

Asian Weightlifting Championships: Iran wins men's title but more work needs to be done to succeed in Paris

Sports Desk

A total of 635 points was enough for Iran to beat Uzbekistan to the men's crown – ending a six-year title drought – at the Asian Weightlifting Championships. However, a more in-depth look into the team's results in Jinju, South Korea, offers a tough job on the Iranian federation's hands ahead of next year's Paris Olympics. Despite a top-spot finish in the team ranking, Iran had to settle for the 10th place in the medal table with eight medals – two of which were Fatemeh Keshavarz's bronzes in the women's contests. China dominated with a remarkable 43 medals in men's and women's competitions – including 26 golds – followed by South Korea, which won 26 (six golds), and Thailand (15 medals, five golds). Of the 10 men representing Iran in Jinju, only Hossein Soltani managed to walk away with the ultimate prizes of his respective weight class.

Soltani bagged the clean & jerk and total golds, as well as the snatch silver, of the 81kg contests – accounting for half of the medals the whole men's team collected at the event. Soltani was one of only two Iranians to win a total medal, alongside Mir-Mostafa Javadi, who took the C&J and total bronzes in the 89kg contests. Iranians' results in the Olympic weight categories were far more concerning, as veteran duo Kianoush Rostami (89kg) and Sohrab Moradi (102kg) – gold medalists at the 2016 Rio Games – left the event empty-handed and will be facing a daunting task to book their tickets for Paris. With the tournament coming a bit too soon for Ali Davoudi – who has recently recovered from an injury – Ayat Sharifi and Alireza Yousefi failed to impress when filling in for the Tokyo Olympic silver medalist, as the two finished second to Bahrain's Gor Minasyan in the snatch and C&J contests of the super-heavyweight class respectively.



Iran's Alireza Yousefi is seen in action in the men's +109kg contests at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Jinju, South Korea, on May 13, 2023. **IRNA**

Chelsea agree terms with Pochettino to take over as manager

THE GUARDIAN – Mauricio Pochettino has agreed to take over as Chelsea's new head coach after extensive talks with the Stamford Bridge club. Chelsea have been looking for a new manager since firing Graham Potter last month. Pochettino will be the third permanent manager to work under the Todd Boehly-Clearlake capital ownership since they bought the club last year. Nothing has been signed yet but confirmation of the Argentinian's appointment

should come soon. Pochettino, out of work since leaving Paris Saint-Germain last summer, emerged as the favourite after Chelsea held talks with the former Barcelona and Spain manager Luis Enrique and Julian Nagelsmann, who was sacked by Bayern Munich in March. The former Tottenham manager will need patience as Chelsea look to rebuild after a difficult season. The 51-year-old will inherit a bloated squad at Stamford Bridge. Chelsea, who will not be in Europe next season, have spent close to £600m on new signings in the past year. They will need to sell players this summer.

Chelsea hired Potter from Brighton after firing Thomas Tuchel – now Nagelsmann's successor at Bayern – in September. Potter struggled to make his presence felt and Chelsea, who are facing the prospect of finishing in the bottom half, ended up installing Frank Lampard as interim head coach last month. Lampard lost his first six matches before winning at Bournemouth last weekend then drawing at home to Nottingham Forest on Saturday. Pochettino, who played 20 times for Argentina, moved into management in January 2009 with Espanyol, for whom he had played more than 250 times. Just under four years later he was sacked but quickly took over at Southampton. He kept them up then delivered an eighth-placed finish in 2013-14, which attracted the attention of Tottenham. He achieved third place in 2016 and second 12 months later. He followed that up by taking Spurs to the 2019 Champions League final but they lost that 2-0 to Liverpool and he was sacked five months later. He joined PSG in January 2021.



GETTY IMAGES

Messi booed by PSG fans in win against Ajaccio

BBC – Lionel Messi was booed by some Paris St-Germain fans in his first match since being suspended for his unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia as the Ligue 1 leaders beat Ajaccio 5-0. Both sides ended the game with 10 men after Thomas Mangani aimed a punch at Achraf Hakimi, who retaliated. Fabian Ruiz and Hakim struck in the first half for PSG. Kylian Mbappe scored twice at the start of the second half before Mohamed Youssouf's own goal as Ajaccio were relegated. Ajaccio's best chance came in the 67th minute when Mickael Barreto's right-footed shot from outside the box just sailed over the bar. Messi played the full 90 minutes, returning to action for PSG for the first time since he was suspended by the club for two weeks after travelling to Saudi Arabia without their permission. Christophe Galtier's PSG are just four points away from a record 11th French title. They are six points clear of second-placed Lens with three more fixtures remaining.

AP – PSG's Lionel Messi reacts after taking a free kick during a 5-0 win against Ajaccio at the Parc des Princes stadium, Paris, France, on May 13, 2023. **MICHEL EULER/AP**



Alcaraz says focus will not change as French Open top seed



JUAN MEDINA/REUTERS

REUTERS – Carlos Alcaraz said being the top seed at the French Open was "crazy", something he would not have believed years ago, but the Spaniard will not dwell too much on his position heading into the year's second Grand Slam. Alcaraz, who turned 20 this month, captured the U.S. Open title in September to become the youngest man to top the world rankings. He will leapfrog Novak Djokovic into the number one spot again after the ongoing Italian Open. He is also assured of top billing at

the May 28-June 11 French Open. "It's great to be the number one seed at Roland Garros, in a Grand Slam, it's something crazy," Alcaraz said after his 6-4 6-1 victory over Albert Ramos-Vinolas in Rome on Saturday. "I wouldn't have believed it years ago, but yes, I'm very happy. "It doesn't change too much to be the number one or number two seed – I just focus on the tournament, on my game, on every match, and that's something that I try not to think about. "But of course, it's something great." Alcaraz overcame an injury-hit

start to 2023 and has already claimed four titles, including clay-court crowns in Buenos Aires, Barcelona and Madrid, to emerge as one of the top contenders for the trophy in Paris. "I grew up a lot in a year," Alcaraz said of his meteoric rise. "I have more experience. I have played great matches. I grew up thanks to that a lot. I'm more mature as well. "I would say in just a year I'm a totally different player. I read the match better than last year. I would say this year is totally different for me."

Suns fire coach Williams after second straight early playoff exit



AP – The Phoenix Suns fired Monty Williams on Saturday, two years after reaching the NBA Finals and a year after he was the overwhelming choice as the coach of the year. Williams had great success in his four regular seasons in Phoenix, winning 63% of his games. But three consecutive years of playoff frustration was likely too much for the Suns to overlook – especially after two straight years of Phoenix trailing by 30 points at halftime of elimination games at home. ESPN and the Athletic first reported the decision. "Monty has been foundational to our success over the past four seasons," said James Jones, the Suns' president of basketball operations and general manager. "We are filled with gratitude for everything Monty has contributed to the Suns and to the Valley community." Jones also said he made the decision to fire Williams.

The Suns had a 2-0 lead in the 2021 NBA Finals, only to lose in six games. They lost in the second round in each of the last two seasons, both times in an embarrassing finale – last year to Dallas, this year to Denver. "Neither day feels good," Williams said after the loss earlier this week to Denver, when asked to compare last season's debacle to this year's season-ending loss. Saturday likely didn't feel good either. The Suns now become yet another high-profile coaching opening, after Toronto fired Nick Nurse and Milwaukee fired Mike Budenholzer. Nurse won the 2019 NBA title with the Raptors, while Budenholzer was the coach who overcame Phoenix's 2-0 lead in the 2021 finals. It's the second major decision made by new Suns owner Mat Ishbia in about three months since the closing of the sale that gave him control of the club. In February, Ishbia green-lighted a blockbuster trade that brought Kevin Durant to Phoenix and gave the Suns a core – him, Devin Booker, former No. 1 pick Deandre Ayton and Chris Paul – that the team hoped would be enough to deliver a title.

It just didn't work, at least, not this year. Paul got hurt in the playoffs to continue his run of bad luck on the health front in the postseason, Ayton sat out the finale and Booker and Durant simply looked gassed by the time it was over. Of the last nine coaches to take a team to the NBA Finals, only Golden State's Steve Kerr and Miami's Erik Spoelstra are still with the franchise they got to the title series.