

A first for Slovakia Tatiana Kukulkova realises dream

25 Mar 2018

Over 1,500 miles, a long journey but that was a minor concern for Tatiana Kukulkova when she left her home in Slovakia to travel to Tunisia, first for the ITTF Junior Circuit tournament in Rades and then for the Road to Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games – Africa event which commenced on Saturday 24th March.

After competing in the 2018 ITTF Challenge Polish Open, there was little time to prepare for the visit to North Africa.



Tatiana Kukulkova after securing her place in Buenos Aires (Ahmed Oulesti)

by Olalekan Okusan, ITTF-Africa Press Officer

The draw for the tournament concluded, the 17 year old knew she was in for a big task, knowing full well that her potential second round match would be against no.1 seed, Sabina Surjan of Serbia.

After beating Algeria's Malissa Nasri in her opening encounter (12-10, 11-3, 11-5, 8-11, 11-3), she faced Sabina Surjan. She trailed by three games to one, before to the amazement of the fans in the Rodes Omni-Sports Hall, fought back to secure the next two games and the seventh by the very narrowest of margins (7-11, 11-12, 11-4, 9-11, 11-3, 13-11, 11-9).

A dramatic victory, Tatiana Kukulkova was now a different person; ever more confident she beat Croatia's Andrea Pavlovic, the no.3 seed (11-6, 11-6, 10-12, 8-11, 11-5, 11-8), before overcoming Italy's Jamila Laurenti, the no.5 seed (11-9, 11-9, 11-6, 11-6) to reserve her invitation for Buenos Aires.

"I am so happy because this is a big achievement for Slovakian table tennis and myself. It was a difficult journey for me particularly against Sabina Surjan, who is one of the best players in Europe. The match against Sabina was very tactical and physical, so I was so happy when I won the match against her; this really gave me a lot of confidence going into the semi-final against Croatia's Andrea Pavlovic." Tatiana Kukulkova

A long journey and for Tatiana Kukulkova most worthwhile, the goal was achieved.

"I think the journey was worth it because I achieved my dream. I just wanted to cry because I did not really prepare very well after competing at the Polish Open; being the first Slovak to qualify for the

table tennis events at the Youth Olympic Games, I am so excited and I am really looking forward to heading to Argentina later in the year.” Tatiana Kukulikova

In the opposite half of the draw in the latter stages, Jamila Laurenti had caused a major second round upset by beating India’s Archana Girish Kamath, the no.2 seed (11-6, 11-8, 11-8, 9-11, 11-8), prior to overcoming Turkey’s Ozge Yilmaz, the no.15 seed (10-12, 7-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-7, 5-11, 11-7), a player in form. At the quarter-final stage, she had accounted for Finland’s Annika Lundström, the no.4 seed (9-11, 11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 12-10, 13-11).

A place in the semi-final booked, Jamila Laurenti accounted for Singapore’s Zhang Wanling, the no.11 seed (11-5, 11-5, 5-11, 13-11, 11-7).

Now attention turns to Sunday 25th March for the second qualification tournament.

Continental Tournaments – Qualifiers (as on Sunday 17th December)

Men

Africa: Youssef Abdel Aziz (Egypt), Nathael Hamdoun (Tunisia)

Asia: Tomokazu Harimoto (Japan), Lin Yun-Ju (Chinese Taipei), Wang Chuqin (China), Cho Daeseong (Korea)

Europe: Ioannis Sgouropoulos (Greece), Vladimir Sidorenko (Russia), Medardas Stankievicius (Lithuania), Vladislav Urdu (Moldova)

Latin America: Nicolas Burgos (Chile), Guillermo Teodoro (Brazil)

North America: Kanak Jha (United States)

Oceania: Nathan Xu (New Zealand)

Women

Africa: Esther Oribamise (Nigeria), Marwa Alhodaby (Egypt)

Asia: Miu Hirano (Japan), Sun Yingsha (China), Jinnipa Sawettabut (Thailand), Su Pei-Ling (Chinese Taipei)

Europe: Lucie Gauthier (France), Mariia Tailakova (Russia), Ning Jing (Azerbaijan), Nadezhda Bogdanova (Belarus)

Latin America: Adriana Diaz (Puerto Rico), Bruna Takahashi (Brazil)

North America: Amy Wang (United States)

Oceania: Vong Hui Ling (New Zealand)

Road to Buenos Series (as on Saturday 24th March)

Men

Europe: Bastian Rembert (France), Cristian Pletea (Romania)

Women

Europe: Andreea Dragoman (Romania), Lee Ka Yee (Hong Kong)

Africa: Tatiana Kukulikova (Slovakia)



International Table Tennis Federation

Road To Buenos Aires 2018 YOG Series - Africa

24 - 25 March 2018 , Rades (TUN)



WOMEN'S SINGLES - MAIN DRAW

1	214 SURJAN Sabina	SRB					
2	x Bye		214 SURJAN Sabina	SRB	4 - 2 (-8, 5, 2, 5, -9, 9)		
3	x Bye				24-Mar - 12:00h Table 1	214 SURJAN Sabina	SRB
4	213 GUNSING Yoeke	NED					4 - 3 (-7, -10, 4, -9, 3, 11, 9)
5	201 NASRI Malissa	ALG			24-Mar - 16:30h Table 1	215 KUKULKOVA Tatiana	SVK
6	x Bye		201 NASRI Malissa	ALG		215 KUKULKOVA Tatiana	SVK
7	x Bye				24-Mar - 12:00h Table 2		4 - 1 (10, 3, 5, -8, 3)
8	215 KUKULKOVA Tatiana	SVK					24-Mar - 17:45h Table 1
9	205 KLEE Sophia	GER					4 - 2 (6, 6, -10, -8, 5, 8)
10	x Bye		205 KLEE Sophia	GER	4 - 1 (3, -4, 4, 3, 6)		215 KUKULKOVA Tatiana
11	x Bye				24-Mar - 12:00h Table 3		
12	216 HAJ SALAH Abir	TUN				203 PAVLOVIC Andrea	CRO
13	211 AKASHEVA Zauresh	KAZ			24-Mar - 16:30h Table 2		4 - 2 (-6, 10, -8, 6, 5, 5)
14	x Bye		211 AKASHEVA Zauresh	KAZ		203 PAVLOVIC Andrea	CRO
15	x Bye				24-Mar - 12:00h Table 4		4 - 0 (3, 6, 4, 10)
16	203 PAVLOVIC Andrea	CRO					24-Mar - 19:15h Table 1
17	204 LUNDSTROM Annika	FIN					CHAMPION: 215 KUKULKOVA Tatiana
18	x Bye		204 LUNDSTROM Annika	FIN	4 - 2 (-9, 8, 7, -8, 10, 11)		4 - 0 (9, 9, 6, 6)
19	210 LADAN Ali Mohamed	DJI			24-Mar - 12:00h Table 5	217 YILMAZ Ozge	TUR
20	217 YILMAZ Ozge	TUR			24-Mar - 10:45h Table 6		4 - 3 (-10, -7, 7, 7, 6, -5, 7)
21	219 ZHANG Wanling	SGP				219 ZHANG Wanling	SGP
22	x Bye		219 ZHANG Wanling	SGP	4 - 0 (1, 1, 1, 7)		
23	x Bye				24-Mar - 12:00h Table 6	219 ZHANG Wanling	SGP
24	206 HARASZTOVICH Fanni	HUN					4 - 3 (8, -9, 11, -4, 5, -10, 3)
25	209 LAURENTI Jamila	ITA			24-Mar - 16:30h Table 3		24-Mar - 17:45h Table 2
26	x Bye		209 LAURENTI Jamila	ITA			209 LAURENTI Jamila
27	202 SOUSA Kailane	ANG			24-Mar - 12:00h Table 7		4 - 1 (5, 5, -5, 11, 7)
28	218 KHALIKOVA Kamila	UZB			24-Mar - 10:45h Table 7	218 KHALIKOVA Kamila	UZB
29	208 ASHTARI Mahshid	IRI					4 - 2 (2, 3, -7, 5, -7, 8)
30	x Bye		208 ASHTARI Mahshid	IRI	4 - 0 (0, 0, 0, 0) wo		209 LAURENTI Jamila
31	x Bye				24-Mar - 16:30h Table 4		4 - 1 (6, 8, 8, -9, 8)
32	207 KAMATH Archana Girish	IND				207 KAMATH Archana Girish	IND
					24-Mar - 12:00h Table 8		4 - 2 (5, 7, 10, -9, -7, 4)