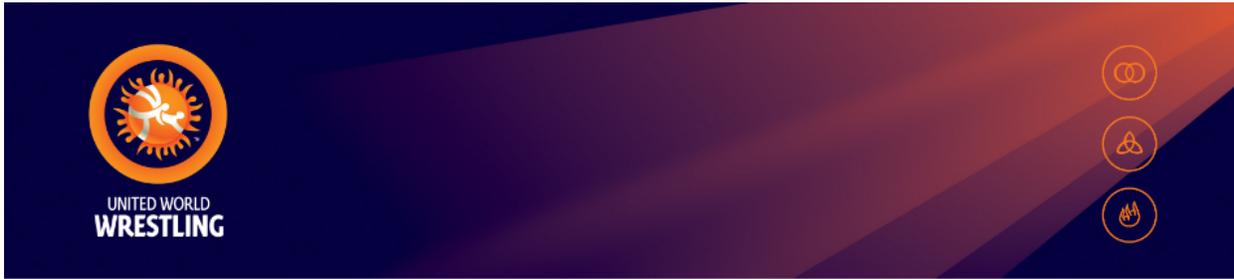


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#WrestleOslo: Ciobanu Gives Moldova 1st-Ever World Greco Gold; Iran Takes 2

By Ken Marantz

OSLO, Norway (October 9) -- Victor CIOBANU (MDA) got off another of his flashy big-point throws, and this one helped make the dynamo the first world Greco-Roman champion in Moldova history -- while preventing another former Soviet republic from getting its first.

Ciobanu scraped together a 9-3 victory over Zholaman SHARSHENBEKOV (KGZ) in the 60kg final at the World Championships in Oslo on Saturday night, giving himself a belated birthday present of an elusive world title.

"This gold medal means a lot to me and to my coach, because I never had a world gold medal, nor did he," said Ciobanu, who turned 29 on Thursday. "I have made the dream of both of us come true."

It was also a good day for Iran, which had not had a world Greco champion since 2014 but got two on the eighth day of the competition with victories from Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Mohammadhadi SARAVI (IRI) at 97kg and Aliakbar YOUSOFIAHMADCHALI (IRI) at 130kg.

Ciobanu, one of the most dynamic competitors in the sport, had come close to a title in his five previous trips to the World Championships, coming away with a silver medal from Budapest in 2018.

But in the battle between wrestlers from former Soviet republics mutually seeking a first-ever Greco champion, he put together a near-flawless performance to make it to the top of the podium at last.

The final was a rematch of his quarterfinal clash with Sharshenbekov at the Tokyo Olympics, which Ciobanu won by 9-0 technical fall. His victory on Saturday was not as one-sided, but he never seemed in danger, even after spotting the 2018 world 55kg silver medalist a 3-0 first-period lead.

"I knew that the final match would be tough, because we wrestled each other at the Olympics," Ciobanu said. "I know he is a great wrestler, he is younger than me, I respect him a lot. Wrestling is wrestling, but it's important to remain human. I am thankful to him for that amazing match."

In the second period, Ciobanu took advantage of his first chance in the par terre position by letting rip a 4-point reverse lift. It wasn't as spectacular as his 5-point head-over-heels throw in his semifinal victory against Gevorg GHARIBYAN (ARM), but it got the job done.

A 2-point penalty for a head butt and unsuccessful challenge point increased Ciobanu's lead to 8-3, before he topped off the scoring with a stepout.

For Ciobanu, who finished out of the medals at the 2019 World Championships in Nursultan, the victory makes up for his loss in the 2018 final to Sergey EMELIN (RUS).

"I was in a hurry in the last world final, that was my mistake," he said. "Emelin is a strong wrestler as well. Now I feel I am stronger. He represents the Russian Wrestling Federation team, it's always difficult to compete against them. I respect him a lot. I have a lot of friends in the Russian team. They respect me as well."

At 130kg, Yousofiahmadchali became Iran's first-ever world champion in the heaviest Greco weight class when he wore down Zurabi GEDEKHAURI (RWF), scoring four stepouts in a 5-1 victory.

"It's like a party in my hometown and my mother is the happiest right now so I am thankful that I could make her happy," Yousofiahmadchali said. "I can't believe I am the first and I dedicate this to the people of Iran."

The win came just over a month after Yousofiahmadchali defeated 2021 European bronze medalist Gedekhuri 10-2 at the Gedza Memorial tournament in Serbia, and continues a hot streak the Iranian has been on for the past two years.

In 2019, Yousofiahmadchali won world junior and U23 titles, as well as the Asian junior, and this year won his first Asian senior crown.

The Georgian-born Gedekhuri, who beat Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Iakobi KAJAJIA (GEO) in the semifinals, came away with a silver medal in his first appearance at a World Championships at age 27.

A short time before Yousofiahmadchali's victory, Saravi knocked off Alex SZOKE (HUN) 3-1 in the 97kg final to give Iran its first world Greco gold since Hamid SOURIAN (IRI) won at 59kg in 2014 in Tashkent.

"I am proud to make the people of Iran proud and dedicate this medal to them," Saravi said. "I was expecting this medal in the Olympics but could not get it, so this meant something special here."

Saravi, a 2019 world U23 bronze medalist and 2019 world junior champion, scored with a gut wrench from the par terre in the first period to go up 3-0, then kept from being rolled himself when Szoke gained the top position and a passivity point in the second.

The two had previously met in the quarterfinals at the 2018 World Junior Championships, which Saravi won 6-1 en route to the gold. They were in opposite brackets in Tokyo, where Szoke finished fifth.

"I have achieved everything because of the support of the Iran people, so if that continues, I can win it in the Olympics," Saravi said.

In the bronze-medal matches, Oskar MARVIK (NOR) sent the home crowd into a frenzy, giving it what had been waiting for all week when he defeated Yasmani ACOSTA (CHI) 1-1 at 130kg.

Marvik, a two-time European U23 bronze medalist, won on last-point criteria after both gave up passivity points as the two spent the majority of the match chest-to-chest, powering forward like bison fighting for territory.

"It's incredible," Marvik said. "It's like a dream come true. It was a difficult time with COVID before the Olympic qualifications. To end the season like this at home court. It's amazing."

"I was nervous but I got inspired by the captain of the team and role model [Stig Andre] BERGE. He used the same tactics to win the bronze in Rio."

The Cuban-born Acosta, who finished fifth at the Tokyo Olympics, had become Chile's first-ever world medalist when he won a bronze in 2017, but was unable to repeat the feat in front of the partisan crowd of his opponent.

Kajaia picked up his second world bronze with a 2-1 win in a physical clash over three-time world junior champion Osman YILDIRIM (TUR) in the other 130kg match.

Both giants received a passivity point and were put in the par terre position, but neither could budge the other. Kajaia had the last-point criteria, and received an additional point for an unsuccessful challenge of an uncalled fleeing.

At 60kg, former world champion Stepan MARYANYAN (RWF) picked up his fourth straight world medal when he made the most of his shot at par terre to defeat 2020 European champion Gevorg GHARIBYAN (ARM) 3-1.

The veteran Maryanyan, the 2019 European champion at 63kg, executed a classic gut wrench in the second period, and that was all he needed to add the bronze to his bronze in 2017, gold in 2018 and silver in 2019.

Murad MAMMADOV (AZE) wasn't able to convert in two tries at par terre, but the two passivity points he received as the aggressor gave him the second 60kg bronze with a 2-0 victory over Maksim KAZHARSKI (BLR).

Kazharski, a 2018 world U23 bronze medalist, squandered his lone chance at par terre late in the match, when he failed to position his hands correctly and the referee put the wrestlers back on their feet.

The win was a repeat of Mammadov's 3-0 victory over Kazharski in the quarterfinals of the 2018 European Championships, where he went on to win the silver medal. He added the world U23 bronze that year, as well.

At 97kg, Artur SARGSIAN (RWF) filled in admirably for missing Olympic champion Musa EVLOEV (RWF), hitting a 5-point throw off the par terre to take his first senior world medal with a 6-1 victory over Nikoloz KAKHELASHVILI (ITA).

Sargsian, the 2021 European U23 champion and a two-time world junior medalist, denied the Georgian-born Kakhelashvili from becoming the first Italian world medalist since 1987.

Kakhelashvili, who began competing for Italy in 2018, was the European silver medalist in 2020 and bronze medalist this year.

The United States got its lone Greco medal after a strong showing from its freestyle team when G'Angelo HANCOCK (USA) won by injury default over Peter OEHLER (GER) for the other 97kg bronze.

Hancock, who placed seventh at the Tokyo Olympics, had dominated the match and was leading 3-0 when Oehler rolled his ankle as the American executed an arm drag to a takedown. He could not continue, ending the match at 3:34.

Meanwhile, the Russian Wrestling Federation team has already clinched the Greco team title with 130 points going into the final day, when the last three titles will be decided. The next two places are also set, with Iran second with 96 points and Azerbaijan third with 87.

Day 8 Results

Greco-Roman

60kg (19 entries)

GOLD: Victor CIOBANU (MDA) df. Zholaman SHARSHENBEKOV (KGZ), 9-3

BRONZE: Stepan MARYANYAN (RWF) df. Gevorg GHARIBYAN (ARM), 3-1

BRONZE: Murad MAMMADOV (AZE) df. Maksim KAZHARSKI (BLR), 2-0

63kg (21 entries)

Semifinal: Leni ABULADZE (GEO) df. Erik TORBA (HUN), 7-1

Semifinal: Meysam DALKHANI (IRI) df. Taleh MAMMADOV (AZE) by TF, 9-0, 1:47

67kg (27 entries)

Semifinal: Mohammadreza GERAEI (IRI) df. Ramaz ZOIDZE (GEO), 7-6

Semifinal: Nazir ABDULLAEV (RWF) df. Almat KEBISPAYEV (KAZ), 10-5

87kg (25 entries)

Semifinal: Zurabi DATUNASHVILI (SRB) df. Turpan BISULTANOV (DEN), 5-1

Semifinal: Kiryl MASKEVICH (BLR) df. Istvan TAKACS (HUN) by Fall, 5:42 (10-6)

97kg (27 entries)

GOLD: Mohammadhadi SARAVI (IRI) df. Alex SZOKE (HUN), 3-1

BRONZE: Artur SARGSIAN (RWF) df. Nikoloz KAKHELASHVILI (ITA), 6-1

BRONZE: G'Angelo HANCOCK (USA) df. Peter OEHLER (GER) by Inj. Def., 3:32 (3-0)

130kg (22 entries)

GOLD: Aliakbar YOUSOFIAHMADCHALI (IRI) df. Zurabi GEDEKHAURI (RWF), 5-1

BRONZE: Iakobi KAJAJIA (GEO) df. Osman YILDIRIM (TUR), 2-1

BRONZE: Oskar MARVIK (NOR) df. Yasmani ACOSTA (CHI), 1-1

United World Wrestling is the international governing body of wrestling and is headquartered in Corsier-Sur-Vevy, Switzerland. To learn more about United World Wrestling and the activities of its 179 national federations, please visit: www.uww.org, [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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