

Duo miss out on Youth Olympics place

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Posted On: April 15, 2014



Tin-Tin Ho was agonisingly denied of a place at the 2014 Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing, China after seeing a 3-0 lead evaporate against final opponent Giorgia Piccolin (ITA) to lose in dramatic circumstances at the African YOG Qualifiers.

The 15-year-old had been excellent in victories over Mariem Ben Cheikh (TUN), Leila Imre (HUN), Olorato Ramagapu (BOT) and Rita Fins (POR) to make the final stage but was left cursing her luck after a frustrating match against Piccolin.

With only one place at the Youth Olympics on offer in Cairo, Tin-Tin began the final well, taking both the opening two games to nine before comfortably achieving a 3-0 lead following an 11-4 third game. However, the Italian right-hander fought her way back into proceedings with back-to-back 11-6 games before crucially saving a match point at 10-9 in the sixth game to force a decider.

The seventh end proved to be neck-and-neck between the European duo but disappointingly for the English athlete, she couldn't stop Piccolin completing the comeback with a 12-10 final game to secure a place on the plane to Nanjing.

The Paddington youngster wasn't the only Brit in action in Egypt as England's no. 1 Junior Boy Helshan Weerasinghe was also striving for the one available slot from the African section of the Youth Olympic Qualification process.

His campaign began well with comfortable victories over Peo Thebe (BOT) and Zeyad Aldmaisy (JOR) in his group before advancing to the semi-finals with a 4-2 win against Ivory Coast player Kanate Ali.

However, the 17-year-old's hopes were dashed in the semi-finals by top seed Martin Allegro from Belgium. Once again the English competitor had chances – leading 2-1 before losing a close 14-12 fourth game, before being knocked-out from proceedings in the Egyptian capital to end his qualification chances.

Both players will now have to wait as first and second reserves on the list and keep their fingers crossed for the summer's event.

Boys' Qualifiers:

Group Stage:

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Peo Thebe (BOT) 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-3)

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Zeyad Aldmaisy (JOR) 3-1 (11-4, 5-11, 11-3, 11-7)

Quarter-Final:

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Kanate Ali (CIV) 4-2 (10-12, 11-1, 11-9, 9-11, 11-7, 11-6)

Semi-Final:

Martin Allegro (BEL) bt Helshan Weerasinghe 4-2 (9-11, 6-11, 11-4, 14-12, 11-7, 11-9)

Third Play-off:

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Luca Bressan (ITA) 4-1 (11-7, 11-2, 11-8, 9-11, 11-7)

Girls' Qualifiers:

Group Stage:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Mariem Ben Cheikh (TUN) 3-1 (8-11, 11-2, 11-3, 11-3)

Tin-Tin Ho bt Leila Imre (HUN) 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-3)

Tin-Tin Ho bt Olorato Ramagapu (BOT) 3-0 (11-1, 11-3, 11-2)

Semi-Final:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Rita Fins (POR) 4-1 (11-9, 11-2, 11-5, 6-11, 11-7)

Final:

Giorgia Piccolin (ITA) bt Tin-Tin Ho 4-3 (9-11, 9-11, 4-11, 11-6, 11-6, 13-11, 12-10)

by Russell Moore (April 15, 2014)

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