

Iran crowned FS champion for clean sweep of Asian U20 wrestling titles



Sports Desk

A total of eight medals – including three golds – across 10 weight classes saw Iran clinch the freestyle crown at the Asian U20 Wrestling Championships in Amman.

Despite being the second best against the Indians in four head-to-head final show-downs, Iranian boys still finished atop the standing with 191 points, adding the freestyle triumph to the Greco-Roman crown in the Jordanian capital.

India settled for the runner-up spot with 180 points, with Kazakhstan in third place on 160

points.

On Thursday, Amir-Ali Pouladi rounded off a glittering campaign for Iran with the super-heavyweight gold thanks to a 7-2 victory over Mongolian Nambardagva Batbayar in the 125kg final.

Iran's first gold of the afternoon came in the 92kg weight class, where Mohammad-Mobin Azimi defeated Sherzod Poyonov of Uzbekistan 8-2 in the final.

The two golds came after Ali-Abbas Rezaei had outmuscled Japanese Taishin Yamaji 8-0 to walk away with the ultimate prize of the 70kg contests on the preceding night.

However, Indian opponents proved to be intimidating for the Iranian boys, who managed only one victory in six bouts against the wrestlers from the new Asian wrestling force – a last-four win by technical superiority for Pouladi over Rajat Ruhel.

Ebrahim Khari left Amman with the 57kg silver after a 7-4 loss to Udit Udit, while a second final showpiece featuring Iranian and Iranian wrestlers saw Ebrahim Elahi suffer a 9-1 defeat against Singh Jaskaran. Sagar Jaglan added another gold to India's medal haul with a 6-3 win against Iranian Farzad Safi Jahan-Shahi in the

79kg final.

Amirhossein Alizadeh also left the mat empty-handed against Mukul Dahiya in the 86kg final – falling to a 3-0 defeat – as India topped the medal table with a remarkable five gold medals, as well as three bronzes – followed by Iran and Kazakhstan, which finished with double golds and six bronzes. Meanwhile, Iranian Hossein Mohammad-Aqaei took the fifth silver medal for the country, when he was beaten 10-0 by Kazakhstan's Yerzhan Bexultanov in the 74kg final.

Iran's hard-fought freestyle title followed an emphatic run at the Greco-Roman event

in Amman, where all Iranian wrestlers finished their campaigns with a medal to help the country cruise to the title with 205 points – 25 points clear of second-place Uzbekistan.

Mohammad-Morad Ashiri (60kg), Ahoura Bouveiri (67kg), Abolfazl Choubani (87kg), Amir-Reza Akbari (97kg), and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) bagged five gold medals in their respective weight classes.

Mohammad-Mehdi Miri took the 72kg silver, with Ali Ahmadi Vafa (55kg), Reza Qeytasi (63kg), Alireza Abdevali (77kg), and Yasin Yazdi (82kg) leaving the event with four consolation bronzes.

VNL Finals:

History-making Japan routs Slovenia to meet Poland in the semifinals

Sports Desk

Japan picked up where it had left off in the preliminary round,

coming out on top against Slovenia in straight sets to become the first Asian team to progress to the semifinals of the Volleyball Nations League.

Prolific outside-hitter and captain Yuki Ishikawa – the top scorer at this year's event with 232 points – chipped in a game-high 27 points to inspire the Japanese

to an emphatic 26-24, 25-18, 25-22 victory in Gdansk's Ergo Arena in Poland on Thursday. Yuji Nishida also contributed with 12 points for Japan, which won 10 in 12 outings to finish second to USA in the 16-team table of the previous round, while middle-blocker Alen Pajenk and Tine Urnauth had 12 points apiece for the Slovenians.

Japan will square off against host Poland today for a place in Sunday's final showdown. The European heavyweight walked away with a straight-set victory over the Asian powerhouse in the preliminary round but today's game will be a different task for the host as Japan had already secured a place in the VNL Finals before heading into the dead-rubber against Poland in the final game of Week 3.

Later on Thursday, a 16-point performance by Polish outside-hitter Aleksander Sliwka led the home side to a 3-0 (26-24, 25-21, 25-20) win against volleyball giant Brazil.

Wilfredo Leon Venero (11 points) and Mateusz Bieniek (10) also finished in double figures for Poland, while Alan Souza and Ricardo Lucarelli topped the scoring for the Brazilians with 15 and 10

points respectively.

The other last-four clash today will see reigning world champion Italy go head-to-head with USA – last year's VNL runner-up. USA defeated France in a five-set thriller (25-21, 25-18, 17-25, 24-26, 15-9) on Wednesday to avenge the defeat against the Tokyo Olympic gold medalist in last year's final.

Matthew Anderson scored 22 points for the Americans, with Thomas Jaeschke and Torey DeFalco respectively finishing on 16 and 12 points.

In the absence of injured outside-hitter Earvin N'Gapeth, Jean Patry led the scoring chart for France with 17 points – followed by Barthélémy Chinenyeze (16 points) and Nicolas Le Goff (14). Elsewhere on Wednesday, Italy made a quick work of Argentina in three sets (25-17, 25-13, 25-14) to advance into a second successive semifinal – thanks to a 15-point display by Alessandro Michieletto.

Daniele Lavia and Yuri Romanò had 12 and 11 points for the world champion, while Agustin Loser tallied 10 points for the South Americans, whose first-ever appearance in the VNL Finals came to an early finish.



Japanese players celebrate a point during a victory over Slovenia in the Volleyball Nations League quarterfinals in Gdansk, Poland, on July 20, 2023.

● FIVB

Iran to play Bulgaria in September friendly



● FFIRI

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Iran will play Bulgaria in a friendly game in September's FIFA international break.

Amir Qalenoey's men will fly to the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv to square off against their host – ranked 77th in FIFA Men's Ranking – at the Hristo Botev Stadium on Sept. 7, Mohammad-Mehdi Nabi, the vice-president of the Iranian Football Federation, confirmed on Thursday. Qalenoey, who replaced Portuguese head coach Carlos Queiroz following last year's World Cup, is tasked with steering the Iranian national team in next January's AFC Asian Cup in Qatar, where the three-time champion will be chasing a first title since 1976.

Iran is drawn alongside the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, and Palestine in Group C of the continent's flagship international event.

In his first matches back on Iran's bench after 16 years, Qalenoey lead his team to a 1-1 friendly draw against Russia and a 2-1 victory over Kenya in a couple of friendlies in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in March, before his side came out on top Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and host Uzbekistan to win the trophy at the inaugural CAFA Nations Cup in June.

Iran stood 22nd – second to Japan in Asia – in the latest FIFA Ranking – released on Thursday – with 1556.59 points.

Australia (27th), South Korea (28th), Saudi Arabia (54th), and reigning Asian Cup champion Qatar (59th) followed Iran in the AFC member states' ranking.

Man Utd sign keeper Onana from Inter

REUTERS – Manchester United have signed Cameroonian goalkeeper Andre Onana from Inter Milan on a five-year contract with the option of a further year, the Premier League club announced on Thursday. Sky Sports said United will pay 51 million euros (\$56.70 million) for the 27-year-old plus four million in add-ons.

"Manchester United has a long history of incredible goalkeepers, and I will now give everything to create my own legacy in the coming years," Onana said in a statement.

