

## Iranian weightlifter Moradi ends illustrious career



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### Sports Desk

Iranian decorated weightlifter Sohrab Moradi announced his retirement from the sport at the age of 35.

Best remembered by his gold-winning campaign at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Moradi made the decision after struggling with several injuries in recent years.

"I hope to have won a constant place in your hearts and memories," wrote the six-time world gold medalist in a farewell message on his Instagram page on Friday.

His latest international appearance came at the Asian Championships in May, where he failed to finish on the podium in the 102kg weight class in Jinju, South Korea.

A world junior bronze winner in 2008, Moradi represented the country at the 2012 Olympics but left London empty-handed and then served a two-year ban by the sport's international governing body for failing a drug test.

The Iranian was back in the sport in time to book a berth for the Rio Games, where a total lift of 403kg secured the ultimate prize of the 94kg class for him.

The Olympic triumph was followed by further domination for the Iranian in the next two editions of the World Championships as he made a clean sweep of three gold medals on both occasions.

Moradi's total tally of 416kg in the 2018 world event in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, has remained

a world record to date.

A winner of 11 Asian medals – including five golds – Moradi also marched to the top podium at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia.

His career, however, was hampered by back and shoulder injuries in the latter stages as he failed to win a quota for the Tokyo Olympics, while double silvers and a snatch bronze in the 2021 Asian Championships were all he achieved during the past five years.

He was hoping next year's Olympics in Paris would mark a fitting sendoff for him but was given a reality check in May's Asian Championships as a total record of 362kg saw him finish outside the top 25 in the ranking list.

## Volleyball Nations League: Iran facing further US visa blows ahead of Week 3



FIVB

### Sports Desk

Iran could be without head coach Behrouz Ataei in Week 3 of the Volleyball Nations League in Anaheim, California, as the US Embassy in Ankara is yet to issue an entry visa for several members of the team.

However, Mohammadreza Davarzani, the chairman of the Iranian Volleyball Federation, remained positive that the visa process for Ataei and two of his players – Mohammad Valizadeh and Shahrouz Homayounfarmanesh – will be complete by Monday.

Iran will begin its campaign in Anaheim with a game against Tokyo Olympic gold medalist France on Tuesday before taking on Bulgaria, Argentina, and Cuba.

The reigning Asian champion has already been dealt a huge blow for the final week of the preliminary round as prolific opposite Amin Esmailnejad and starting setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi plus Arman Salehi will miss the four matches due to the US visa denial.

Davarzani ruled out Iran's withdrawal from the remainder of this year's VNL as the country could be facing "serious consequences" in the future international events.

The international governing body of the sport, the FIVB, announced last week that Iran's results in Week 3 will not affect the team's status in the World Men's Ranking – a decisive factor in the qualification process for next year's Paris Olympics.

Iran enters the final week in 11th place of the 16-team table – courtesy of a couple of victories over China and Germany and six defeats against Japan, Poland, Slovenia, Italy, USA, and the Netherlands – and there will be no room for further slip in the remaining fixtures if Ataei's team is to book a place in the quarterfinals for a second year running.

Top seven teams of the table will join host Poland in the VNL Finals – starting with the last-eight round in Gdansk on July 19.

The surprise package of the event Japan tops the table thanks to a perfect run of eight victories, with USA, Brazil, Slovenia, Poland, Argentina, Italy, and the Netherlands following the Asian powerhouse.

## Fury's next fight a 'game-changer' for heavyweight boxing: Promoter Warren

BBC – Promoter Frank Warren says Tyson Fury's upcoming fight announcement could be a "game-changer" for heavyweight boxing. WBC champion Fury has teased a big announcement for several weeks after an undisputed fight with Oleksandr Usyk fell through in March. The Briton has been linked with several fighters including MMA's Francis Ngannou and Jon Jones.

Warren told 5 Live Boxing: "I'm hoping in the next week or so we'll be in a position to

announce something." He added the announcement could be "a game-changer for the sport".

Fury, 34, has faced criticism for failing to agree terms for a fight with WBA (Super), WBO and IBF champion Usyk earlier this year, with the bout appearing to fall apart over a disputed rematch clause. Usyk is now set to defend his titles against his WBA mandatory challenger Daniel Dubois. Warren, who promotes Dubois, says that fight is pencilled in to happen in Poland

on 26 August. With Deontay Wilder and Anthony Joshua also in protracted talks over fights including with each other, heavyweight boxing has stagnated with all the biggest names stalling on making the biggest bouts. Heavyweight Joe Joyce was involved in one of the most thrilling heavyweight contests in April against China's Zhilei Zhang and has already announced the rematch for 23 September in London.

"Are we fighting, are you not fighting? Is there undisputed or not? Just get the fights please," Joyce said of his fellow heavyweights. "The fans are missing out. I am the only one who seems to be fighting these days." Huge offers from Saudi Arabia have turned the heads of many fighters including Usyk and Joshua, and Warren says money is the main reason the big fights have not happened. "The main reason is the market is good in some ways and not good in other ways," Warren said.

"There are these offers being made from the Middle East, Saudi. "That's made people sit back and wait rather than engaging in big fights right now, with what would be a realistic price rather than the premium they'd pay to bring them over there. "That's the real truth. And contrary to what everyone says, Tyson and us have been trying to make those fights in the UK."

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REUTERS

## Liverpool close to £60m Szoboszlai deal after triggering release clause



EFE

THE GUARDIAN – Liverpool are close to signing RB Leipzig's Dominik Szoboszlai as Jürgen Klopp continues his summer rebuild at Anfield. The 22-year-old has been heavily tracked by Newcastle after an excellent season in the Bundesliga that yielded six goals and eight assists. However, Liverpool emerged as front-runners to sign the Hungary captain after a meeting with his agents earlier this week and have now triggered his release clause of around £60m, with personal terms already agreed. Liverpool were under time pressure as the release clause was due to expire at midnight on Friday. Szoboszlai, a midfielder who also led the Ger-

man club to victory in the DFB Pokal final for the second season in a row, is understood to be keen on the move having joined RB Leipzig from sister club Red Bull Salzburg in December 2020.

Liverpool have a strong relationship with Leipzig and have allowed the forward Fábio Carvalho to join them on a season-long loan. The 20-year-old moved to Anfield from Fulham last summer for an initial £5m and on a five-year contract.

"He will now continue his development and gain more experience in Germany with Leipzig," said a Liverpool statement.

Meanwhile, Liverpool are to apply for a safe standing licence as they expand rail seating by a further 3,000 to 13,300 at Anfield. The initiative has been trialled for a couple of years, but they are now close to becoming the seventh Premier League club after Wolves, Tottenham, Manchester City, Manchester United, Brentford and Chelsea to have a licence.

As a result, fans in the Kop and the redeveloped Anfield Road end, which will open for next season and take the ground's capacity to 61,000, will be able to stand throughout matches and not just for significant moments such as goal celebrations.