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## Press Release

### USA wins Gold over New Zealand in Day of Upsets at Team Disc Golf World Championships



A dramatic day of semi-final upsets and final round action brought the inaugural PDGA-WFDF Team Disc Golf World Championships, presented by [DGA](#), to a climax today in Vancouver, Canada. Team Canada and Japan had appeared to be the favourites to advance to the finals after they finished first and second after three days of regulation play, but the Americans rolled to gold after they and the Kiwis both squeaked by the leaders in the semifinals. The event was held from August 18-21, 2016 in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia. Six countries -- Australia, Brasil, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the USA -- competed in this inaugural Team Disc Golf World Championships. The World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) co-hosted the event along with the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA).

“WFDF is pleased that the disc community was able to experience such a competitive event in this unique format for disc golf,” stated Robert “Nob” Rauch, WFDF President. “We thank our co-host PDGA for their support and look to continue to work with them to promote further growth in current countries that have an active community as well as in new countries around the globe. We thank the local organizing

committee led by Dan Laitsch, BC Disc Sports, and the event sponsors for all of their support in making the event successful.”

In the morning’s 18 hole match play semifinals, both matches could have gone either way. Team USA saved their best golf for when it counted most by defeating Team Japan 6-2. The critical moment occurred when Japan’s top shooter, Manabu Kajiyama, inadvertently played from a USA player’s lie, an unfortunate error that cost him the hole from which he never fully recovered. He ended up losing his match against Nick Wood by 5 holes to 4; had he won by the same score, Japan and not USA, would have advanced to the Gold Medal match.

The competitively stunning and cut throat nature of Match Play was on full display in the Canada-New Zealand semifinal. When Kiwi Gemma Sullivan hit a 7 meter/23 foot headwind putt on the final hole, the teams finished tied in both matches and total holes won, resulting in playoff. Kiwi captain Simon Feasey stepped up to the designated Hole 7 tee and smoothed his drive down the 115 meter/379 foot tree lined fairway to within 5 meters/17 feet of the bucket. Feeling the pressure, Canuck Hector Diakow, who had won the toss but opted to drive second, threw a “worm burner” that landed far short, but then, facing do or die second shot, hit metal from 55 meters/180 feet. When Simon calmly drained the putt, it was New Zealand – who Canada had beaten 7-1 the day before in match play – that advanced to the Gold Medal showdown versus the Americans.

Team Japan took the bronze medal match over Canada 6- 2 with Senior Grandmaster age Kazuo Shirai’s crucial wins on holes 16 and 17 to go from 1 down to 1 up proving to be the difference. Had Shirai remained 1 down to Steve Crichton the teams would’ve been in a dead heat and playoff bound. But after dominating regulation play it simply was not Team Canada’s day.

The USA-New Zealand battle for glory had all the makings of a classic championship match. Not only had the two squads tied in regulation match play and match play holes won, they had also finished in a dead tie in the Total Team Score round. But USA’s cruise to gold was not to be denied as they shrugged off an early Kiwi lead to win



convincingly by 7 points to 1 (3 wins and a draw in the 4 matches). And now this group of players from Washington and Oregon States will go down in disc golf history as the first Team World Champions: MPO Tim Skellenger, MPO Zac Ruziska, MPO Nick Wood, FPO Ashlee Harris, Captain and MPM Mark Kilmer, and MPM Jason Pinkal.

The 5<sup>th</sup> place match between Australia and Brasil was won handily by the Aussies. Brasil's determination to compete to the very end was rewarded when they and New Zealand were voted as the teams best demonstrating Spirit of the Game, together with individual players Peter Boyle and Tim Skellenger.

#### **About WFDF:**

The World Flying Disc Federation ("WFDF") serves as the international governing body of all flying disc (frisbee) sports. WFDF is made up of the National Associations ("Members") that govern their respective disc sports. There are currently Members representing athletes in over 65 countries. WFDF is an International Federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), an ARISF member and a member of SportAccord and the International World Games Association. WFDF is recognized as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) registered corporation in the State of Colorado, USA, and it is a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Agency code.

For further information, please contact:  
Volker Bernardi, Executive Director  
World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF)  
Enggaße 2a, D - 55296 Harxheim  
Mobile: +49 176 64 19 77 02, eMail: [ed@wfdf.org](mailto:ed@wfdf.org)

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