**Dhesi caps six-medal day for Canadian wrestlers**

COVENTRY, UK – The wrestling competition at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games officially kicked off on August 5, from the Coventry Arena. Six Canadians took to the mats on day one, all with medal aspirations. At the end of the day, they all stood on the podium, led by Amar Dhesi who won gold in the men’s 125kg division.

Amar Dhesi – FS125kg

Amar Dhesi, from Surrey, B.C., received a first round by and faced Jamaica’s Aaron Johnson in the quarterfinal. Dhesi was able to score big with an ankle lace and took the win 10-0.

Dhesi drew a tough match up in the semifinal against Mohit Mohit of India. After a tight first period, Dhesi took over in the second and picked up the win 12-2.

That win pit Dhesi against Zaman Anwar of Pakistan for gold. Dhesi, who’s family immigrated to Canada from India in the 1970s, had the heavy India crowd behind him in the match and was able to feed off their energy. Dhesi scored early and then, after giving up his only two points, found himself in a dominant position. He was able to turn it into a pin and took the win by fall, securing the first gold for Canadian wrestlers.

“Accomplishing this feels really good. It was for the family and people back home. I know the Commonwealth Games are a big deal in Canada, so it felt good. I wrestled as hard as I could,” Dhesi said after the win. “Now, I just want to carry this momentum from here and at Pan Ams (where Dhesi also won gold) into the World Championships. I feel very carefree, I will wrestle as hard as I can and whatever the outcome is, it is.”

Linda Morais – WW68kg

After receiving a first-round bye, Tecumseh, Ontario’s Linda Morais took on Sephora Aza of Mauritius. Morais quickly took control and won the match by pin.

Morais found herself in a tight contest in the semifinal when she took on Tayla Ford of New Zealand. Despite the back and forth, Morais was able to pull out a 6-4 win.

With that, Morais was wrestling for gold against Blessing Oborududu of Nigeria. This was a physical and gritty match with very few scoring opportunities for either woman. In the end, it would be Oborududu who took the decision 5-1.

“There is a little disappointment winning silver but at the same time I am excited, the Commonwealth Games is a great competition, there are many great competitors, so I am happy to be on the podium, but it is not gold,” said Morais. “Going up to 68kg is very different than the smaller weight classes, when you are smaller it is quicker and more explosive, now I am finding out it is a different fatigue, but I am excited because I love a new challenge.”

Lachlan McNeil – FS65kg

North York, Ontario’s Lachlan McNeil had an opening round bye, so he met Scotland’s Ross Connelly in the quarterfinal. McNeil controlled the match from the start and earned a 10-0 win.

Next, McNeil matched up with Inayat Ullah of Pakistan in the semifinal. McNeil took a 5-0 lead to the break and would add to it in the second period, finishing the match with two gut wrench exposures 11-0.

McNeil’s chance at gold came against Bajrang Bajrang of India, the defending Commonwealth Games gold medalist and Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist. Bajrang would take a 4-0 lead to the break. McNeil cut the lead to 4-2 in the second and came close to earning additional points but couldn’t turn Bajrang. Bajrang would add to his lead an ultimately win 9-2, forcing McNeil to settle for silver.

“There were some strong points in this tournament,” said McNeil. “I performed well against the Pakistan wrestler, it was tight, but I found a way to win and dominate so I was happy with that. Even in the final, even though I didn’t come out with the win, I was happy that I showed my toughness. I didn’t let the fact that the crowd was against me affect me and I wrestled an Olympic bronze medalist for six minutes. I showed heart and grit and I am happy with that.”

Ana Godinez Gonzalez – WW62kg

In her opening match, Coquitlam, B.C.’s Ana Godinez Gonzalez locked in a gut wrench and won 10-0 in a matter of seconds over Abbie Fountain of Scotland. The win advanced her to the semifinals.

Godinez Gonzalez next met Omolayo Kolawole of Nigeria in the semifinal. After a close opening round, Godinez Gonzalez led 4-2 at the break. Godinez Gonzalez would take control in the second and won on points 10-4.

The win advanced the 2021 U23 World Champion to the gold medal match against Sakshi Malik of India. Godinez Gonzalez opened the scoring in the first and was up 4-0 at the break. However, Malik would catch Godinez Gonzalez for a split second in the second, tying it and then earning a pin. A disappointed Godinez Gonzalez was forced to settle for silver.

“Today went well for the most part, but silver is just ok,” said Godinez Gonzalez. “During the match, I felt my best I had all day, but in wrestling in that moment I couldn’t stop and had to keep moving. Now, I will go back to my matches from this year, fix my mistakes and get ready for the World Championships.”

Hannah Taylor – WW57kg

Hannah Taylor, from Summerside, P.E.I., opened her competition against Danielle Lim of Singapore. This was a quarterfinal match and Taylor had no trouble defeating her opponent, winning by superiority 10-0.

That earned her a showdown with Odunayo Adekuoroye of Nigeria. This was a tough match for Taylor who ultimately lost 10-0.

With the loss, she found herself in the bronze medal match against Sophia Ayieta of Kenya. Taylor was able to refocus and took care of business quickly earning the win by fall in the first minute, securing her the bronze medal.

“After winning the first match 10-0, I was feeling pretty good,” explained Taylor. “Then, I unfortunately lost 10-0 to the eventual winner from Nigeria but I gathered myself to come back and win the bronze against a super strong individual from Kenya, I was able to win by pin in the first minute. I set high goals for myself, to win bronze feels great, I didn’t come here to win bronze but any time you can bring home a medal for Canada it is special.”

Alex Moore – FS86kg

Alex Moore, from Montreal, opened the competition with a round of 16 match against Ekerekeme Agiomor (NGR). Moore had no issues, winning the contest by superiority 10-0.

Moore advanced to face Suresh Warnakulasuriya (SRI) in the quarterfinal. Moore again had a strong performance winning by superiority 10-0.

He matched up with Deepak Punia of India in the semifinal. While the match remained close until the end, it would be Punia pulling out a 3-1.

There was still a chance for bronze for Moore when he took on Matthew Oxenham of New Zealand. In the match, Moore quickly got the laces, and it was all over. He quickly scored and won 10-0.

“Winning bronze wasn’t what I wanted but I came in off some injuries, so it was still good to come and compete,” said Moore. “I had to change up my strategy in the semifinal match, it wasn’t what I wanted to do but I thought approaching it as a more tactical match was the way to go. He was a good opponent, and I will build off this.”

The second and final day of wrestling takes place tomorrow Aug. 6 with six more Canadians in action: Maddi Parks, Sam Stewart and Justina Di Stasio compete on the women’s side, while Darthe Capellan, Jasmit Phulka and Nishan Randhawa battled in the men’s division. For complete information visit the [event page](https://results.birmingham2022.com/#/combat-sports-schedule/WRE/2022-08-05).