecutive counter lifts off a Koliadenko takedown attempt.

Kawai had a tougher test but skillfully scraped together a 3-2 victory over Taybe YUSEIN (BUL), avenging a loss to the Bulgarian in the final at the 2018 World Championships.

Yusein took the lead on a steepout and an activity clock point, but Kawai went ahead on criteria with a single-leg takedown at the end of the first period. In the second, she gained an activity clock point then held on to assure herself of at least a silver medal in her Olympic debut.

Not that she would be satisfied with silver. Like the Lorincz brothers, the 2019 world bronze medalist is on a mission with her sister Risako to win golds together at the Olympics. Risako will begin her quest for a second straight Olympic title on Wednesday at 57kg.

"Tomorrow, my older sister Risako gets started, and I wanted to do what I could to get a good momentum going," Kawai said. "It was a tough match, but I fought believing up to the end that I would definitely win, so it was good."

The clash between Tynybekova and Kawai will be the third since 2019. Tynybekova won the first two before Kawai took their most recent encounter at the 2020 Asian Championships.

In the Greco 67kg semifinals, world U-23 and Asian champion Mohammedreza GERAEI (IRI), the younger brother of Mohammadali, assured there would be an Olympic medal taken back to their family home when he posted a 6-1 victory over Ramaz ZOIZDE (GEO).

Zoizde had gotten the day's competition off to a rousing start by knocking off Rio 2016 champion Ismael BORRERO (CUB) in the first round, but fell into a 4-1 hole against Gerai when he was dealt a 2-point penalty for leg-grabbing and lost a further point with an unsuccessful challenge.

"I came here for the gold medal," Gerai said. "All of my competitors are so powerful, but if you want to get the gold medal, it's not important how good the competitors are. I have a plan for all of them."

"I was so sad for my brother who was defeated last night, because we thought that he would be in the final. But we are separate, I have my own goals."

The clash was a rematch of the 2019 world U-23 quarterfinals, which Zoizde led 5-2 with a minute to go, only to have Gerai throw him onto his back with a back suplex. That knocked the fight out of the Georgian and he conceded a fall.

In the final, Gerai will face 2018 world junior bronze medalist Parviz NASIBOV (UKR), who pulled a rabbit out of his hat in rallying to defeat Mohammed ELSAYED (EGY) 7-6.

Elsayed, who was looking to become just the third Olympic wrestling champion in Egyptian history, scored with a big 4-point throw in the first period and led 6-0 in the second.

But somehow it all fell apart, as the 22-year-old Nasibov cut the lead with a 4-point move off a scramble. With Elsayed visibly fatigued as he tried to fend off Nasibov, he tried a half-hearted throw that Nasibov easily countered for a takedown that was upheld by challenge and give him the victory.

Looking ahead to the final, Nasibov said, "The Iranian wrestler is really good, he is strong. The one who is stronger and the one who desires more will win the final. I am young, I am excited and I really want it. Tomorrow I'll try to do the same thing I've done today."

Egypt hopes were again shattered in the next match, as Viktor LORINCZ (HUN) joined his brother as a finalist at the Tokyo Olympics by beating Mohamed METWALLY (EGY) 9-2 in the 87kg semifinals.

That set up a rematch of the 2019 world final with champion Zhan BELINIUK (UKR), who defeated Ivan HUKLEK (CRO) 7-1 in the other semifinal.

Lorincz gave up an early takedown and was trailing 2-2 on criteria when he bulled the unheralded Metwally over with a standing pancake for 4. An unsuccessful challenge and 2-point penalty for a head butt finished off Metwally, who can draw satisfaction for having made an Olympic semifinal without ever having even appeared at a World Championships.

Beliniuk, who will be looking to improve on the silver medal he won at the 2016 Rio Olympics, scored a 4-point throw and a 2-point gut wrench out of the par terre in the second period to defeat Huklek, who will attempt to become Croatia's first-ever Olympic wrestling medalist in the bronze-medal match.

"In Rio, I was 25, I was a young guy," Beliniuk said. "Now I have more experience. I am not getting younger, but I prepared for this competition very well."

Day 3 Results

Greco-Roman

67kg

SF1 - Mohammedreza GERAEI (IRI) *df.* Ramaz ZOIZDE (GEO), 6-1
SF2 - Parviz NASIBOV (UKR) *df.* Mohammed ELSAYED (EGY), 7-6

77kg

GOLD - Tamas LORINCZ (HUN) *df.* Akzhol MAKHMUDOV (KGZ), 2-1

BRONZE - Shohei YABIKU (JPN) *df.* Mohammadali GERAEI (IRI) by TF, 13-3, 5:54
BRONZE - Rafiq HUSEYNOV (AZE) *df.* Karapet CHALYAN (ARM), 4-1

87kg

SF1 - Viktor LORINCZ (HUN) *df.* Mohamed METWALLY (EGY), 9-2
SF2 - Zhan BELINIUK (UKR) *df.* Ivan HUKLEK (CRO), 7-1

97kg

GOLD - Musa EVLOEV (ROC) *df.* Artur ALEKSANYAN (ARM), 5-1

BRONZE - Tadeusz MICHALIK (POL) *df.* Alex SZOKE (HUN) by TF, 10-0, 1:53
BRONZE - Mohammadhadi SARAVI (IRI) *df.* Arvi SAVOLAINEN (FIN), 9-2

Women's Wrestling

62kg

SF1 - Aisuluu TYNBEKOVA (KGZ) *df.* Iryna KOLIADENKO (UKR) by TF, 10-0, 3:57
SF2 - Yukako KAWAI (JPN) *df.* Taybe YUSEIN (BUL), 3-2

68kg

GOLD - Tamyra MENSAH STOCK (USA) *df.* Blessing OBORUDUDU (NGR), 4-1

BRONZE - Alla CHERKASOVA (UKR) *df.* Sara DOSHO (JPN) by Fall, 2:33 (2-0)
BRONZE - Meerim ZHUMANAZAROVA (KGZ) *df.* Battsetseg SORONZONBOLD (MGL) by Fall, 5:06 (10-1)

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