

Asian Wrestling Championships: Amouzad revels in bringing joy to Iranians after retaining FS gold

Sports Desk

Freestyle wrestler Rahman Amouzad said there was no bigger joy than making his fellow Iranians happy after he walked away with the 65kg gold at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

A gold medalist in last September's World Championships in Belgrade, the 20-year-old defeated Mongolian Tumur Ochir 3-1 to win the ultimate prize at the event for a second successive year.

An activity point for the Mongolian was the lone score of a staid first period in which the 2021 world bronze winner consistently fended off Amouzad's attacks. In the second period, Ochir attempted an arm spin, but Amouzad kept his feet and scrambled behind for a takedown. He then received an activity point to complete the scoring.

"I dedicate my heart and my soul to train hard to make the Iranian people happy. This is the biggest joy for me in life," said Amouzad – also a winner of three world cadet and junior gold medals.

Amouzad, who was only named in the Iranian squad after Payman Babaei was ruled out of the event with an injury, outmuscled host's Sanzhar Mukhtar in the quarterfinals before edging Japanese Ryoma Anraku 2-1 for a place in the final.

"I had less than a month to prepare for the competition. The 65kg division is the toughest in the world, but I enjoy being a part of that weight class. The Japan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia opponents were all truly good wrestlers," said Amouzad.

"I hope to repeat this medal at the next World Championships and the Olympic Games."

Amouzad was surprisingly the only one of the five Iranians to make it to the final showdowns on the first day of the freestyle contests.

Having suffered a last-four 8-5 defeat against Kazakhstan's Bolat Sakayev, Amirhossein Kavousi beat Yajuro Yamasaki 6-0 to claim a consolation bronze in the 79kg contests – sharing the podium with Indian Deepak Mirka – with Sakayev going all the way to win the gold, thanks to a 7-4 triumph over Zafarbek Otakhonov of Uzbekistan.

An Asian champion in 2020, Mojtaba Goleij also had to settle for a joint third-spot finish in the 97kg class – alongside Makhmud Veysalov of Uzbekistan – courtesy of a 11-0 win against home favorite Bekzat Urkimbay.

Bahrain's Akhmed Tazhudinov, who came out victorious against Goleij in the semifinals, eased to an 11-0 win against China's Awusayiman Habila for the gold.

Iranian duo Alireza Sarlak (57kg) and Morteza Qiassi (70kg) left the event empty-handed.

The freestyle event came after Iran had bagged 196 points en route to the Greco-Roman title in Astana.

Pouya Dadmarz (55kg), Iman Mohammadi (63kg), Nasser Alizadeh (87kg), Mehdi Bali (97kg), and Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) were the five Iranian gold medalists, while Amin Kavianinejad settled for the silver after an injury kept him out of the 77kg final.

Sajjad Imentalabfell short against Ibragim Magomadov of Kazakhstan in the 72kg final with Alireza Mohammadi taking a joint bronze in the 82kg class.

Kyrgyzstan followed Iran in the Greco-Roman standing with 166 points, with Kazakhstan standing third on 160 points.

'Terrible' Djokovic upset by Musetti in Monte Carlo last 16



Novak Djokovic (R) greets Lorenzo Musetti after the last-16 match at the Monte Carlo Masters in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France, on April 13, 2023.

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Novak Djokovic was knocked out in the last 16 of the Monte Carlo Masters by Lorenzo Musetti in three sets on Thursday after the world number one struggled badly on serve.

Djokovic, a two-time winner in the Principality in 2013 and 2015, was broken eight times before going down 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 to the 21st-ranked Musetti on a wet and chilly day on the Cote d'Azur, AFP reported.

"(The) feeling is terrible after playing like this, honestly. But congrats to him. He stayed tough in important moments, and that's it," said Djokovic.

The Serb led by a set and a break against Musetti, but the Italian youngster fought back in a scrappy second set and then prevailed in the decider after rain interrupted the match for an hour.

Musetti advances to a quarter-final meeting with compatriot Jannik Sinner, who saved a match point before beating Poland's Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1.

Djokovic, the big favourite in the absence of Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz, surged 5-2 ahead in the opening set. He dropped serve as he tried to close it out before breaking Musetti for a third time.

The top seed again looked in control at 4-2 in the second but was broken easily in a game that started with Djokovic justifiably unhappy over a line call that went against him.

Musetti won the next three games, successfully serving for the second set at the second attempt after blowing his chance while leading 5-4.

A rain shower early in the deciding set forced play to be suspended, with Musetti landing the decisive break to go 5-3 up and eventually sealing victory on his fourth match point. "I am struggling not to cry because it is a dream for me," said Musetti, who led Djokovic by two sets at Roland Garros in 2021 before having to retire.

"Beating Novak is something remarkable for me." Djokovic, holder of a record 38 Masters titles, has not gone beyond the last eight in Monte Carlo since 2015.

"I don't think it's catastrophic, but my feeling is bad right now because I lost the match. That's all," said Djokovic.

"It's not a great day for me, so I'm not really in the mood to speak."



Rahman Amouzad celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the freestyle 65kg gold at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on April 13, 2023.

● UWW

Ten Hag plays down Martinez injury fears

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag tried to stay positive about the injury suffered by defender Lisandro Martinez during the 2-2 Europa League draw with Sevilla on Thursday.

There was speculation Martinez had suffered a serious Achilles injury which would end his season, Reuters reported.

"I cannot tell what it is, but is not an Achilles," the Dutchman told reporters. "I have spoken with him and he is okay and he is calm."

United were leading 2-0 late in the game at Old Trafford, but

had to settle for a 2-2 draw after conceding two own goals. The draw was not the only disappointment. Martinez joined a list of injured players including striker Marcus Rashford, defender Luke Shaw and Martinez's fellow centre back Raphael Varane who had to be replaced at halftime against Sevilla.

"We have seen Licha Martinez drop out after a moment," Ten Hag told MUTV. "There was no opponent involved so it doesn't look that great but we have to wait. The medical staff have to do their job, to give the right diagnosis.

"I think (it is) an injury (that means) he will not play on Sunday," Ten Hag added, referring to United's Premier League game at Nottingham Forest. "I cannot say what the diagnosis (is). I prefer to wait and to know what it is."

Rashford, who has contributed 28 goals and eight assists this season, is expected to miss a couple of weeks due a groin injury.

United became only the second English side to score two own goals in a single match in a major European competition. Chelsea were the first, in 2019 against Ten Hag's Ajax Amsterdam.



Manchester United's Lisandro Martinez (6) is helped off the pitch by Sevilla's Marcos Acuna and Gonzalo Montiel after sustaining an injury during a Europa League quarterfinal game at Old Trafford, Manchester, Britain, on April 13, 2023.

● LEE SMITH/REUTERS

Bayern suspend Mane after claims he punched team-mate Sane



Bayern Munich's Sadio Mane (L) and Leroy Sane are pictured in a 3-0 defeat against Manchester City in the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals at Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Britain, on April 13, 2023.

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Bayern Munich have left Sadio Mane out of their squad for today's league match against Hoffenheim amid reports he punched team-mate Leroy Sane.

Reports in Germany alleged Mane hit Sane in the face following Tuesday's 3-0 Champions League defeat by Manchester City at Etihad Stadium, BBC Sport reported.

The pair reportedly had to be separated by team-mates after the altercation.

Bayern said Senegal forward Mane has been dropped because of "misconduct" and confirmed he will also be fined. "Sadio Mane, 31, will not be included in the FC Bayern squad for this Saturday's home match against 1899 Hoffenheim,"

said Bayern in a statement on Thursday.

"This is due to his misconduct after Bayern's Champions League match at Manchester City. Mane will also be given a fine."

Bild said former Liverpool player Mane, a two-time African footballer of the year, had complained about the way Germany winger Sane spoke to him after the defeat.

After flying back to Germany, Mane was picked up privately at the airport while Sane got the team bus.

Both Mane and Sane were back in training together on Thursday morning. Neither player has yet commented on the alleged altercation.

Bayern host City in their quarter-final second leg next Wednesday.

Mane joined Bayern from Liverpool for £35m on a three-year contract in June, shortly before prolific striker Robert Lewandowski left the German champions for Barcelona.

He scored six goals in his first seven matches in all competitions for Bayern but has not scored since October, struggling to replicate the Poland international's exploits.

Mane, who scored 120 goals in 269 appearances for Liverpool, missed the Qatar World Cup because of a knee injury picked up while playing for Bayern in November, which also kept him out of nine club games.