



# Spain's golden oldie Sanchez Jaime lands karate's historic first Olympic gold

**TOKYO:** Spain's Sandra Sanchez Jaime won the first ever Olympic Games karate gold medal in Tokyo yesterday, becoming her country's oldest ever Olympian at 39 years and 323 days. She ensured her name would be in the sport's history books by beating Japan's Kiyomasa Shimizu in the women's kata final.

Karate was included for the first time on the Olympic program for the pandemic-delayed 2020 Games, but was not included on the menu for Paris 2024. Sanchez Jaime, 39, took the historic title with a higher athletic score than the home favorite and two-time former world champion Shimizu after the two karatekas were all square on 19.60 on the technical score.

The 2018 world champion Sanchez Jaime beamed and raised her arms skywards after the chief judge had walked out to stand between the two finalists, then raising the right arm to signify victory for Sanchez Jaime.

"It is crazy. I am so emotional, I am feeling so many things together. I am happy, but I want to cry," she said. "I think I need more time to believe that this is real. I want to see my kata and make sure it happened, because right now I can't believe it."

Shimizu said she had got "carried away" and lost her usual rhythm but added: "I would like to praise myself that I was able to put my heart and soul into my performance, which is the best I have done recently."

Bronze medals went to Italian Viviana Bottaro and Mo Sheung Grace Lau from Hong Kong. Spain's previous oldest Olympian was Joan Llaneras who won track cycling gold in 2008 aged 39 years and 91 days.

The karate competition is being held at the Nippon Budokan, the venue with the roof fashioned to resemble Mount Fuji. It staged judo at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and two years later was where The Beatles played on their tour of Japan. And Sanchez Jaime remarked: "This was the perfect final, with Shimizu, in Japan, at the Budokan. This really is the best moment. It is amazing." Karate is split into two disciplines: kata, where athletes perform choreographed moves for the judges to score, and kumite, which involves two fighters trying to land blows on each other in bouts of up to three minutes.

Later yesterday, France's Steven Da Costa beat Turkey's Eray Samdan in the men's -67kg kumite final. The part-time employee with SNCF, France's state-run railway company, 24, won 5-0 on the technical score with an ippon and waza-ari.

Da Costa, whose twin brother, older brother and father are all in the family karate 'business', was adding this to his 2018 world championship gold. In the last final of the night Ivet Goranova of Bulgaria beat Ukraine's Anzhelika Terliuga 5-1 to claim women's -55kg kumite gold. —AFP



**TOKYO:** Spain's Sandra Sanchez Jaime poses with her women's kata gold medal in the karate competition of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

## Kuwait karateka compete in Tokyo Olympics today

**TOKYO:** Kuwait's karateka Mohammad Al-Mosawi is due to begin competition at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics at 4:00 am today (Kuwait's time) at the Nippon Budokan martial arts arena. The indoor arena is located in Chiyoda, Tokyo, and was originally built for judo competition of the 1964 summer Olympics in the Japanese capital. Mosawi hopes to advance to the 2nd round as the only Karateka from the Gulf and Arab regions in this competition.

Mosawi is ready for the competition, and is

physically and psychologically fit, coach Aser Pintado said. He benefited from a 10-day training camp in Nihonmatsu city, added Pintado, which contributed to "remarkable improvement" of his skills and performance. e.Pintado said the Kata needed a great focus and accuracy, and the karateka needed to perform physical moves in coordination with the mind. He hoped Mosawi advanced to the second stages.

Mosawi is the last Kuwaiti athlete to compete in Tokyo Olympics. The Kuwait karateka participated in many international championships, including in Portugal and France, as part of preparations for the Tokyo Olympics. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee announced yesterday a reward of KD 30,000 to shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi after winning a bronze medal in Tokyo 2020 Olympics' skeet competition. —KUNA



Mohammad Al-Mosawi

## Paalam one win away from Philippines' first boxing gold

**TOKYO:** Flyweight Carlo Paalam is one victory away from winning a first Olympic gold medal for the Philippines in boxing after his semi-final master-class yesterday in Tokyo. But there is to be no double Filipino gold after compatriot Eumir Marcial was edged out on split points in his middleweight semi.

The Philippines has a proud boxing history and boasts one of the all-time greats in Manny Pacquiao. But the country has never won Olympic boxing gold — Paalam could be the man to change that, even if it is something that the 23-year-old refuses to talk about for now.

"I cannot answer that question now, sorry," he replied, asked by AFP what it would mean to win gold, a first in boxing and only the second ever for the Philippines at the Olympics in any sport. "I have got the final to think about, which will be a tough fight."

Paalam, who sank to his knees and screamed when victory was announced in his semi-final, faces Britain's Galal Yafai in the final tomorrow. At Kokugikan Arena, which is usually home to Japan's national sport, sumo, Paalam outboxed home fighter Ryomei Tanaka in a unanimous points win.

Paalam was ahead on the judges' scorecards after the first two rounds — they are displayed on screens to make the scoring more transparent - and had Japan's Tanaka chasing shadows and missing wildly with his shots at times.

There was disappointment however for Marcial, a narrow loser to Ukraine's Oleksandr Khyzhniak. Marcial, 25, will take home bronze. "We've been dreaming of this since I was young and now I'm



**TOKYO:** Philippines' Carlo Paalam reacts after winning against Japan's Ryomei Tanaka in the men's fly (48-52kg) semi-final boxing match during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Kokugikan Arena in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

here," he said. "I represent the Philippines in the Tokyo Olympics. I win the bronze medal. I'm so proud of myself."

The Philippines have enjoyed a breakthrough in boxing at Olympic level in Tokyo. On Tuesday, Nesthy Petecio had to settle for silver after she was beaten by Japan's Sena Irie in the final of the women's featherweight event. But the 29-year-old still became the first woman from the Philippines to win an Olympic boxing medal.

### 'Olympic gold is crazy'

For Yafai, it was not that long ago that he was handling rubbish and picking up boxes in a car factory. He hated it. Now the Briton is vying for gold in an Olympic boxing final. The 28-year-old, who has two older brothers who are professional boxers, defeated Kazakhstan's Saken Bibossinov in their flyweight semi-final in Tokyo yesterday on split points. Yafai now faces Paalam in tomorrow's title decider and said: "It's the Olympic gold, isn't it, man? Olympic gold is crazy. Just imagine being the Olympic champion." —AFP