

OFFICIAL



European Shuai Jiao Union (ESJU) 歐洲摔交聯盟

European Shuai Jiao Championship 2023

ESJU Official Report – 22 September 2023

1. Introduction

Europe has not hosted a Shuai Jiao (Chinese Wrestling) Championship since the Covid-19 Pandemic. The reintroduction of competitive Shuai Jiao had been long awaited. The championship brought together 120 athletes from 16 countries from all over Europe to compete, with Referees from across Europe, China, and Taiwan. The European Shuai Jiao (Chinese Wrestling) Championship 2023, took place from 14 to 16 September, in Montesilvano, Italy, hosted by the European Shuai Jiao Union (ESJU) in association with Associazione di Cultura Sport e Tempo Libero (ACSI).

For the first time in European Championship history the ESJU introduced Senior and Juvenile divisions. The Senior division was for athletes aged 37 and over; and the Juvenile division was for children and youths aged 6 to 17 (inclusive). Although the Adult division, now restricted from 18 to 36 years of age (inclusive) were popular, with many notable returns to the mat, there were some with the absence of events in the last few years had migrated to the Senior division.

Feedback from athletes (participants) was that the event was, on the whole, a serious undertaking in terms of preparation of highly skilled athletes to participate, but was “really enjoyable”. Unlike other martial arts the Shuai Jiao ‘family’ can compete together and train together and there is little or no animosity. While athletes demonstrate their skill, strength, speed and stamina on the mat, win or lose they are friends afterwards. Shuai Jiao is an opportunity to not only exhibit high-quality techniques, it provides a platform to build life-long friendship. While acknowledging the friendly rivalry between nations. From the coaches’ and team leaders’ perspective there were a number of organisational issues that emerged which diminished from the overall success of the championships – it was not perfect – which has to be acknowledged.

There were a number of issues which the organisers working with coaches were able to identify and resolve, from registration documentation and weigh-in to the issuing of medals and certificates; but that should not undermine the work of the organisers to run the event with limited resources. A number of coaches and team leaders recognised the considerable pressure organisers were under to deliver a high-quality event. Despite the set-backs the Shuai Jiao family worked together to resolve the issues and to deliver the event.

2. Background

The organisers recognised that athletes had travelled from across Europe and were looking to compete. Adaptations were made to the categories to accommodate athletes to enable them to have a reasonable match (within 5Kg). Athletes were still awarded the medal for the event that they were entered into and were also allowed to move up to the next category, as long as consent was given, and it was deemed safe (in the context of a Shuai Jiao match) to do so.

Teams had been in the process of preparing for the European Shuai Jiao Championship since the announcement of the European Shuai Jiao Championship in Kyiv, Ukraine, prior to the start of the war with Russia. Then the Covid-19 Pandemic impacted significantly on the ability of athletes to train. While many nations planned a safe return to training, it was apparent that the hiatus has an impact on some teams. Italy, unexpectedly has the largest team, followed by Ukraine, with a majority youth team, and France with a mixed team of adults and youths and one participant with a sight impairment. The ESJU is both diverse in terms of membership and inclusive in terms of participation and welcoming of all athletes to compete within the rules and regulations and irrespective of any diverse characteristic. The Ukrainian team leader and coaches were applauded in fielding their team, given the current situation in Ukraine and the ongoing war with Russia.



Many nations had been preparing their teams well as the high degree of skill being deployed was a testament to the hours of training in preparation. The coaches and team leaders all had squads of which they could be proud. The implication is that the Shuai Jiao family in Europe will continue to grow from strength to strength and continue to expand across Europe. Countries who had attended to observe, including Austria's new team leader, with a view to join the ESJU and the Shuai Jiao family, would be welcome at the next event.

There were a number of the ESJU old guard such as Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Spain and Poland, and who fielded teams, it was great to see these countries actively returning to the Shuai Jiao tournament. There were also some of the newer members such as Armenia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Latvia, North Macedonia, and Serbia. All participated with a dignity and

respect for their opponent, for which Shuai Jiao is renowned. The discipline of a traditional 4,000-year-old martial art with the structure of a modern sport combined to produce a spectacular event.

3. Overview of the Championship

The Shuai Jiao Tournament Rules has been adapted under the mandate of the ESJU Council, who reserve the right to adapt rules for safety, consistency, and timing reasons. The latest [Shuai Jiao Tournament Rules and Regulations](#) for tournaments and championships was made available with the rules revisions to be utilised at the European Shuai Jiao Championship 2023, published. A synopsis of the revision is set out below:

Adults and Youths (Aged 12 Years or More) Categories: 3 People or Less – Round Robin; and 4 People or More – Double Elimination with Byes. Youths from 12 to 17 years of age: 2 rounds of 3 minutes with a 30 second break. Adults from 18 years of age: 2 rounds of 3 minutes with a 30 second break. Children (Aged 8 to 11 Years) Categories: Single Elimination with Byes. Children up to 8 years of age: 1 round of 2 minutes. Children from 9 to 11 years of age: 1 round of 3 minutes. While some of the timings were challenged by coaches, in particular, in the children’s categories, the officials maintained the revisions for consistency. The organisers had published the information on the ESJU website, and a coaches meeting called prior to the start of the event was to ensure that the revision was communicated.

The championship was managed across two areas with Referees from across Europe as well as China and Taiwan. The British fielded officials to help organise the two competition areas. The Referees performed their duties excellently. The Referee General commended the Referees for their professionalism, consistent approach, diligence, and hard work. Many Referees on the rotation worked tirelessly to enable the championship matches to be completed by the due deadline.



The first evening of action (Thursday 14 September) was immediately following dinner and the closure of the weigh-ins. The Seniors were up first, with some returning European Champions, now in the Senior division, demonstrating considerable skill and technique. The

more popular categories (Male under 75Kg and Under 82Kg) were competing first. Some argued that 37 was still quite young to be called 'Senior'; although the regulation had been agreed at the meeting of the Executive Board of the World Shuai Jiao Federation (WSJF) and ratified by the Executive Board of the ESJU, and is unlikely to change. The oldest competitor was 62 years old, and was still able to enjoy participating in the event. A few returning European Champions were displaced during the event which created some excitement around who would be crowned the new European Champions.

The second day (Friday 15 September) was stop start action initially, with some issues about 'tolerance' on weight. The ESJU operate a tolerance of up to 0.5Kg, to enable athletes who are registered for one weight to participate, at that weight, if they are within tolerance. The computer was less tolerant, but any misplaced athlete was allowed to compete with respect to the tolerance. There was some discussion between coaches about whether the tolerance is reasonable and fair, and a clear cut-off is more appropriate. These concerns were referred to the Referee General and will be considered at the next meeting of the ESJU Council. Once the category issues had been resolved the event proceeded.

The Opening Ceremony took place in the middle of the afternoon, to enable local school children to act as country name bearers and to participate in the children and youth categories. Area A was the centre of attention as children as young as 7, participated. The 'cute and adorable' soon turned into 'skilled and tactical' once the matches started. It was commented that the future of Shuai Jiao is with the children, and if this event was anything to judge by the future of Shuai Jiao is in good hands.

The final matches ran into the evening with the final match around 10pm. It had been two long days of intense competition. The Referee General congratulated the Referees on the job well done.

The Awards Ceremony took place on the morning of Saturday 16 September. The Awards Ceremony was an opportunity for the ESJU Executive to thank all participant and to give medals, gifts and awards to athletes, VIPs, and teams leaders.



During the afternoon, the European Shuai Jiao Seminar was hosted by the ESJU with Grandmaster Chang Dawei. The excellent seminar enabled participants to benefit from the years of experience that Grandmaster Chang offered from his years as an instructor at the Central Police University.



4. Final Results Analysis

There were a number of standout performances and exceptional displays of skill during the championships. The [Final Results List](#) sets out the awards by category.

The Team Awards were influenced by the size of the participating Teams. Medals were awarded points (Gold Medal – 5 Points, Silver Medal – 3 Points and Bronze Medal – 1 Point), which were calculated as the Team Result.

The Team Results were:

1st Place – Team Italy

2nd Place – Team Ukraine

3rd Place – Team France

A number of nations were noticeable by their absence. Russia and Belarus were asked not to field teams, given the ongoing war with Ukraine. While apolitical, the ESJU Council's approach to Russia and Belarus is in alignment with other international sports bodies.

5. Post-Championship Reactions

The championship hotel (Serena Majestic Hotel, Montesilvano), and championship arena were two to three minutes-walk apart. The co-location of the hotel and arena made the movement between accommodation and competition seamless for participants. The hotel facilities enabled the ESJU administration to function and allowed for participating teams to prepare and relax in spacious and comfortable accommodation.

All participants were registered, and specially commissioned medals and certificates were provided for athletes who placed first to third.



The ESJU Council met after the championship. Members were given the opportunity to voice their views. It was felt that a lot of pressure was placed on the organising team in the post-championship interviews with athletes, coaches, and officials. Expectations were high, given the previous ESJU events and their reputation for the production and delivery of high-quality events. While the championship still delivered, it was felt that the organisers could have benefited from more support and resources to ensure a first-rate championship.

Emotions ran high as some of the issues were resolved but working together as a Shuai Jiao family we were able to overcome the immediate problems and come to reasonable resolutions for the issues as they emerged. The need to continuously improve was underlined. Continuous improvement allows athletes to consistently enhance their performance levels. By analysing their strengths and weaknesses, athletes can identify areas that need improvement and focus on specific skills, techniques, or physical attributes. Through consistent practice, feedback, and refinement, athletes can refine their abilities and achieve higher levels of performance. Coaches will have learned lessons in that regard with an intention for improved performance of their athletes at the next Shuai Jiao event. Continuous improvement is not limited to individual athletes but also applies to teams and organisers. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, teams can identify areas for collective growth, enhance teamwork, and optimise performance. Regular evaluation, feedback, and collaborative learning opportunities contribute to a cohesive and high-performing team dynamic. Organisers who are committed to continuously improving their skills and knowledge to enable them to deliver high-quality events is also part of the continuous improvement ethos. By staying ahead of the curve and adapting to changing trends and strategies, organisers can ensure a great tournament experience by all participants underpinned by professional standards to ensure fair competition.

While some athletes had to leave in the early hours of Saturday morning, the majority of athletes enjoyed a hearty dinner in the evening and Montecatini nightlife, and beach-life in the morning, an opportunity to relax after quite an intense championship.

6. Conclusion

The European Shuai Jiao Championship 2023, will be remembered for a number of reasons, the high-quality shuai jiao exhibited by athletes, the diligence of the coaches and team leaders, the professionalism of the Referees, and the need for more support for the organisers to enable them to deliver a first-rate event.

The ESJU maintain a continuous improvement ethos. Continuous improvement is of paramount importance in the world of sports. The ESJU recognise the role it plays in the development and success of athletes, teams, and Shuai Jiao across Europe.

The ESJU are committed to the ongoing promotion and development of Shuai Jiao in Europe and beyond, working with Associate members in South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. The Scandinavian nations did not attend the event or the ESJU Council meeting. The ESJU Executive Board is resolved to reach out to the Scandinavian nations to enable their participation in future events.

Continuous improvement in Shuai Jiao as a sport is essential for maximizing performance levels, gaining a competitive advantage, promoting adaptability and resilience, facilitating long-term development, preventing injuries, fostering personal satisfaction and motivation, and enhancing team dynamics. Athletes, coaches, team leaders, and organisers all have a role to play to prioritise continuous improvement, to enable Shuai Jiao to continue to develop, achieve sustainable success and meet the goals of a high-quality championship experience. At the meeting of the ESJU Council (16 September 2023), in an agenda item for feedback on the championship, the Council agreed to form a new Organising Committee, which will be supported by the European nations, nominating a representative to help with the coordination and management of tournaments and events. A minute of the ESJU Council Meeting is available for ESJU members only.

This Report has been prepared by the Office of the ESJU Secretary General and approved for publication by the Office of the ESJU President.

