

Jitender provides the silver lining

Punia and Aware clinch bronze medals

ASIAN WRESTLING

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

Jitender Kumar was the silver lining for India on the final day of competition at the senior Asian wrestling championships amidst below-par display from some of the big names on Sunday.

India managed to add a lone silver and just two more bronze to its tally. The performances itself, however, left a lot to be desired from all the five Indians in action.

The only Indian to reach the final, Jitender failed to find a way past reigning champion Daniyar Kaisanov of Kazakhstan, losing 1-3 in the 74kg but salvaging some pride after World championships silver medallist Deepak Punia (86kg) and World and Asian championships bronze medallist Rahul Aware (61kg) disappointed.

Edging past

Having won his qualifying round easily, Jitender managed to edge past Iranian Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani on criteria after being tied 2-2 on points in the quarterfinal before winning the semifinal against Sumiyabazar Zandanbud of Mongolia 2-1, all three points coming through passivity penalties for the opponent.

It was, however, a disappointing outing for Punia who appeared completely off-colour in both his morning bouts, losing 1-4 to Shutaro Yamada of Japan in the semifinals.

Punia, already qualified for the Olympics, hardly seemed to put in any effort before eventually winning a consolation bronze against Issa Abdulsalam Abdulwahab Al Obaidi of Iraq 10-0 in under three minutes.

Aware, though, would be ruing the decision to challenge the referee's decision at a crucial juncture in his



Consolation: Jitender Kumar poses with his silver medal. •PTI

semifinal bout against Ulukbek Zholdosbekov of Kyrgyzstan.

Trailing 0-2 with his opponent under caution for passivity, Aware sought points for what he thought was a scoring exposure move with 45 seconds left on the clock.

He lost the challenge to concede a 3-point lead and even though he scored a take-down immediately after to narrow the margin, it was enough to make him lose focus and go down 3-5 and miss out on a spot in the final

and settle for a bronze, winning 5-2 against Iran's Majid Almas Dastan.

In the 125kg, Satender Malik failed to impress, going down 1-12 in the repechage round to crash out of the competition. Satender had replaced original qualifier Sumit Malik in the draw after the latter tore his MCL before the event but appeared out of depth on the mat.

Somveer was outclassed 10-0 by Ajiniyaz Saparniyazov in the 92kg quarterfinal. **The medallists: 61kg:** 1. Uluk-

bek Zholdosbekov (Kgz), 2. Muhammad Ikramov (Tjk), 3. Rahul Aware, Ryuto Sakaki (Jpn). **74kg:** 1. Daniyar Kaisanov (Kaz), Jitender, 3. Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani (IRI), Daichi Takatani (Jpn). **86kg:** 1. Shutaro Yamada (Jpn), 2. Ahmad Yousef Bazrighaleh (IRI), 3. Deepak Punia, Isa Shapiey (Uzb). **92kg:** 1. Mohammadjavad Mohammadebrahim Ebrahimzivi (IRI), 2. Takuma Otsu (Jpn), 3. Iliskhan Chilaiyev (Kaz), Tsogtgerel Munkhbaatar (Mgl). **125kg:** 1. Yusup Batirmurzaev (Kaz), 2. Khuderbulga Dorjkhand (Mgl), 3. Parviz Khodavirdi Hadibasmanji (IRI), Kounjing Nam (Kor).

Sharath & Sathiyam duo claims silver

TABLE TENNIS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BUDAPEST

A. Sharath Kamal and G. Sathiyam took the men's doubles silver at the ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open after losing the summit clash to Germany's Benedikt Duda and Patrick Franziska 11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9 on Saturday.

It was Sharath's second medal of the tournament

after his mixed doubles bronze with Manika Batra.

Meanwhile, M.R. Hansini bagged the mini-cadet girls' singles bronze at the Swedish Junior and Cadet Open at Orebro.

The 10-year-old fifth standard student started her main draw challenge after a couple of wins in the group stages before going down to Russia's Iuliia Pugovkina 12-10, 9-11, 5-11, 8-11 in the last-four stage.



laCumba/AB/685

Manchester United climbs to fifth

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Bruno Fernandes opened his goalscoring account at Manchester United on Sunday as Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side climbed to fifth place in the Premier League table with a 3-0 win against lowly Watford. Victory at Old Trafford lifts it to 41 points, just three behind fourth-placed Chelsea. Midfielder Fernandes scored from the penalty spot shortly before half-time and Anthony Martial and Mason Greenwood also found the net.

As it stands, fifth place could be enough to earn a Champions League spot because second-placed Manchester City has been banned from Europe's elite competition for two seasons, pending an appeal.

On Saturday, Gabriel Jesus struck late to give City a 1-0 win at Leicester, strengthening its hold on second place despite more woe from the penalty spot - Sergio Aguero had failed to convert a penalty before Jesus replaced him in the second half.

The results: Premier League: Manchester United 3 (Fernandes 42-pen, Martial 58, Greenwood 75) bt Watford 0; Wolves 3 (Jota 19, 30, Jimenez



Firing it in: Mason Greenwood caps off a fine United performance with its third goal against Watford. •REUTERS

50) bt Norwich 0; Arsenal 3 (Nketiah 27, Aubameyang 33, 46) bt Everton 2 (Calvert-Lewin 1, Richardson 45+4).

LaLiga: Real Valladolid 2 (Ramirez 77, Guardiola 83) bt Espanyol 1 (Embarba 90+3-pen).

Serie A: Genoa 2 (Cassata 57, Criscito 89-pen) lost to Lazio 3 (Marusic 2, Immobile 51, Cataldi 71).

Bundesliga: Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Diaby 25, Amiri 59) bt Augsburg 0.

Saturday: Premier League: Leicester 0 lost to Manchester City 1 (Jesus 80).

LaLiga: Real Sociedad 3 (Merino 12, Monreal 45+1, Januzaj 48) bt Valencia 0; Levante 1 (Morales 79) bt Real Madrid 0.

Serie A: SPAL 1 (Petagna 69-pen) lost to Juventus 2 (Ronaldo 39, Ramsey 60); Bologna 1 (Palacio 90+2) drew with Udinese 1 (Okaka 33); Fiorentina 1 (Pulgar 85-pen) drew with AC Milan 1 (Rebic 56).

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 1 (Ginter 11) drew with Hoffenheim 1 (Lucas Ribeiro 90+2); Werder Bremen 0 lost to Borussia Dortmund 2 (Zagadou 52, Haaland 66); Hertha Berlin 0 lost to Cologne 5 (Cordoba 4, 22, Kainz 62, 38, Uth 70); Freiburg 0 lost to Fortuna Dusseldorf 2 (Hoffmann 37, Thommy 61); Schalke 0 lost to RB Leipzig 5 (Sabitzer 1, Werner 61, Halstenberg 68, Angelino 81, Forsberg 89).

No trials for Bishkek qualifiers: WFI

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has confirmed that there will be no trials to select the Indian entry for the 74kg freestyle category at the Asian Olympic qualifiers next month in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The qualifiers are to be held from March 27-29 and the WFI had announced that the team selected for the Rome ranking tournament in January and the ongoing Asian

championships would be retained, subject to the athletes' performances. Jitender had lost in the repechage round and finished 10th in Rome.

"We had decided that a medal in either or both tournaments would be considered a satisfactory performance and we will stick to that. Since Jitender has reached the final in the 74kg, there will be no trials and he will go for the qualifier," WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh confirmed.

The decision means twice-Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar will not get a chance to stake his claim for a fourth Olympic appearance. If Jitender manages to book a Tokyo spot in Bishkek - he needs to reach the final - it may well be the end of the road for Sushil.

However, in case he doesn't, there will be a second chance during the World Olympic qualifiers in April (Sofia). The WFI hasn't yet decided on holding trials for that.

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