

Canada Grabs 3 World Wushu Golds

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Austin Chan, Andrea Hung and Margherita Cina beat their respective competitors in three martial arts categories to grab three gold medals for Canada at the World Junior Wushu Championship in Bali, Indonesia last week.

The three golds came in the taolu competition, with Chan triumphing in the men's U-12 Broad Sword event, Hung in the women's U18 Broad Sword event and Cina in the women's U-18 Spear event at the Westin hotel in Nusa Dua.

Canada also added to its tally 7 Silver and 3 Bronze courtesy of Brianna Chan (Calgary), Nathan Yuen (Toronto), Nanrong Hui (Toronto), Gillian Szeto (Toronto), Tiaunna Steadford (Richmond Hill) and Anita Chew (Toronto). This marks the most successful championship ever for a Canadian National Wushu Team, and the first gold medals ever to be won by Canadian athletes at any World Wushu Championships.

While Hung was beaten by eventual gold medalists from China in two of her other individual events, she led the Canadian Team in individual medals with a final tally of 1 gold and 3 silver.

The 16-year-old athlete from North York, Ontario, executed her routine almost to the letter to earn her astounding results. She had been training for over 10 years in the sport at Sunny Tang Martial Arts Centre in Scarborough, and was in her first World Championship appearance.

"It surprised me a bit because I know it was a competition with strong competitors and I had ranked second in Canada," Hung said.

Chan from Markham, Ontario and Cina from Mississauga, Ontario, on the other hand, had come to the games with confidence having clinched gold at the recent National Championships and each with previous appearances in international games. Cina recently came back from the TREX Games in Busan, Korea with a bronze medal in the Women's bare hand event.

Canada's medal tally was the best ever and set a strong precedence for the Senior Team next year as Canada plays host October 24-29, 2009 to the 10th World Wushu Championships at the Ricoh, Coliseum in Toronto.

"The Junior team has indeed set a new standard for Canadian Wushu, these three golds are important to raise the standard and recognition of our country in this Olympic level sport," said Sunny Tang, president of Wushu Canada.

The second edition of the biennial championship brings to the table 62 gold medals from two disciplines -- taolu (artistic) and sanshou (combative).

The taolu participants are split into three categories -- A (from 16 to 18 years old), B (13 to 15) and C (7 to 12) - and contested a total of 50 gold medals in the men's and women's division, while the sanshou men's and women's fighters duked it out for 12 golds.

A total of 700 athletes and officials from 44 countries took part in the tournament, which will run from December 7-14.

Canada finished 5th overall in medal standings, with powerhouse China leading the way. This also marks the highest ranking for a North American country in this traditionally Asian dominated sport. In the inaugural event in Malaysia in 2006, China won most of the medals, taking home 16 golds and one silver, Canada won 3 bronze medals in that tournament.

Wushu dates back centuries and is a time honored sport in China with millions of practitioners across the world. Made famous by action stars Jet Li and Jackie Chan Wushu uses various weapons apparatus and hand routines in the taolu events which incorporate acrobatic jumps, flips and swirling maneuvers to demonstrate the skills and agility of the athletes. Sanshou, the combative style of wushu, is akin to boxing. However, having good punches alone is not enough, because sanshou encompasses aspects of different martial arts including kicks, grappling and throws.

With both a full-contact combat element (sanshou) and non-combative elements (taolu) Wushu is an all-round martial art that will come to Canada for the first time in 2009 with the 10th World Wushu Championships scheduled to be held at the Ricoh Coliseum from October 24-29, 2009. An expected 85 countries and 1500 participants are to arrive in Toronto for the senior world championships next year presented by Wushu Canada www.wushucanada.com , the City of Toronto and the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotions.