



INTERNATIONAL WUSHU FEDERATION
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IWUF 13th World Wushu Championships – Jakarta, Indonesia



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From November 13-18, 2015 the wushu community was transfixed by the power and beauty of the world's premier taolu and sanda competition at the 13th World Wushu Championships in Jakarta. Nearly 1,000 participants from 73 nations converged on Istora Senayan, the lively venue nestled in the Indonesian capital, to attend what has become IWUF's standout signature biennial event -- and the most highly anticipated week of wushu in the world. Those who couldn't make the trip didn't have to miss a minute of action as every event was streamed live online on WushuTV,

the vibrant new home of IWUF's exclusive wushu video content. Through this newly debuted platform, audiences around the globe became connected as one community, sharing the very best that wushu has to offer.



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In the end, 34 countries took home a total of 167 medals from the Championships, and China, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Hong Kong and Malaysia emerged topping the medal chart. Charismatic Indonesian wushu stars Lindswell and Charles Sutanto both proudly won double golds -- and the hearts of the audience -- amidst cheers of an enthusiastic arena. Iran's sanda powerhouse rocked the leitai with a near-sweep of 6 sanda golds.



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Jet Li Attends Opening Ceremony

Jet Li added a burst of star power and a special wushu synergy to the event, making it unlike any previous World Championships. He arrived the day of the opening ceremony, and as word spread anticipation ran high. Athletes gathered at the Jakarta Convention Center and when Li made his electrifying entrance hundreds of camera phones began to click madly. Li, IWUF VIPs, and the audience were treated to a spectacular opening ceremony of Indonesian music and dance. Then wushu's most famous star came onstage to give a rousing speech. "We have a dream to be pursued," he stated powerfully to the rapt athletes at the ceremony, and expressed the wish that wushu would become an Olympic sport. "Hopefully," he said, "wushu can enter the Olympics. With wushu we can get to know the power of self and culture."



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After receiving an IWUF lifetime achievement award Jet Li, President Yu Zaiqing, IWA President Supandi Kusuma, Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, and Indonesian Olympic Committee Chairman Erick Thohir cut the ceremonial cake to celebrate the championships. Then, the 13th Wushu World Championships was officially opened by Li and Minister of Youth and Sports Imam Nahrawi, who together rang the lucky gong three times.

The Championships Begin

The atmosphere was thick with excitement and nerves on Saturday morning as athletes, coaches and officials made last minute preparations for the first session due to start that afternoon. The tournament couldn't have begun on a higher note as the crowd, which consisted of many local wushu enthusiasts, got what they came for as Indonesia's two biggest stars -- Lindswell and Charles Sutanto -- both picked up gold medals. It was also the first sighting of Russia's sanda king, Muslim Salikhov, who wowed his adoring fans with a dazzling six-second knock out of his Australian opponent.

Live Broadcast on WushuTV

Energy was high, and the Istora Senayan was abuzz. For the first time, athletes were being broadcast live around the world on IWUF's new digital channel WushuTV (worldwushu.tv). Television cameras were focused on two taolu rings and the sanda leitai, and professional commentators and wushu experts were providing commentary to every event. More than ever, the WWC flew instantly around the world on Instagram and Facebook, and thousands of viewers tuned in to the live broadcast at all hours to watch their family, friends and wushu heroes compete.

Jet Li and Indonesia's Golden Girl

As the afternoon session ended, the audience didn't budge -- Jet Li was in the house, about to give out the first gold medal of the event. A beaming Lindswell stepped up to the top of the podium to receive her top award for taijiquan; her competitors -- Hong Kong's silver medalist Chen Suijin and Malaysia's bronze winner Ng Shin Yee -- also reveled in the moment (and frenzied photo op).



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Journalists from the world's premier news wire agencies – Associated Press, Reuters, AFP – sent wushu images all over the globe, and international viewers were transfixed by the live broadcast, some in the middle of the night. As the Indonesian flag rose, crowds in the stands sang along to their national anthem "Indonesia Raya." It couldn't have been a more jubilant opening to this thrilling wushu event.

Following the ceremony Lindswell talked to WushuTV, and when asked how she felt, replied, "It feels great! It's the first medal for Indonesia. My friend and teammate also got the gold medal, so we are very happy. It means a lot that the World Championships are in Indonesia. It's really been motivating us. And we are lucky to have the opportunity. With Jet Li coming here, a lot of his fans can begin to know what is wushu really, and they will get more interested in it now. I hope this brings a positive energy to the country for wushu. To get the gold medal from Jet Li – it was awesome!"

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Showtime on the Taolu Carpet

Day two belonged to China as their razor-sharp athletes took home four of the eight taolu medals on offer that morning and afternoon. The majestic Sun Peiyuan enthralled the spectators with his breathtaking Changquan routine, while on the women's side Lai Xiaoxiao announced herself to the international wushu world with gold in qiangshu.

Lai told us afterwards, "I feel so excited, and this is the first time to take part in the international competition. I want to say thank you for everything, for my teacher, for my friends. I think this is my best performance and I just want to say that it's time to show the world who I am. I want to enjoy the performance. I don't think of it as competition – just showtime."



Elsewhere on the taolu carpet, Lindswell won her second gold and Vladimir Maksimov burst onto the scene with the first of his two gold medals in the men's gunshu. It was a momentous day for Egypt as history was made when Amir Abdeltawab claimed the nation's first taolu gold ever, in the men's dadao. It was also the first World Championships for the new Egyptian star, who we expect to see more of in future events.



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The final taolu event of the day drew in a large crowd as the fiercely-contested women's shuangjian unfolded. Seasoned star Daria Tarasova looked like the favorite to take the top spot but settled for bronze after two dynamic performances from Hong Kong's Zheng Tianhui and Turkey's Elif Akyüz. Wearing her silver medal, Akyüz described her feelings. "I'm happy because I got the silver medal," she noted, smiling, "but I hoped I would take the gold medal. When I play shuangjian my soul is feeling so good, it's like an aura, a spirit. I like the new events. I do hope to take the gold medal next time."

Day two also saw a full slate of sanda, with the women's competition getting under way. There were no surprises with all the favorites progressing to the next round in their respective weight classes. Notable victories came from China's Liu Ling Ling in the women's 56kg and Iran's Mohsen Mohammad Seifi in the men's 70kg.

Gold Medal Firsts, and Tears

Day three told a dramatic story of its own, with more of historic firsts, as countries which had never won a gold medal at a World Championships finally saw the top of the podium. Australia broke into jubilant cheers when athlete Elizabeth Lim won her country's first gold in the women's compulsory nanquan. After her victory she told us, "It's amazing, it's the first time Australia's won a gold medal. I'm just proud that I was able to do that for the team, and the country. This gold really shows the direction of where we're going and all our hard work, in terms of our training and our dedication, and our passion for wushu is going the right way. Wushu in our country is not a professional sport -- we're all professionals in something else, or students, and we train in wushu just because we have the passion for it. So being able to train hard, and work hard, and dedicate the time, as well as all my teammates, and coaches, towards this has been amazing."

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Another high note sounded not long after, when seasoned athlete Tania Sakanaka won Brazil's first ever taolu gold medal in the women's baguazhang. Needless to say, an ebullient Brazilian crowd burst into celebration when her name and score came up on top on the board, and Sakanaka had a tearful, emotional moment when her flag rose above the arena and her national anthem was played.

"Ah," she smiled, near tears again after the ceremony, "It's really good, I'm just happy about it. I think everybody who represents Brazil, everybody who represents their country, you see the flag and you hear the national anthem being played, and its really good. I think every athlete goes through this. There's so much work behind every performance that you do, it just comes out in different ways."

Vladimir Maksimov continued to impress as he won his second gold, this time in the men's daoshu event. Maksimov's double gold made Russian spirits soar high, and it augured well for more of the team's medals to come. Beaming as he descended the top podium, he told WushuTV, "I almost don't believe in this moment, because I've been working towards this for a long time."

The day's sanda action was one for the books as the pumped-up crowd bore witness to a feast of knockouts and tactical victories. The results once again largely went according to expectation, but by the end of the afternoon anticipation of the sanda finals was in the air.



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Hometown Heroes

The final, fourth day of taolu did not disappoint. The host country Indonesia firmly put their stamp on the championships as they claimed three of Wednesday's 11 gold medals. Local boy Charles Sutanto won the men's qiangshu -- confirming that he came away from the championships with two gold medals -- and compatriot Juwita Niza Wasni won back-to-back golds in the women's nangun and nandao events. The playing of Indonesia's national anthem during the medal awarding ceremony was a sight – and sound -- to behold as the many local wushu fans in attendance sang along with deep emotion. Malaysia also celebrated Jack Loh's compulsory taijiquan gold medal, and a gracious Loh remarked to WushuTV, "I'm very happy, because this was my first gold ever in World Championships. We didn't expect the gold, we just tried to do our best. It means a lot to Malaysia, and I want to thank the National Sport Council of Malaysia, the Wushu Federation of Malaysia, and also thanks to my family, my coaches and my friends who are always supporting me and have my back."

As the action intensified, the women's gunshu competition escalated into a real nail-biter. After many impressive scores were set by the initial performers, the final three athletes stole the show, and the medals, as Xiaoling Geng (China), and Russian teammates Daria Tarasova and Sandra Konstantinova finished first, second and third respectively, separated only by 0.3 points. Konstantinova had earlier won the gold medal in compulsory changquan, so another medal was sweet icing on the cake. Needless to say, wushu's popular and ever-charming heroine Daria Tarasova revved up the cheering crowd with her stylish and powerful performance.

The finale of any championships always displays spectacular thrills with the audience's favorite event of duilian, and Jakarta was no exception. Technical skill, power and ferocity was played out in the dazzling women's duels of the Hong Kong, Malaysia and USA teams who took gold, silver and bronze respectively. Competition was cutthroat in the men's event, with wonderful performances from France, Canada, Uzbekistan, Korea and Thailand, but it was much-loved seasoned teams from Iran and Ukraine who snatched silver and bronze; gold went to China's Long Long Shi and Xiao Long Wu after their lethally dramatic barehand-spear performance, full of speed and precision, brought down the house.



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Sanda Finals Rock Jakarta

Arriving at the venue on the final day of the championships the fighters' warmup room was filled with the electric energy and tension of the sanda elite. The morning session played host to the men's semi-finals which were brutally but fairly contested between some of the heavyweights of the sport. Keen eyes were on 80kg Gao Fengfu of China as he progressed as the challenger to Muslim Salikhov for the afternoon session. Ukraine's Dmytro Batok was facing a similar challenge as he advanced to the final in the men's 85kg category, where he would meet heavily favoured Amir Fazli of Iran.

The dining rooms were abuzz with low murmurs as athletes from all countries discussed the afternoon's impending sanda finals over lunch. At the arena, once the action got under way there was no silencing the raucous crowd who had come to see the best sanda athletes in the world compete for gold and glory. National teams drew close together in the stands to cheer on their teammates, and even the VIP box was full, with IWUF President Yu, Executive Board members, and other special guests in attendance.



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The women's finals were dominated by China and Iran as each nation fought hard to take three titles each; the only other gold medal went to the Philippine's lively heroine Divine Wally in the 48kg category. The Chinese and Iranian athletes were both strong and technically gifted. A particularly standout match came from Shahrbano Mansourian who faced a tough Filipino opponent in Hergie Bacyadan, but the Iranian's iron discipline, lightning fast kicks and stylish techniques ultimately put her over the top.

Following the women's sanda action, anticipation rose for the men's sanda finals. Between shouts of "Iran... Iran... Iran..." and "Zhongguo dui, Jiayou" (Team China, Come on) the venue was alive with energy. These 11 fights would feature five Chinese and three Iranian athletes as the overall medals standing race reached a crescendo. The Russian presence also brought much expectation, and the beautiful fighting techniques that characterize Russian sanda, to the lei tai.

China came away from the afternoon session with four men's golds. Iran's near perfect sweep – with three golds and one bronze – once again displayed its masterful dominance in the sport. Top Iranian champion Hamid Reza Gholipour would defeat his opponent Illia Varchenia from Belarus to win his fourth gold World Championships medal. The Indonesian audience went crazy when 56Kg Yusef Widiyanto took home his nation's only sanda gold, and Egypt reveled in their second golden moment of the Championships when 90Kg Motaz Abdelsalam slugged his way to victory.

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A Legend Returns

China's only loss came from the great and indomitable Muslim Salikhov, an athlete beloved by young fans who crowd around for photos and his toughest international competitors alike. This was a story of redemption, for two years ago in Kuala Lumpur the top of the podium had eluded Salikhov and his quest for a fifth gold sanda medal. As soon as he leaped onto the leitai the spectators united behind their hero as they chanted "Muslim...Muslim...Muslim."



Salikhov and Gao fought a tight encounter but the Russian champion showed the audience just how he earned his "King of Sanda" moniker over the past decade; quick as a cat he dodged jabs and eluded kicks, and his masterful, signature throws were on full display. He won the match in two rounds on points, raised a gloved fist in victory, and ever the consummate sportsman, hugged his opponent and coaches.

Right off the leitai, the 31-year-old Salikhov gave his first interview to WushuTV's cameras. "I'm happy," he exclaimed, still a little breathless, but smiling, "it's my fifth gold medal and it's the best. I had more motivation for this final fight because -- I must win. My fifth gold medal is my dream. I lost the last final in Malaysia and I had wanted to retire then, but I had to come back to one more World Championships to take this title. Everybody is cheering me on here, and it gives me 20 times the power to win." With his legend now complete, Salikhov hugged his fellow sanda brothers on the podium wearing that fifth gold medal, and posed for dozens of pictures with his fans, smiling for each and every one.



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Farewell Jakarta, Hello Kazan

With the last sanda medal awards the tournament came to a close but the festivities were far from over. The closing ceremony was a joyful photo frenzy, as friends new and old from many different countries hugged and posed for selfies and group shots, and young wushu fans sought autographs from international stars like Tarasova and Lindswell. IWUF President Yu Zaiqing officially closed the tournament with a lively and inspiring speech, and handed over the ceremonial flag to Russia's Daria Tarasova, signaling the end of Jakarta's championships, and the beginning of Kazan's.

The event's host, the Indonesia Wushu Association, offered outstanding hospitality and impressive organization throughout the event. As wushu progresses steadily towards Olympic inclusion, it's deeply gratifying to see the level of competition continually rising, and the standards of the sport increasing apace.

While the steady grassroots promotion by IWUF's 147 member IFs remains the bedrock of wushu's growth around the world,

other factors also contribute to the recent synergy of the sport's development; these include IWUF President Yu Zaiqing's close work with the IOC, a professional management team, the Federation's burgeoning Solidarity Program, steady improvement to events by IWUF Technical and Events management, a dedicated push to engage youth through targeted social media campaigns, a WADA-compliant anti-doping committee, and the global outreach of the OTT platform WushuTV.

After a busy week of Championships that also included overseeing the IWUF Congress, Executive Board elections and Executive Board meetings, President Yu stated, "I am truly pleased that we have so much positive feedback from this Championships on so many levels – from the harmonious success of the IWUF Congress, to the high level of athletes participating, the fine judging, and smooth registration. I commend Indonesian Organizing Committee for their excellent collaboration to make all parts of the event successful, both behind the scenes and on the arena floor. I also acknowledge with gratitude the investment of the LOC and the many resources they provided for us."



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*Did you miss any action of the 13th World Wushu Championships? Not to worry – **every event**, taolu and sanda, is archived and on demand at IWUF's premier place for wushu, WushuTV. Find it at: worldwushu.tv. And stay tuned for more great wushu in 2016, from new state-of-the art instructional videos to our exclusive IWUF interview with Jet Li!*



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