ASPIRE QATAR JUNIOR & CADET TABLE TENNIS OPEN

Jorgic, Selvakumar win young paddlers meet

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SLOVENIA'S Darko Jorgic, the world No.1 in the junior circuit, confirmed his ratings as the best in his category with his fourth career title at the Aspire Qatar Junior & Cadet Open in Doha on Sunday.

While the European won in the boys category, Selena Selvakumar of India emerged the last girl standing in the junior girls'.

In all, over 80 boys and girls from 17 countries participated in the five-day competition organized by the Aspire Zone and the Qatar Table Tennis Association.

Jorgic, who has won in Egypt, Serbia and Hungary, overcame the strong challenges of the Thailand players en route to striking gold in Doha.

At the final he beat Sirawit Puangthip (11-4, 12-10, 11-7) and Passara (11-4, 11-8, 11-4, 11-4) and in the semi-finals he had overcome Parnpat Jaroenkarnkit (11-11, 8-11, 11-3, 11-6, 9-11, 11-6, 11-7), prior to reserving his place in the final courtesy of success against Iran's Amir Hossein Hodaei (11-9, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8).

"In the team event I had not played so well but as the week has progressed I feel that I have played better and better," said Darko Jorgic. "I came here as the favourite, my opponents had nothing to lose but I think I was able to show them how you have to play in European competitions."

Qatar is in Asia, the continent which is the strongest in the world in the sport of table but of course there is a considerable difference between the Middle East, the Gulf region and the far east, where you find the best from China, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong," he added.

Success for Jorgic meant he departed Qatar with three titles in his possession; partnering Mohammed Abdulwahhab he had won the Junior Boys' Team title, on the concluding day, the duo secured the Junior Boys' Doubles crown.

While Jorgic had to contend with the Thais, the situation was different for 16-year-old Selvakumar who had to overcome her compatriot Diya Parag Chitale, a 12-year-old prodigy, in five games to snatch the title (14-12, 11-13, 11-5, 11-7, 11-6), equally completing a hat-trick of titles.

She had earned the Junior Girls' Team event in partnership with Poland's Julia Slazak earlier in the week. On the concluding day of action, prior to the success in the Junior Girls' Singles event, once again in partnership with Julia Slazak, she earned the Junior Girls' Doubles title as well.

"I must admit I was scared at the thought of playing Diya in the final," said Selvakumar.

Even though I lost the second game I still felt quite confident. My backhand is my strength and I was able to make her move by creating angles," she added.

QTTA president Mohanadi said the federation is always ready to further develop the sport not only in Qatar but in the entire region as well.

At the quarter-final stage Selvakumar had beaten Iran's Saba Safari (11-5, 11-9, 11-7, 11-7), before emerging successful against Algeria's Sannah Lagsir in the semis.

Speaking about the tournament, QTTA President Khalil Ahmed al Mohanadi said that the competition had not only brought out the best in the participants but has equally given the upcoming players the opportunity to further expose them on a global stage.

"One of the major achievements of this tournament is that it has given some of the young players the opportunity to play for the first time in a competitive event of this nature. Some of the players are having their first experience of a major competition in Qatar and without any doubt the experience will linger in their memories for a long time," he said.

He added that his federation is always ready to further develop the sport not only in Qatar but in the entire region as well.

"We are committed to promoting table tennis and make it one of the top-rated sports in the region and the Middle East. We hope to organize more of this type of events in the future," Mohanadi said.

Ivan Bravo, the director general at Aspire Academy – the tournament's host, said that the competition has benefitted the academy students in terms of exposure and experience. "The level of the competition was very high and it was a huge opportunity for our players to meet with people of like minds and to interact in an atmosphere of gamesmanship. Going forward, I see this competition impacting positively on the sport and the players in a tremendous way," he said.

UAE crush Oman, enter Asia Cup main draw

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

THE United Arab Emirates entered the main draw of the Asia Cup after a convincing 71-run win against Oman in Dhaka, according to Espncricinfo website. The UAE won all three of their qualifying matches to finish first on the points table and book their berth.

Oman were still alive going into the last match of the qualifying group, but had to chase the target in 13.5 overs after opting to bowl. The UAE just needed a win to qualify.

Oman were given a boost in the second over after Rohan Mustafa was run-out after failing to slide his bat into the crease.

Shaiman Anwar, however, the momentum swung again as Muhammad Usman played a match-turning cameo to lift his side to 172 for 6. He plundered 35 off his last 10 balls and finished with an unbeaten 46 off 22, an innings that featured six fours and two sixes. His innings earned him the Man-of-the-Match award. Aamir Kaleem took two more wickets in the final over to finish with figures of 4 for 36.

Oman's hopes of qualification were dashed within

Mohammad Naveed of the UAE celebrates a wicket against Oman during the qualifiers for the Asia Cup cricket in Dhaka on Monday. (AFP)

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