



Dressel wins fifth gold as McKeon makes Olympic history

TOKYO: Caeleb Dressel banked two more titles to end his Tokyo campaign with five golds yesterday, as Australia's Emma McKeon became the first female swimmer to win seven medals at a single Olympics. The American machine earned the title of world's fastest swimmer with a lightning 21.07 seconds in the 50m freestyle before helping the US men shatter their own world record in the 4x100m medley relay. "I'm proud of myself, I think I reached what my potential was here at these Games and it was just really fun racing," said Dressel.

The unassuming McKeon was just as impressive, blasting through the 50m in 23.81 to win then spearheading Australia to the women's medley relay honors on the final day of action. It boosted her medal tally to seven — four gold and three bronze — surpassing the six won by East German Kristin Otto (1952) and

American Natalie Coughlin (2008).

McKeon also matched the record for the most decorated female athlete at a single Games ever, tied with Russian gymnast Maria Gorokhovskaya (1952). McKeon snared gold in the 50m and 100m freestyle, 4x100m relay and the medley, along with bronze in the 100m butterfly and two further relays.

"It's very surreal now it's over. It all went by very quickly and I'm very happy with how the meet went," she said. "I look at the athletes that have gone before me and have been so impressed and inspired by what they've done but I've never been into the stats and medal counts. But to be in that kind of company, it's an honor and I know I've worked hard for it."

Like McKeon, Dressel took out the 50-100 free double, but also powered to the 100m butterfly title in world-record time, while adding 4x100m free and

medley relay to thrust himself into rarified company. He joins Americans Michael Phelps, Mark Spitz and Matt Biondi, and Otto, as the only swimmers to win five or more golds in one Games. "I'm giving a pat on the back then put it away and move forward," Dressel said. "I'm going to take a break, I'm pretty over swimming, and enjoy time with my family."

Australia's record tally

Once again the superpowers dominated the nine-day meet, where six world records fell. South African Tajana Schoenmaker joined Dressel with an individual mark when she crushed the long-standing women's 200m breaststroke best. New benchmarks were also set in the women's 4x100m relay (Australia), women's 4x200m relay (China), mixed 4x100 relay (Britain) and by the US in yesterday's men's medley.

While the US again topped the medal table with 30, including 11 gold, second-placed Australia made serious inroads. Among their 20 medals were nine golds — their highest number at an Olympics, and a huge improvement on their three titles in Rio. In contrast, the US underperformed from their 33 medals and 16 golds in Rio, with Dressel and Katie Ledecky doing the heavy lifting.

Both Dressel and McKeon returned for the event-closing relays with Dressel delivering a storming butterfly leg to steer the US to a world-record 3:26.78. It crushed their own global mark of 3:27.28 set at the 2009 world championships, with Adam Peaty's Britain taking silver ahead of Italy.

In the women's relay, McKeon swam the fly for Australia, leaving Cate Campbell to bring them home in an Olympic-record 3:51.60 to upset the American two-time defending champions. Canada were third. "It's a little bit more special being able to get a win from behind, over the Americans," said Campbell, in her fourth Olympics. "It's a dream come true."

Meanwhile, America's Robert Finke overcame fatigue to secure the Olympic distance double by winning the men's 1500m gold medal to go with his 800m title. "I came in not really expecting to get a medal or anything and to come out of it with two golds!" said Finke. — AFP



TOKYO: Britain's Charlotte Worthington competes in the inaugural BMX freestyle women's park final at the Ariake Urban Sports Park during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Britain's Worthington wins inaugural Olympics BMX freestyle gold

TOKYO: Britain's Charlotte Worthington won the inaugural BMX freestyle Olympic title yesterday by landing the first-ever 360 backflip in women's competition. Worthington scored a huge 97.50 points to take the lead and could not be caught, with favorite Hannah Roberts of the United States taking silver (96.10) and Switzerland's Nikita Ducarroz bronze (89.20). The British rider was working full-time in a restaurant just three years ago but found out that BMX freestyle was on the program at the Tokyo Games.

"In 2018 I went to a couple of events and contests and got speaking to people and found out about BMX being in the Olympics, and British cycling putting together a team," she said. "So at the time I was just taking a lot of really cool opportunities that I enjoyed doing, and it just kind of snowballed from there. It was something I found out I was really passionate about, and I really enjoyed it, so I'll never look back at the days of working in a kitchen."

Worthington, 25, said she was proud to pull off the 360 backflip — she fell on her first attempt. "I just had to have faith that it was ingrained in my body with the amount of work that we've been putting into it," she said. "Going out there the second time I was just ready to give it my all again. Once I landed that trick I knew that it was on. I pretty much zoned out for the rest of the run."

Australia's Logan Martin, 27, won the men's competition at Ariake Urban Sports Park with a score of 93.30, finishing ahead of Venezuela's Daniel Dhers (92.05) and Britain's Declan Brooks (90.80). Landing tricks such as a triple opposite tailwhip, 720 barspin and a flair opposite downside tailwhip, the world champion kept his cool on a day when most of his competitors were showing nerves.

"I've had so many highs in my career, but I've never, ever gotten teary, so that just shows how meaningful this one is to me," he said. "It's the biggest stage of them all, the gold medal, to bring that home and show my son. It's amazing." — AFP



TOKYO: USA's Caeleb Dressel celebrates winning to take gold in the final of the men's 100m freestyle swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Five memorable moments from Tokyo Olympics swimming

TOKYO: The Tokyo Olympics swimming ended Sunday with USA on top of the medals table. AFP Sport has compiled five memorable moments:

The Katie-Ariarne show

The Katie Ledecky-Ariarne Titmus rivalry lived up to its billing, with the pair locking horns across three high-quality races. Australia's Titmus drew first blood, topping the decorated American in the 400m freestyle, but she needed the second fastest time ever to do so. She then out-sprinted Ledecky for the 200m title in another lightning-quick effort, before the American earned some revenge.

Ledecky remains the distance queen and not even Titmus could touch her over 800m, admitting her rival was "in a class of her own". Despite already being a three-time Olympian, Ledecky plans to compete at Paris in 2024 and even Los Angeles four years later,

with plenty more twists and turns to come in her developing duel with Titmus.

Dressel dazzler

Powerhouse Caeleb Dressel only added to his celebrity in Tokyo, winning five gold medals to cement himself as the top name in the sport. It wasn't the seven many had touted, which would have put him in the league of Michael Phelps and Mark Spitz, but his exploits were impressive nonetheless. The American, who won two relay golds in Rio, smashed his own world record in the 100m butterfly and was equally dominant in scooping the 50-100 freestyle double. Add in two relay medals and his star is shining brighter than ever.

Nailbiter

Tatjana Schoenmaker announced herself on the Olympic stage in style when she smashed the women's 200m breaststroke world record to claim South Africa's first gold in the pool since 1996. The 24-year-old had already won silver in the 100m and threatened Denmark's Rikke Møller Pedersen's 200m world benchmark in the heats, joking she wished her fingernails were just a bit longer. But Schoenmaker needed no help from a manicurist to clock 2min 18.95sec in the

final and clip 0.16s off Møller Pedersen's record.

History-maker

Emma McKeon came into the Tokyo Olympics well known in her native Australia but not so much elsewhere, but she changed that forever. The 27-year-old splashed her way to an incredible seven medals, four gold and three bronze, a feat no other female swimmer has ever managed at a single Olympics. She called the achievement "surreal" and credited experience for helping her go where no one else has been before. "I've been at these meets before where the emotions are so up and down. I knew what to expect," she said.

Mix-and-match

The debut of the 4x100m mixed medley relay added some much-needed atmosphere to a spectator-free Tokyo Aquatic Centre as men raced against women for the first time at the Olympics. The four-strong British team of Kathleen Dawson, Adam Peaty, James Guy and Anna Hopkin touched in 3min 37.58sec to break the world record of 3:38.41 set by China last year. As an added bonus, Hopkin was far enough ahead in the freestyle leg to fend off a late charge from US speedster Dressel, a fact she revelled in: "It's cool to say I've killed Dressel!" — AFP

Inclusive or unfair? Transgender weightlifter sparks Olympic debate

TOKYO: Transgender weightlifter Laurel Hubbard makes her Olympic debut in Tokyo today, with the New Zealander's historic appearance igniting heated debate on one of sport's most divisive issues. Hubbard was born male and competed as a man before transitioning to become a woman in her 30s, taking up the sport again after meeting the International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines for transgender athletes.

The IOC says she is the first openly transgender woman to compete at the Games, hailing it as a landmark moment for the Olympic movement. "Laurel Hubbard is a woman, is competing under the rules of her federation and we have to pay tribute to her courage and tenacity in competing and qualifying for the Games," IOC medical chief Richard Budgett told reporters in Tokyo. However, her presence in the women's +87kg category on the elite stage raises complex issues of bioethics, human rights, science, fairness and identity in sport. Supporters say her appearance is a victory for inclusion and trans rights. Critics argue she has an unfair advantage over female rivals due to physical attributes locked into her body during her decades as a male.

Debate on the issue is intense and sometimes vitriolic, with barbs flying from both sides online, prompting to New Zealand Olympic Committee's to take steps to shield Hubbard from social media trolls. But the IOC concedes there are legitimate questions about whether Hubbard has — in the jargon-heavy language the sporting body uses to discuss the issue — a "disproportionate competitive advantage".

Searching for 'sweet spot'

Female sporting advocates, including pioneering gay tennis star Martina Navratilova, have expressed concern that including transgender competitors is unfair and threatens to undermine hard-fought gains in lifting the status of women's sport.

"I am happy to address a transgender woman in whatever form she prefers, but I would not be happy to compete against her. It would not be fair," she said. Caitlyn Jenner, who won Olympic gold in the men's decathlon at the 1976 Olympics before coming out as a woman in 2015, declared earlier this year: "It just isn't fair." There are also fears that including trans women in high-impact sports could jeopardize the safety of other competitors, prompting World Rugby to ban them from international competition last year. But some national unions such as New Zealand Rugby have indicated they will allow trans women in grassroots competitions, underlining how opinions are divided on the issue. In making its decision, World Rugby cited scientific studies showing males were around 30 percent stronger than females.

University of Otago physiologist Alison Heather told AFP other male physical advantages included longer limbs and higher muscle mass, as well as a larger heart and greater lung capacity, which increases oxygen flow and endurance. But the IOC's Budgett said it was not as simple as comparing males to females, arguing it was possible trans women experienced a drop in performance when they underwent the process of transition. Budgett said more research was needed, adding: "Consider the fact there have been no openly transgender women at the top level until now (and) I think the threat to women's sport has probably been overstated." — AFP



GOLD COAST: In this file photo taken on April 9, 2018, New Zealand's Laurel Hubbard competes during the women's +90kg weightlifting final at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia. — AFP



TOKYO: France's Mourad Aliev waits outside the ring after losing by disqualification against Britain's Frazer Clarke during their men's super-heavy (over 91kg) quarter-final boxing match during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Kokugikan Arena in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

French boxer stages ringside sit-in protest after Olympic 'injustice'

TOKYO: A French super-heavyweight boxer lashed out at an "injustice" and sat in protest on the side of the ring after he was disqualified for headbutting in the Tokyo Olympics quarter-finals yesterday. In what was the first major controversy in the boxing in the Japanese capital, Mourad Aliev was disqualified in the second round against Britain's Frazer Clarke.

The 26-year-old Aliev sat beside the ring ropes afterwards, seething, and claimed that officials had admitted they had made a mistake. "I sat down to protest against the unfairness for me," he said. "I prepared for these Games for four years... I really wanted to fight against the injustice, so that was my way to show that I don't agree with that decision."

He added: "So the judges went to discuss together

to know what happened. They said that I would have won, however it was already written that I was disqualified so the decision cannot be unmade. It was already too late."

Aliev said that the referee had failed to give him any warning before the bout was called off. "I was just stopped without any warning and they just told me that 'you lost' — just like that," he said. "So I think it was an act of sabotage."

Clarke, who had cuts to both eyes, called the situation "confusing". "The referee made his decision, that's what he's there to do. There's a bunch of great referees and officials here so you know we have to believe in what they do. "I think they've done whatever they deemed to be correct."

Clarke said that he told Aliev "to calm down". "I've been in these situations myself, often you're not thinking with your head, you're thinking with your heart and your emotions are all over the place," he said. Controversial scoring is often a feature of Olympic boxing, but the Rio 2016 competition was marred by especially poor judging and an IOC taskforce took over running the sport at the Tokyo Games to prevent a repeat. — AFP