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TEAM NI BOXERS SET NEW RECORD WITH INCREDIBLE NINE MEDALS GUARANTEED

Northern Ireland's boxers will bring home an astonishing haul of nine medals from the Commonwealth Games after they added six more yesterday to the three won on Tuesday.

The previous record for one Games was six in Edinburgh in 1986 when a number of African countries boycotted the event.

With eleven total medals now guaranteed, it also exceeds the ten won in Delhi four years ago.

What colour those medals will be is still to be determined with the semi-finals to come on Friday.

After the quarter-final successes of Sean Duffy, Joe Fitzpatrick and Sean McGlinchy on Tuesday it was Olympic bronze medalist Michael Conlan who led the way yesterday after he beat Uganda's Bashir Nasir at bantamweight.

The 22-year-old will now fight Wales' Sean McGoldrick in the semi-finals.

"I'm not thinking about the bronze medal, gold is the only one I want. I have a bronze medal from London, I don't want another one. I won my fight today and I'm happy enough but it was only a quarter of what I can perform. I can fight better than that," he said.

Looking ahead to Friday's bout Conlan added, "Sean McGoldrick from Wales is the reigning champion, so I'm looking forward to meeting him in the semi-finals. I know him well and he's a lovely person and a quality boxer. I sparred with him a few years ago. Come Friday I think I'll win, I have that confidence inside me and that self-belief. I know he's a quality opponent but I'm on my game now in this tournament. That's the worst you'll ever see me fight in this tournament, it's just getting better now."

Next into the ring were the two women and both Michaela Walsh and Alanna Audley-Murphy didn't disappoint.

Walsh, who was the first-ever female to compete at the Commonwealth Games this week, beat Jamaica's Joy Sarah Rae in the women's flyweight quarter finals, winning by unanimous decision. She'll face India's Pinki Rani in the semi-finals and is one fight away from a possible shot at the Olympic champion Nicola Adams.

"The first round I started off very slow. I couldn't get my punches off against her but I changed my tactics and I just listened to my coaches who told me what to do and by the fourth round any punch I was throwing I was catching her with it," said Walsh.

She added: "I knew I had to go to her in the first because of the height difference. As soon as I changed my tactics I felt like I was hitting her with ease. I believe if I perform to the best of my ability



I can go all the way. People ask me about Adams but that's not until the final. I'm a big fan of Nicola and I've followed her throughout her career. I'm going for one colour and one colour only."

In her first fight of the Games after receiving a bye, Audley-Murphy defeated Dominica's Valerian Spicer on a split decision in the lightweight division. Guaranteed at least a bronze, she'll take on Australia's Shelley Watts next.

"I felt nervous. I got into it and when I knew I was down I had to dig deep. At the end of the day I got the win and that's the most important thing. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, I've boxed a long time and I finally got here and I've made it to the podium and I want to get two steps further and get the gold medal.

"To be on that stage and perform in front of your home nation, there's no better feeling. Me and Michaela are history makers and you can't take that away from us. It's something to tell the kids and grandkids."

Double Olympic bronze medallist and team captain Paddy Barnes blazed into the last four by thoroughly outclassing Charles Keama of Papua New Guinea.

A succession of swift hooks forced Keama to take two standing counts in round two and two more big shots in the third left the Papuan flailing and handed Barnes his second straight stoppage win of the competition.

As well as being pleased at his own performance Barnes also backed Walsh to give Adams a run for the gold should they meet in the final.

"What you've seen from Michaela is just a fraction of what she can do. She spars with me and she gives me lots of trouble. You heard it from me first - if they fight in the final, I'm telling you she'll beat Nicola Adams."

On his own fight and whether it went to plan Barnes commented, "Sometimes I rushed it a bit much but it was good. Bronze medals are only a token of appreciation for entering the competition. All it means is that you took part in something. Unless you get the gold it's not worth talking about."

The success kept rolling when Steven Donnelly entered the ring and beat Caustio Clayton from Canada at welterweight. "He was a high-quality opponent. He was the favourite and I was treating that as my final, but that doesn't mean that the rest will be easy. He was world number eight so my confidence has definitely gone up," said the 25 year-old from Ballymena.

And on the team performance he added, "We are flying at the moment. There is no secret - just hard work and dedication. Each time we win we just spur each other on and everyone wants to match one another in success."



The last of the ten quarter-finalists to enter the fray was middleweight Connor Coyle who wasn't going to be outdone by what had gone before as he also won a unanimous decision over South African Siphwe Lusizi.

"It's a magnificent feeling to win a medal and gives you much more adrenaline. It's unbelievable but I'm nowhere near as good as I can perform yet"

ATHLETICS

Katie Kirk finished second in her heat of the women's 800m in a time of 2.03.00 and progresses to the semi-finals on Thursday night.

"I am really pleased. That was a very tough race particularly as the World Champion was racing. My legs are really sore at the minute. We slowed up after the first lap but I felt comfortable even though the pace picked up towards the end. I never eased up as my Dad (Coach Mark Kirk) has always told me to run to the line," she said.

"I was a bit sick last night and before the race because of nerves. I am a happy girl to make the semis and I will give my all and hopefully get a personal best. I am now going to the Village for an ice bath and a sleep!"

In the men's 200m, Leon Reid finished 3rd in his heat with a time of 20.97 seconds to progress to the semi-final as a fastest loser.

"I ran really well for the most of the race but some great athletes just slipped away from me towards the end."

"I might not yet be fully recovered from my accident a few weeks ago in Belgium where I collided with another athlete and was knocked out for a while. As a result I spent four days in hospital and lost a total of three weeks training. However, I am going in the right direction. This is a great experience for me and there is fantastic support from my NI teammates."

Jason Harvey was fifth in his semi-final of the 400m hurdles in 52.06.

"This was not a good run, unfortunately I slightly damaged ligaments in my foot just after my season's best time and have only now recovered. This is frustrating but I have the consolation of being able to compete in the Europeans in Zurich in two weeks' time."

In the final of the women's 3000m steeplechase Kerry O'Flaherty finished in 11th place with her third fastest time ever of 9:55.94.

"This was a great a great experience for me and while it was my 3rd best ever time I was a bit disappointed I didn't get a PB. I certainly felt I had a 9.50 in me and I was in fact on course for a fast



time until the last two laps, however, towards the end I faded. The problem was I lost a lot of energy early on as I couldn't see the barriers properly as there were a number of tall girls jumping in front of me. I was also a bit nervous at the beginning because of my fall over the barriers in Belgium last year."

She added, "However it was fantastic to run against these girls in front of thousands of spectators. This has been the culmination of 10 years of work with the support of many people."

BOWLS

It was a successful day for Northern Ireland's bowlers with the men's fours, Martin McHugh in the singles and the women's pairs all making the knockout stages with the quarter-finals and semi-finals scheduled for Thursday but they have all tough draws.

The fours – Neil Booth, Paul Daly, Neil Mulholland and Ian McClure – needed a draw against England to make certain of progressing and that's exactly what they got with two shots on the 14th end leading to a 12-12 tie. The two countries will meet each other again in the last eight.

Martin McHugh had a busy and successful day winning his last three group games to make it through to the quarter-finals of the men's singles.

The 41 year-old from Whitehead began with a 21-9 win over Jersey's Malcolm de Sousa and followed it up with a 21-10 victory over Leonard Callus from Malta that secured his place in the last eight but he went on to finish his campaign with a 21-12 victory over John Christian of the Norfolk Islands.

Next up is local favourite Darren Burnett from Scotland.

The women's pair of Barbara Cameron and Mandy Cunningham are also into the knockout stages. After losing to Australia 23-15 in the morning they had to beat Papua New Guinea and hope Australia beat Malaysia in the last round of group games. They found themselves 10-11 down after 10 ends but recovered to win 19-13 and went through when the unbeaten Aussies beat Malaysia.

Cunningham said afterwards, "We feel relieved. The conditions were really hard. Glasgow's weather and its four seasons in one day were difficult. Now we are going to free our minds. It's all to play for and every match from now on is a final."

They'll now take on New Zealand.

Despite winning their last group game 26-15 over Papua New Guinea, the women's triples – Donna McCloy, Catherine McMillan and Jennifer Dowds are out of the tournament after England beat Scotland 21-9.



WRESTLING

Hugh McCloskey was beaten 4-0 by New Zealander Sam Belkin in the bronze medal final of the men's freestyle 97kg class.

The 22 year-old from Limavady initially lost his quarter-final to eventual gold medalist Arjun Gill from Canada and when his scheduled opponent pulled out of the tournament and the repechage, the 22 year-old from Derry went straight to the medal final.

Despite losing out McCloskey is predicting good days ahead for Northern Ireland wrestling.

"Wrestling is a fledgling sport in Northern Ireland. But we've got a strong team coming through. So next Games we'll be a force to be reckoned with."

NETBALL

Northern Ireland's netball team have achieved their pre-Games target of a top eight finish as they completed the group stages with a scrappy 37-32 win over Scotland.

The victory means they finished fourth in Group B and will now face Wales on Friday for seventh place.

Northern Ireland's defence was magnificent as its backcourt of Fionnuala Toner, Nordia Masters and Gemma Gibney posted nine intercepts and eight deflections between them.

"We played them six weeks ago (in the world cup qualifiers) and only lost by one so having played them before was an advantage. We kept calm and kept our composure," said Toner who is now looking forward to the Welsh game.

"We know a lot about them as we have played them before (in the world cup qualifiers). We are definitely more confident as a team than we were six weeks ago."

GYMNASTICS

Nicole Mawhinney finished in a very creditable 17th place in the women's all-around final. After qualifying in 21st position the 18 year-old from Portavogie who trains at the Salto Gymnastics Club in Lisburn, performed clean routines on all four apparatus for a total mark of 48.565.

"I went clean and I'm very happy I got into the top 24 and then with nothing to lose I just wanted to enjoy it and although I got very nervous I did that and I'm very happy."



BADMINTON

Tony Murphy and Tony Stephenson are both through to the last 16 of the men's singles. Murphy beat Muhammed Bhatti of Pakistan 2-1 to progress.

"I needed a good while to get up to speed with the game. I had no idea about my opponent so after the first game I managed to figure him out."

He added, "It's one of my better performances. It's the biggest and best venue I've ever played in and it's great to have people supporting you."

Stephenson beat South African Prakash Vijayanath 2-0.

Sinead Chambers went out of the women's singles in the last 32, beaten by the fifth seed PC Thulasi from India. Along with brother Ciaran they lost to the fifth seeds from Canada Phyllis Chan and Derrick Ng in the last 32 of the mixed doubles.

Murphy and Alannah Stephenson also went out of the mixed doubles at the last 32 stage as they lost 21-12, 21-13 to the top seeds – husband and wife partnership Chris and Gabrielle Adcock from England.

However the third mixed doubles partnership of Murphy and Caroline Black made the last 16 by beating Gareth and Geordine Henry of Jamaica.

Murphy and Stephenson also combined to reach the last 16 of the men's doubles but Northern Ireland's only representatives in the women's doubles – Sinead Chambers and Caroline Black lost at the last 32 stage.

TABLE TENNIS

Paul McCreery and Ashley Robinson are still alive in the men's doubles as they reached the third round with a 3-1 win over Peter Jackson and John Cordue from New Zealand.

The two will also be involved in the first round of the men's singles along with Peter Graham on Thursday morning.

Robinson and Ashley Givan went out of the mixed doubles at the third round stage. Northern Ireland's other two partnerships - Peter Graham and Emma Ludlow and Paul McCreery and Hannah Lynch-Dawson both lost in the first round.

Givan and Amanda Mogeey both had good wins in the first round of the women's singles before succumbing in the last 32.



SQUASH

Madeline Perry and Michael Craig to Australian pair Rachael Grinham and David Palmer 2-0 in their latest group game of the mixed doubles.

"We got a lot better in the second game once we got into it. We knew they were going to be tough opposition because they are ex-world champions and together that is quite a big force," said Perry.

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