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WFDF 2017 World Team Disc Golf Championships

Essex University, Colchester, GBR - August 23-26.

Canada take Gold Medal at World Team Disc Golf Championships

Gold

Canada

Gold!

Four days of intense Disc Golf on the University Campus saw the World title come down to the last putt on the last hole of the Championships with the title still up for grabs. Anne Kettunen from Finland had a tough but makable 10 metre bird putt on the 18th green to put pressure on Canadian Kristy Lee to make her putt as well. One down with only the 18th to play the Finnish woman drove the hole and set herself up for a tie which would have given Finland the match - but a close miss, a lay up by Lee and with the whole match drawn on points the Canadians took the title on countback to their Doubles results.

The climax of this event summed up the whole tournament. From Day 1 there were exciting games, surprise results and exceptional skill on view. Players did their part but there were also some crucial calls from Captains in team selection for each match in each round.



The world's best disc golf teams get ready to compete at the University of Essex.

Round 1 – Round Robin

Round 1 was a ten team round robin where every game featured 2 singles and 2 doubles matches for the teams of 6. Every game would be matchplay throughout the event. Each game was also played using a different combination of players so each team member had 3 singles and 6 doubles matches - playing with all their team mates in Alternate shot doubles over 9 holes.

With each of the four matches per game worth 2 points - Reigning Champions USA started with a 4-4 draw with hosts Great Britain (GBR). Finland (FIN) then beat France (FRA) 5-3; New Zealand (NZL) took Slovakia (SVK) 7-1; Canada (CAN) lost to an underrated Estonia (EST) 6-2 and Czech Republic (CZE) drew with Croatia (CRO) 4-4. These results did not reflect the final table results until Round 1 was into Game 7 where FIN, EST and CAN became clear favourites moving towards Round 2.



Team Great Britain

EST were the surprise team of the tournament. Coming into the event they were seeded 9th but showed from early on that Disc Golf growth in Estonia had already outstripped the ability of players to be rated correctly - they proved to be much better than expected and gave many teams hard matches and some serious disappointment on the way.

By the end of Round 1 the top three of FIN, EST and CAN were joined by NZL. These would be the teams choosing who to play next. Their opponents would be , in order of finishing, USA who were 5th, GBR, FRA and CZE. SVK and CRO would play out for 9th and 10th place over the next two rounds in Singles and Doubles.

Round 2 – Quarter Finals

In WFDF tradition and style the top seeds were given first choice for Round 2 from teams placed 5 to 8. FIN chose CZE, EST then picked GBR after beating them 7-1 in the pool match, CAN chose USA leaving NZL to play FRA.

By the end of Day 3 and end of Round 2 the tension and excitement really did get cranked up. There were comfortable wins for Finland and Canada - both 6-2 victors over Czech Republic and reigning champions USA respectively but the other two matches produced controversy and excitement to the last.

Round 2 was Tough Shot Doubles and 2 Single Matchplay games with the Masters and Juniors in the Singles. The Doubles were the third seeded Open player and the Woman player; the other being the top two Open players. Tough shot is where opponents choose the worst of two shots for players to complete next - but when a hole is complete by holing out the hole is over.

New Zealand eventually won their match against France on the last hole when a lost disc call was made on Hole 12 when the scores for the overall match could have gone either way; NZL running out winners 5-3 to a very unlucky FRA.



Kari Vesala - Masters Division player for Team Finland

the hole and drew the game.

Then Siim Isup and Marion Kull capitalised on mistakes by the British Open players Luton and McDougall on the lake hole and then drained a 15 meter put on Hole 5 to tie the British pair and take the crucial point needed to draw overall 4-4; but with points on the doubles counting as tie breakers Estonia went through to Saturday's semi finals and GBR were resigned to holding their 6th seed.

So, Finland choose who to play between Canada and New Zealand in the semi finals and picked NZL while Estonia were left to play ever improving Canada. These four will be the teams to battle it out for Gold Silver and Bronze. Meanwhile USA chose to play between CZE leaving GBR to pick up FRA in the remaining match to decide 5th to 8th place. Slovakia and Croatia continued their 9th-10th place battle with 6 singles matches - Slovakia currently holding a 5-1 lead but with 12 points at stake in the morning round.

The match between Estonia and GBR was even closer. With GBR up in two matches and tied in another with a few holes to go it looked like a major upset was on the cards.

This was a match between the 2nd and 6th seeds after Round 1 but GBR came out with strong conviction and belief which was turned into results as all the games hit half way. With just two holes to go the MPO3 and FPO pairing of Jon Tweed and Sophie Southgate were still in with a chance but the Lake Hole at Essex proved a turning point for them and the whole team. MPM singles player Del Robins had already taken his match to notch up the first 2 points for GBR. MPO1 and MPO2 James Luton and Ian McDougall were 2 up with two to play going to the Lake. And MJ1 Declan Bransby was one up with one to play on the same tee.

Estonia were not to be beaten though - and Teemu Pikka drove the Lake well to the right leaving an easy but long upshot to the basket. Bransby undercooked his drive and ended in the rough leaving a difficult up shot which caught the trees coming in. Pike took

Round 3 – Semi Finals

Saturday morning saw the semi-final matches decided and all other teams play their final games of the event. Each team now chose their singles and doubles pairings (Best Shot this time) and went out to finish as high as possible in the final table. In the 5 to 8 slots the major result was CZE overturning the USA 6-2 relegating them to 8th place - however GBR also played really well to hand out a 6-2 drubbing of FRA to secure their 6th place finish.

In the semis Finland beat NZL comfortably with a 6-2 win and Canada beat Estonia 5-3. This was a tight game though with three of the matches going to hole 18 and ending as a draw. It was Hector Daikow's victory of 5 and 4 against Ralf Rogov that clinched it for the Canadians with close calls in all three other matches. Having already lost to Estonia in Round 1 the Canadian Captain, Craig Shearing, knew he had to field his strongest team and with the doubles scores counting first in a tie break situation he relied heavily on the pairing of Dave Ross and Chris Hartmann to match the MPO 1 EST player Siim Isup and Master Viljare Rebane. In a very close match it came down to the last putt and Dave Ross sunk it from 40' - just one of his outstanding putts over the whole tournament.

Round 4 – Finals

In the afternoon the medal matches were the only ones on the course. And all matches were worth following! NZL were up against EST for Bronze and the Gold medal match was FIN v CAN. Both ended in 4-4 draws and had to be separated by count back to the doubles results. NZL won the womens singles with Hayley Flintoff beating Anni Eesmaa 2 and 1 despite a spirited comeback from Eesmaa who was 4 down after only 12 holes. EST then won the MPO 1 match - Siim Isup taking Jackson Sullivan 2 up after 17 holes. Isup was 2 up after 4 holes and despite an immediate comeback by Sullivan, Isup re-established his lead and held it at +2 for the next 7 holes to take the match. In the MPO doubles NZL Captain Simon Feasey and Paul Child went down 3 and 2 to Kull and Rogov so the Master and Junior pairing of EST had to win or draw to take the match or NZL had to win by more than 3 holes. The Kiwi pairing of Van Vliet and Junior Weil-Lake took the match with an impressive 6 and 4 win over the Estonian pair of Rebane and Pikka and gave New Zealand the Bronze medal.

The Gold Medal match saw Round 1 first place winners Finland against third placed Canada. The Doubles matches returned to Alternate shot and this meant that both those games were over as the Singles matches reached halfway. With Masters and Junior pairings coming together again Canadian Captain Shearing put Dave Ross in with Brett Hislop but they were up against the strongest individual payer in the whole tournament in Finnish Junior Mikael Hakala. In the 11 matches he had played to this point he had won 9 and drawn 2 and he was not to be beaten here either. Despite winning the first hole the Canadians never led again and though they came back from 4 down after 8 holes and eventually lost 2 down Ari Penttala and Hakala proved to be the stronger pair.

The other Doubles match almost mirrored the first - but in reverse. The 2nd and 3rd Open seeded players in each team tied the first four holes, but after that Daikon and Hartmann hit birdie after birdie to go four up after 11 holes. Despite Finnish Captain Tapani Aulu and veteran Kari Vesala's best efforts the Canadians then played out the match to win 4 and 3.

So with 2 points apiece, but with Canada having a better Doubles score on count back, all came down to the Singles matches. All the Doubles players joined the gallery and the tension increased as everyone became aware that it would probably come down to the Women's singles to decide the Gold medal place. In the match up of 1st seeded Open players Juho Parvianen started by losing hole 1 to Chris Alden. He had tied up the game by Hole 3 and then led from Hole 4 to the end of the match. Parvianen was the highest rated individual player at the Championships and his class was apparent in this final match - winning 3 and 2 and leaving his team mate Anne Kettunen to be the only game left on the course - to decide the World Championships.



Erik Wendland from the winning Team Canada drives on hole 11

With Finland already on 4 points and Canada on 2 - but with a better advantage in the Doubles - Kettunen had to win or draw her match against Kirsty Lee for Finland to be Champions. With four holes to go she was 1 up on Lee who then birdied the 15th to tie the match. The 16th was also tied though both women had chances to lead. On the tee of the 17th the gallery appeared more nervous than the players and both drives produced potable chances - both in the clear - with Lee

slightly closer to the basket. Kettunen rimmed out and Lee sank her putt to go 1 up with one to play. All to the 18th where both women drove well - Kettunen's drive passing the basket at chain height. But with a longer return putt and up first she missed - allowing Lee to lay up, draw the hole, take the game and for Canada to be World Champions.

This was an exceptional Championships - the weather was kind, play was at a staggeringly high level, team spirit was measurable, camaraderie was on display in all aspects of the event and it was highly competitive. As one of the Canadian team said "Amazingly close competition and I really don't think anybody would have been surprised with any of the final 4 teams winning".

Charlie Mead, WFDF Disc Golf Chair and Technical Director for the Championships was asked for this immediate thoughts: "The future for Team Disc Golf has been enhanced by this event. The way that Teams and Players have thrown themselves into the format and schedule and appreciated the difference between stroke play and matchplay, team play and individual play has been enlightening for all. We knew that there were many WFDF member countries that were not able to come to this event this year and we hope that the response from the countries that did attend will encourage them to compete the next time the event is held in 2019.

I would also like to thank all Captains of all teams; Tournament Staff, especially TD Nige Williams; University of Essex; and all our sponsors - Disc Zoo, Discraft, DGA and VCU for all their help and support in making this a truly world class Disc Golf Championships."

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