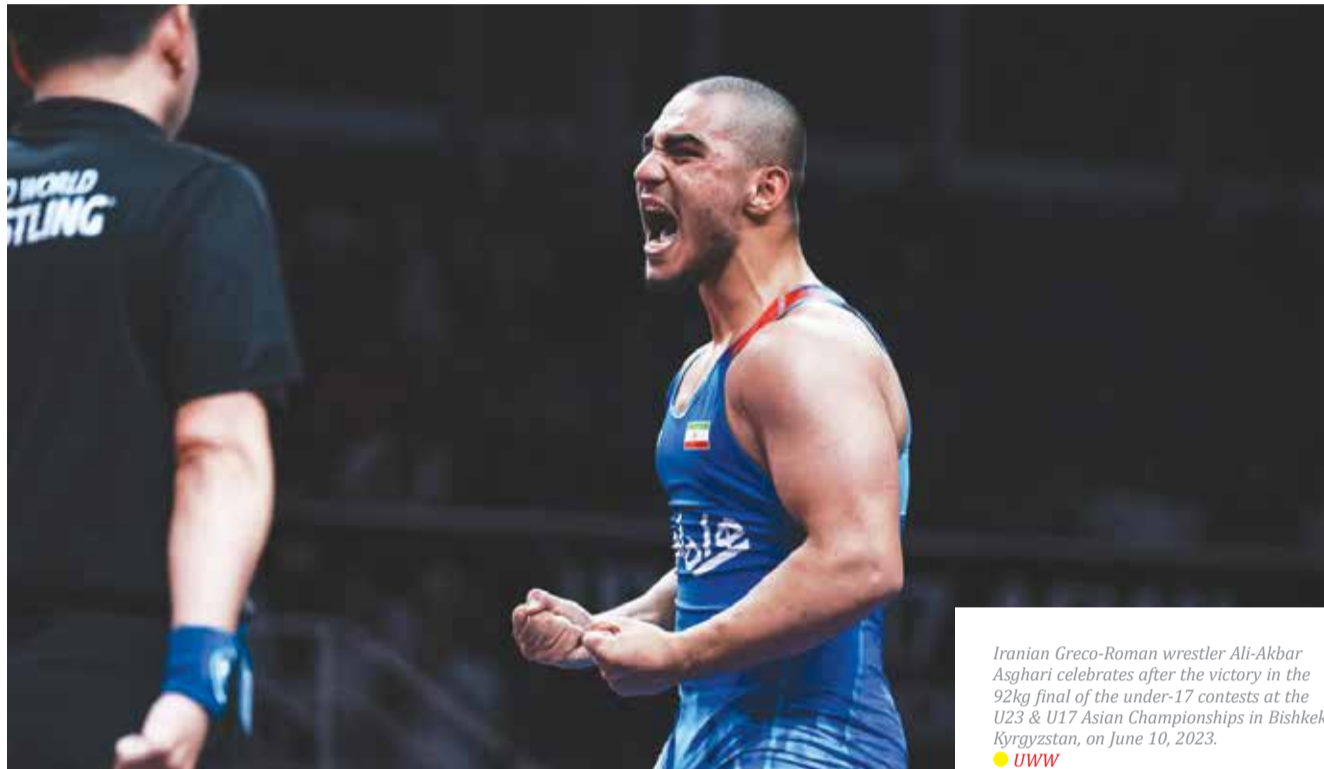


Iranian Greco-Roman team crowned Asian U17 wrestling champion



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Ali-Akbar Asghari celebrates after the victory in the 92kg final of the under-17 contests at the U23 & U17 Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on June 10, 2023.
● UWW

Sports Desk

Iran's Greco-Roman under-17 team cruised to the title at the Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, courtesy of a remarkable eight medals across 10 weight classes. Iranian boys claimed four golds as well as two silver and bronze medals apiece to finish atop the table with 188 points – a first crown for the country in four years – followed by Kyrgyzstan (176pts) and Uzbekistan (151pts).

On Sunday, Habibollah Rahimi settled for the silver in the 71kg contests after suffering a 12-2 defeat against home-favorite Yrskeldi Khamzaev. Elsewhere on the final day of Greco-Roman event, Ahmadreza Mohammadian finished his campaign with a consolation bronze in the 65kg class, thanks to a 5-3 victory over Tajikistan's Muhammad Yahyoev. Sunday's results came a day after Mohammad Meraj Mohammadi, Mohammadreza Gholami,

Ali-Akbar Asghari, and Amirhossein Abdevali walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective weight divisions. Mohmadi edged the host's Yrskeldi Khamzaev 4-3 for the 51kg gold, while Gholami defeated Indian Suraj Suraj by the same scoreline in the 55kg final. Asghari grabbed a third gold for the country after a 5-0 triumph over Uzbekistan's Sardorbek Rustamov in the 92kg showdown, with Abdevali clinching the top prize in the 110kg class

after a 5-3 win against Bekzhan Ismagulov of Kazakhstan. Erfan Moradi was the other Iranian to come short in the final showpiece as a 4-0 loss to Kyrgyzstan's Marlen Abdysamatov saw him finish on the second podium of the 45kg event. Meanwhile, Ali Dezfulejad bounced back from an 11-10 defeat against Kazybek Kalmagambetov in a thrilling 60kg semifinal to beat Varun Varun of India 8-0 and leave the Kyrgyz capital with a bronze.

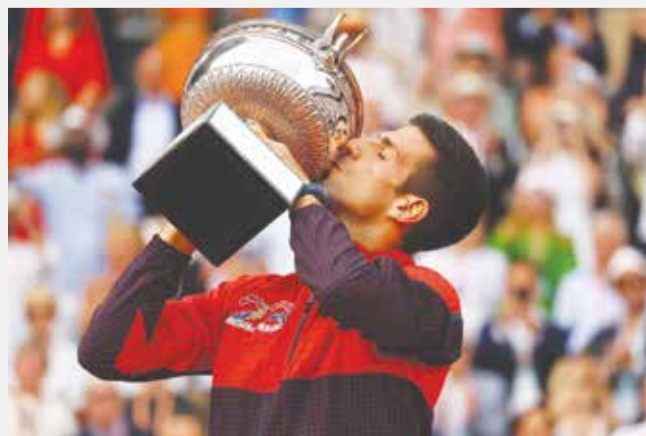
Djokovic cements status in GOAT debate after scaling men's Grand Slam peak

REUTERS – If the debate about the best-ever man to wield a tennis racket came down to statistics alone, Novak Djokovic's status as the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) would already be decided after he clinched a 23rd Grand Slam title at the French Open on Sunday. The Serb beat Casper Ruud 7-6(1) 6-3 7-5 to eclipse Rafa Nadal's mark of 22 Grand Slam titles and extend his advantage over the now-retired Roger Federer, who won 20 majors. The trio have dominated men's tennis in the last two decades with a collective 65 Grand Slam titles and divide opinion among their loyal fanbases and analysts about who deserves to be known as the best of the lot. But it is Djokovic who is currently the last man standing among the "Big Three" with Nadal effectively out for the season following hip muscle surgery, although the Serbian played down the significance of his latest crown. "I don't want to say that I'm the greatest," Djokovic told reporters. "It's disrespectful towards great champions in other eras. Each great champion of his generation has left a huge mark and paved the way. I leave these discussions to someone else."

The 36-year-old won his first Grand Slam title in 2008 when Federer had already claimed 13 of his 20 crowns and Nadal's era of unprecedented dominance was underway on the Parisian clay with the Spaniard primed to make inroads on the other surfaces. "I've always compared myself to these guys, the two greatest rivals in my career," Djokovic said. "I've said before they have defined me as a player. All the success I have, they contributed to it in a way... the countless hours of thinking what it takes to beat them. "It's amazing to know I'm one ahead of Rafa but at the same time everyone writes their own history. I think everyone has a unique journey they should embrace and stick to but of course the three of us and Andy (Murray), we reached the golden era." Djokovic's rise up the overall tally gathered pace in 2011 when he won three majors, a feat he went on to repeat four years later to get into double figures.

Novak Djokovic kisses the French Open trophy after the victory over Casper Ruud in the men's singles final in Roland Garros, Paris, France, on June 11, 2023.
● KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

The Serbian's steady progress in the last few seasons is a testament to his mental strength and physical conditioning, even as his fellow contenders for the GOAT title began to feel the effects of their long careers. Federer brought his career to an end last year at the age of 41 after winning 20 major titles while the 36-year-old Nadal may face an uphill task to swell his tally, with 2024 likely to be his final year on the tour. Djokovic has only gotten better with age and his victory over Ruud extended his win-loss record in Grand Slam finals in his 30s to 11-2. The Serbian's coach Goran Ivanisevic said he hoped Nadal could



return and win another major but had no doubt Djokovic had more titles in him to stay ahead with the calendar slam now a real possibility. "I'm really sorry Rafa is not here, but I said a long time ago, before even I became member of Djokovic's team that him and Rafa, they're going to go over 22," Ivanisevic said. "I'm hoping Rafa comes back and wins one more and Novak is the only player who can win a calendar Grand Slam. He was one match away two years ago, so he has a chance this year. "It's still a long way, but Grand Slams are the goal now. I don't know how many, but he has in his body a lot more."



Iran's Mobina Nematzadeh poses with the women's -49kg bronze medal at the 2023 World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Rome, Italy, on June 11, 2023.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO



Iran's Mehran Barkhordari poses with the men's -80kg silver at the 2023 World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Rome, Italy, on June 11, 2023.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Iranians bag five medals at World Taekwondo GP

Sports Desk

Iranians claimed five medals – including three silvers – at the Roma 2023 World Taekwondo Grand Prix. Representing the country in the men's -80kg contests, Mehran Barkhordari came out on top against Norwegian Richard Andre Ordemann – a gold medalist at the event in 2018 – in three rounds for a place in the final showdown but a 2-1 defeat against Saleh Elsharabaty of Jordan saw the Iranian finish with a silver in the first event at this year's World Grand Prix. Mobina Nematzadeh, 17, finished her campaign with a women's -49kg bronze following a 2-0 loss to Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Panipak Wongpattanakit of Thailand in the semifinals. The young Iranian shared the third podium with China's Qing Guo, while Wongpattanakit went on to beat Spain's Adriana Cerezo Iglesias for a 10th Grand Prix gold. An all-Iranian quarterfinal showdown had seen Nematzadeh beat Ghazal Soltani, thanks to a 6-0 win in the deciding round. The two medals came after re-

cently-crowned world champion Nahid Kiani had grabbed the women's -57kg silver on the preceding night. The Iranian beat South Korean Kim Yu-jin in the semifinals but came short against Great Britain's Jade Jones in straight rounds (8-6, 5-2) in the final showpiece. In the men's -58kg contests, Mehdi Hajimousaei, 18, booked a place in the final after a walkover victory against his compatriot Abolfazl Zandi – who was forced out with an injury in the first round. The young Iranian, however, had to settle for a silver on his debut at the event after a defeat against Spaniard Adrian Vicente Yunta in a thrilling three-round final, while Zandi took the joint bronze alongside South Korean Jun Jang. More than 250 contestants from 53 countries took part at the three-day tournament – serving as a qualification event for next year's Paris Olympics – in the Italian capital. Paris, the Chinese city of Taiyuan, and Manchester will host the next editions of the 2023 Grand Prix.

Neymar latest on Al Hilal wishlist after Messi snub

CBS SPORTS – Neymar is the latest superstar on Saudi Arabia's radar with representatives of Al Hilal in Paris as they attempt to secure the signature of the world's most expensive footballer. With Paris Saint-Germain eager to part ways with the 31-year-old and the Saudis prepared to offer a mammoth wage packet, the ball is in the Brazilian's court as to whether he wants to call an end to his top-level career in Europe. Al Hilal had expected to secure the services of Lionel Messi until he decided to sign for MLS club Inter Miami earlier this month; they and their owners, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), are eager to secure an alternative marquee addition for the Riyadh club as they look to build on the rivalry between The Blue Waves and Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr. As one of the most high-profile stars in world football, Neymar would tick all the boxes for Al Hilal. CBS Sports understands that a senior delegation from Al Hilal flew to the French capital on Friday, intending to test the waters around Neymar's camp and ascertain



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whether he is amenable to make the move to the kingdom. Personal terms would be comparable to those of Ronaldo, whose total package is believed to be around €200 million a year. Sources indicate that the Saudi giants, 18-time league champions, would be prepared to pay in the region of €45 million as a transfer fee however they are yet to open dialogue with Paris Saint-Germain over the signing. For their part, PSG would welcome any approach for Neymar, whose contract expires in 2025.