

FIVB Men's U21 World Championship: Unbeaten Iran to face Argentina for final berth



Iranian middle blocker Shayan Sepehrifard (10) hits a spike during a 3-1 victory over Bulgaria in the FIVB Men's U21 World Championship in Manama, Bahrain, on July 13, 2023.
● FIVB

defending champion Italy in the other last-four clash today.

This was the six successive victory at the event for Iran, which is chasing a second world title in Manama after a maiden triumph in 2019.

The reigning Asian champion opened the competition with a straight-set win against Thailand before coming from two sets down to beat Tunisia.

Momeni-Moqaddam's side then outclassed the host in three sets to win Pool A and progress into the quarterfinals alongside Thailand.

Iranian boys picked up in the last eight where they had left off in the preliminary round, easing past Poland – bronze medalist in 2021 – in straight sets, and repeated the 3-0 victory over Thailand before Bulgaria showdown.

Elsewhere on Thursday, Italy, also yet to concede a defeat in Manama, rallied from behind to beat Belgium 3-2 (23-25, 25-18, 25-19, 16-25, 15-9) for a top finish in Pool F, while in the second-place decider Argentina defeated South American foe Brazil 3-0 (25-23, 25-23, 25-18).

Sports Desk

A place in Sunday's final showpiece will be up for grabs when Iran and Argentina square off in the FIVB Men's U21 World Championship in Manama, Bahrain, today.

Days after a disappointing Volleyball Nations League campaign concluded for the Iranian seniors' team in Anaheim, California, volleyball fans in the country took some consolation in watching their under-21 side continue its perfect run

in the Bahraini capital with a victory over Bulgaria on Thursday.

Amir-Mohammad Golzadeh chipped in 21 points as Gholamreza Momeni-Moqaddam's boys came out on top in four sets (25-17, 23-25, 25-22, 25-23) to finish atop Pool E in

the last-eight group phase. Mobin Nasri contributed with 16 points – including a remarkable five aces – for Iran with middle blocker Shayan Sepehrifard finishing on 13 points.

"The tournament has just begun for Iran. We are here

to win the title," said Iranian outside hitter Nasri, who hailed the team's "mental strength" in recovering from a second-set setback.

Aleksander Nikolov, meanwhile, scored a game-high 23 points – six aces – for the Bulgarians, who will play

Iran's Motaqian bags world javelin bronze, secures Paralympic quota

Sports Desk

Iranian javelin thrower Hashemiyeh Motaqian will be chasing a second successive Paralympic gold medal after securing a berth in next year's Games in Paris – courtesy of a bronze medal at the World Para Athletics Championships in the French capital.

Representing the country in the women's F56 class on Thursday, the 37-year-old Iranian registered a best throw of 22.95m to finish behind Latvian Diana Krutina, who tallied 25.81m for the ultimate prize, and Brazil's Raíssa Rocha Machado (23.05m). This was a third world medal for Motaqian following

double silvers in 2017 and 2019 and saw her join fellow Iranians Mehdi Olad, Elnaz Darabian, Amir Khosravani, Elham Salehi, Amanollah Papi, Rashid Masjedi, and Alireza Mokhtari in booking their tickets for the Paris 2024 Paralympics.

Olad and Masjedi had walked away with a couple of shot put golds earlier in

Paris, while Khosravani settled for a long jump silver. Olad's 13.79m throw sealed a second world gold for the Tokyo Olympic champion in the F11 event, with Masjedi topping the F53 table thanks to a successful 8.49m attempt.

Khosravani – also a reigning Paralympic champion – came second in the T12

contest with a 7.26m jump as Uzbekistan's Doniyor Saliev (7.47m) won a third world gold and Azerbaijani Said Najafzade – bronze winner in Tokyo – finished third with 7.11m.



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IOC warns over political interference in Olympics

BBC – Allowing governments to decide which athletes can take part in competitions "would be the end of international sport as we know it", the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has warned.

The organisation says it "has found middle ground" for athletes from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

But the Russian and Ukrainian authorities have opposed its plans.

"It cannot be up to the governments to decide which athletes can take part," the IOC said.

The body updated its stance on Russian and Belarusian athletes in a document released on Thursday.

The IOC has been under pressure to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing, even under a neutral flag, following the



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invasion of Ukraine.

In March it told sporting federations they should allow athletes from those countries to compete as neutrals. With the 2024 Paris Olympics due to start in just over a year, the IOC is still

fine tuning its stance on Russian and Belarusian athletes and said it has not made a final decision on their participation in next year's Games. However, it said the National Organising Committees of Russia

and Belarus would play no part in the Games.

It stressed that allowing participation "works", highlighting several sports in which athletes from the warring nations had competed without problems – though

some athletes have questioned this.

It also highlighted a ruling by the United Nations Human Rights Council, which advised that a blanket ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes would be discriminatory and a flagrant violation of human rights.

Wimbledon has also allowed athletes from those two nations to compete over the past few weeks, although Victoria Azarenka, who holds a Belarusian passport, was booed off court by fans after losing to Ukraine's Elena Svitolina.

Ukraine's sports minister Vadym Guttsait has accused the IOC of "double standards" for suggesting Russian and Belarusian athletes could compete in Paris, while government minister Oleh Nemchinov announced in April that

Ukrainian athletes should not be allowed to compete in qualifying events for the 2024 Paris Olympics if Russians are taking part.

The IOC criticised Ukraine for "depriving its own athletes of their chance to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and to make the Ukrainian people proud", and reiterated that point in its updated document.

"In such politicised sport, universal Olympic Games will no longer be possible," the IOC said.

It also criticised nations which supported the Ukrainian or Russian stances. The United Kingdom is among countries to have supported a ban on Russian athletes.

"The overwhelming majority of the world's athletes respect or support the IOC's approach," it added.

Jabeur ready to make it third time lucky in Wimbledon final



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur celebrates winning her Wimbledon semi-final match against Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka in London, Britain, on July 13, 2023.
● DYLAN MARTINEZ/REUTERS

REUTERS – Tunisia's Ons Jabeur believes the lessons she learned in two Grand Slam final defeats will stand her in good stead for today's Wimbledon showdown with unseeded Czech Marketa Vondrousova.

Jabeur showed incredible endurance on Thursday to absorb the brutal power of second seed Aryna Sabalenka to claim a 6-7(5) 6-4 6-3 victory after trailing by a set and 4-2.

She is now back in a position she found herself in at last year's Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, requiring one win to become the first African woman as well as first Arab to win a major.

"Last year was my first final of a Grand Slam. Definitely getting closer to winning the Grand Slam that I always wished," North African trailblazer Jabeur, who had a photo of Wimbledon's Venus Rosewater Dish on her phone last year but never got her hands on the real thing, told reporters.

"I would say I always believed. But sometimes you would question and doubt if it's going to happen, if it's ever going to happen. I'm going to learn a lot from not only Wimbledon's final but also the U.S. Open final and give it my best.

"Maybe this year was all about trying two times and getting it right the third time."

The 28-year-old sixth seed has lost twice this year to left-handed Vondrousova, who was French Open runner-up in 2019, and said she wanted revenge today after working "like crazy" to improve.

"I didn't win against her this year. She has good hands. She plays very good," Jabeur said. "Honestly, I will try to focus on myself a lot. I'm not sure how she's going to play her second Grand Slam final. We're both hungry to win."

Jabeur, who will have the Arab world rooting for her, has certainly earned her place in the final. She beat twice Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in round four, 2022 winner Elena Rybakina in the last eight and Australian Open champion Sabalenka in the semis.

"I think this year the draw is much tougher. Playing against amazing players that not only play good on any surface, but they play amazing on grass. That was very challenging," she said. "That gives me more confidence to be ready for the final. Also getting that rhythm of playing great tennis to be ready for the next match."