

Malloy Medals in London

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[Marti Malloy](#)'s first Olympic match started shortly after 1:30 a.m. local time Monday in her home of San Jose, Calif.

An ocean away from home, the 57kg judo fighter took her first step onto the tatami and, standing barefoot, she was literally toe-to-toe with the second-ranked fighter in the world.

The weight of the moment did nothing to rattle the determined fighter once the opening buzzer sounded. With a variety of attacks, grips and counters, she forced Telma Monteiro of Portugal to sudden death golden score and then swept her foot to secure the stunning upset. Thus began a flurry of victories that led to her final step of the day: onto the Olympic medal podium.

Match after match she fought, as the early morning hours ticked away. By the time California woke up Monday, she was safely into the semifinals. After four victories in five bouts, the American was handed an Olympic bronze medal that put her in rarefied air.

Malloy joined current MMA standout Ronda Rousey as just the second American woman ever to earn an Olympic medal in judo.

Few sports match the pressure of judo, where one throw can end an entire Olympic journey in less than 10 seconds. And while she won four times in all, that pivotal opening bout not only set the tone for the whole day, but made her entire unlikely run to the medal stand possible.

Before Malloy entered London's ExCeL Center, Americans had only won 10 medals total in judo, none of them gold. Two of those medals were in Malloy's corner, in the form of Team USA's head coach Jimmy Pedro. And Pedro, who knows a thing or two about competing on this stage, never counted Malloy out.

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Phoning in from last Wednesday's practice session in London, shortly after brackets were finalized, Pedro said, "[Malloy]'s been on fire at all the big tournaments lately. If she's going to beat Monteiro, now is the time."

Marti Malloy and Nick Delpopolo fight for Team USA on the third day of judo competition.

Pedro acknowledged it would be an upset, but pointed out that each of Malloy's three previous losses to Monteiro had gotten successively closer. The last time they met, the match went to referee's decision, with Malloy dropping a bout Pedro felt she deserved to win.

Pedro felt confident, even noting that Monteiro often struggles in her first match of the day. And then he added prophetically, "Marti's capable of staying with the Portugese girl. She's capable of beating her. If she does that, I think you'll see her come all the way through to the semifinals because she'll have knocked off the number two seed."

That's exactly what Malloy did.

Malloy's next match was punctuated by a sudden ippon to eliminate Colombia's Yadinys Amaris in just 40 seconds.

Her quarterfinal match was one of her most exciting, as she grabbed an early lead against Irina Zabłudina, but then allowed the Russian to tie the score and force sudden death. A scoreless period led to a referees' decision, and this one went in Malloy's favor. After deliberation, both fighters faced each other in the center of the mat, and the ref dramatically raised Malloy's flag to claim her the victor.

Malloy then had a chance to beat Romania's Corina Caprioriu to become the first ever American in a women's finals match. She came out as the aggressor, but was thrown for an ippon with just seven seconds remaining.

On an exciting day that also featured two early wins for American [Nick Delpopolo](#), who reached the quarterfinals in the men's 73kg weight, Malloy willed herself to come up with one last big move in the bronze medal match against Italy's Giulia Quintavalle. Midway through the fight, Malloy took Quintavalle straight backwards for the ippon that made the bronze medal hers.

Credit Malloy for fighting all day, particularly for coming back to win the bronze medal match so soon after her disappointing loss in the semifinals. And remember too, that first upset in the middle of the night, which could have ended her Olympic journey before it had even started.

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