

## Iran wins men's kumite gold, finishes third at Asian Karate Championship



### Sports Desk

Iranian men's kumite team won the gold medal at the Asian Karate Championship as the country stood third at the 19th edition of the competitions in Melaka, Malaysia.

On Sunday, the Iranian five-man side, which had won the Asian gold on four occasions since 2017, made a quick work of Kazakhstan in the final showdown as Saleh Abazari, Mahmoud Ne'mati, and Mehdi Ashouri came out on top against their opponents to seal a 3-0 victory – taking the country's medal count for the day to three.

A 2-0 defeat against Vietnam saw Iran take the women's team kumite silver, while in the men's team kata, the Iranian trio of Abolfazl Shahrjerdi, Ali Zand, and Milad Farazmehr won a bronze medal – scoring 40.6 points to beat China, which fin-

ished on 39.3.

This was a second bronze medal at the competitions for Shahrjerdi, who came out victorious against the Chinese Taipei's Chen Chao-Ching to share the third podium of the individual kata event with South Korean Park Hee-jun.

Kazakhstan stood atop the medals table with three golds, four silvers, and four silvers. Japan and Iran also won three golds apiece, but the Japanese piped the Iranians to the runner-up spot after grabbing three silvers against Iran's two.

The final day results came after Iranians had bagged nine medals – including double kumite golds – earlier in the individual contests in Melaka.

Atousa Golshadnejad – a member of the silver-winning kumite team – defeated opponents from Jordan, Kazakhstan, and China and then beat Sarah al-

Ameri of the United Arab Emirates 3-0 for the ultimate prize of the women's -61kg weight class. Behnam Dehqanzadeh, meanwhile, was the only Iranian gold medalist in the men's kumite contests – thanks to a thrilling 7-4 victory over Jordanian Omar Shaqrah in the -55kg final.

There were however rather disappointing campaigns for two high-profile Iranian men, Bahman Asgari and Sajjad Ganjzadeh.

Four-time world gold medalist Asgari, who missed out on the Tokyo Olympics due to a positive doping test, beat Sultan al-Zahrani of Saudi Arabia for a place in the men's -75kg final, before a 3-2 setback against Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azhikanov brought him a seventh Asian medal.

Tokyo Olympic champion Ganjzadeh eased to successive victories over participants from



Iran's kumite team won a fifth gold medal in six years at the 2023 Asian Karate Championship in Melaka, Malaysia.

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Macau and Indonesia but came short against Saudi karateka Tareg Hamedi, whom the Iranian beat for the Olympic gold.

Ganjzadeh still managed to get back to winning ways in the repechage bouts and defeated Emirati Sulaiman al-Mulla 5-0 for a joint-third place alongside Abylay Toltay of Kazakhstan in the +84kg event – a 12th Asian medal for the Iranian.

Two-time world champion Amir Mehdizadeh also had to settle for a joint-third-spot finish in the men's -67kg event.

The Iranian, who has double Asian golds under his belt, bounced back from a third-round defeat to beat Palestinian Mahmoud Daifallah (2-0) and Mohammad al-Otaibi of Kuwait (3-2) for the bronze.

Elsewhere, Sara Bahmanyar (-50kg) and Fatemeh Sa'adati (-55kg) won two women's kumite bronzes for the country, while Fatemeh Sadeqi took a third Asian kata bronze of her career.

Meanwhile, the second edition of the Asian Para Karate Championship took place in Melaka, where Iran was crowned the champion, courtesy of five medals.

Ma'soumeh Eiji, Rahim Golmohammadi, Abolfazl Chehreh-Qani, and Farzad Safavi collected four gold medals, with Hafez Hafezikia taking a bronze, as Iran beat Kazakhstan to the title.

Kazakhstan scooped two golds and silvers apiece, while Saudi Arabia finished third with one gold, three silvers and five bronze medals.

## Iran names 18-man squad for Asian volleyball title defense



volleyball.ir

### Sports Desk

Iran head coach Behrouz Ataei announced an 18-man squad for the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, starting August 19 in the northwestern Iranian city of Urmia.

The four-time champion will begin its quest for a third successive crown with a game against Hong Kong on Aug. 20 in Pool A – also featuring Iraq.

The members of the team will report for a training camp in Tehran on Tuesday.

The good news for the Iranian fans is the return of prolific outside hitter and skipper Milad Ebadipour, who missed the country's recently-finished campaign at the Volleyball Nations League for family reasons. Opposite spiker Saber Kazemi has also received a call-up by Ataei but Morteza Sharifi and Ali Hajipour will be ruled out of the event after being injured during the final week of the VNL preliminary round in Anaheim, California.

Pouria Hossein Khanzadeh and Mobin Nasri were also rewarded

with a place in the seniors' team after inspiring the country's under-21 side to a second world title last week in Bahrain.

Having endured a disappointing VNL run, which saw the Asian powerhouse suffer 10 defeats in 12 outings to finish third from bottom in the 16-team table, Ataei's men will be looking for a bit of consolation on home soil before heading to Rio de Janeiro in late September for the Paris 2024 Olympics qualification event, where Iran will be taking on Germany, Ukraine, Qatar, the Czech Republic, Italy, Brazil, and Cuba.

The following is the full Iranian squad for the Asian Championship:

Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi; Milad Ebadipour; Mehdi Jelveh; Amir-Reza Sarlak; Mohammad Valizadeh; Pouria Hossein Khanzadeh; Meysam Salehi; Shahrouz Homayounfarmanesh; Amirhossein Esfandiar; Mobin Nasri; Amin Esmaeilnejad; Bardia Sa'adat; Saber Kazemi; Mohammadreza Hazratpour; Arman Salehi; Mohammad-Taher Vadi; Ali Ramezani; Javad Karimi.

## Russian tennis player Zvonareva blocked from entering Poland



REUTERS – Russian tennis player Vera Zvonareva was blocked from entering Poland for reasons of state security and public safety, the Polish Interior Ministry said on Saturday.

The 38-year-old, a bronze medallist at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, was on the list of players of the BNP Paribas Warsaw Open tournament starting today.

"The Border Guard prevented a Russian tennis player from entering Poland. Vera Zvonareva, using a visa issued

by France, tried to get into our country on a flight from Belgrade to Warsaw," the ministry said in a statement.

Zvonareva, who landed in Poland on Friday, is on a list of people considered undesirable there, the ministry said. "After arriving from Serbia, the tennis player stayed in the transit zone of Warsaw Chopin Airport and today after 1200 she flew to Podgorica."

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) on Saturday said it was aware of the situation. "The safety and well-being

of all players is a top priority of the WTA," it said in a statement.

"Vera has departed Poland and we will be evaluating the issue further with the event." Poland has become one of Ukraine's staunchest allies since Russia invaded the country in 2022, and it has been refusing entry to people who support the actions of Russia and Belarus.

The tournament organisers did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment.

## PSG criticised by French footballers' union after leaving Mbappe behind

BBC – Paris St-Germain have been accused of "moral harassment" after leaving Kylian Mbappe out of their pre-season tour of Asia, and the French footballers' union said it could take legal action.

PSG's all-time leading goalscorer has told the club he will not extend his contract, which has 12 months left.

The club want to sell Mbappe, 24, now to get a fee but the France international plans to stay until the end of his deal.

The forward cost PSG £165.7m following his 2017 move from Monaco.

After Mbappe was left out of the PSG squad going to Japan and South Korea, a National Union of Professional Footballers statement said: "These players must enjoy the same working conditions as the rest of the professional workforce."

"The UNFP feels it would be useful to remind managers that putting pressure on an employee – via the deterioration of their working conditions, for example – to force them to leave or accept what the employer wants constitutes moral harassment, which French law firmly condemns."

"The UNFP reserves the right to take civil and criminal action against any club that behaves in this way."



AFP

Mbappe has been a key player for PSG for six years, scoring 212 goals in 260 games, and winning or sharing the past five Ligue 1 Golden Boots.

He helped France win the 2018 World Cup and scored a hat-trick in the 2022 final defeat by Argentina. He had been widely expected to join Real Madrid for free at the end of his last deal in 2022, but surprised nearly everyone by signing a new two-year deal at PSG.

After deciding he will not extend that deal any more, PSG believe he cannot remain part of their playing group.

Chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi has said it is "impossible" that Mbappe will be allowed to leave for free in

2024.

Former Barcelona boss Luis Enrique replaced Christophe Galtier as manager of the Ligue 1 champions this summer.

Meanwhile, Saudi club Al-Hilal, who lost the Lionel Messi sweepstakes to MLS's Inter Miami, has reportedly offered Mbappe a €400 million contract (around \$445.3 million) and would pay a €200 million fee (around \$222.5 million) to PSG, per French journalist Fabrice Hawkins. PSG will reportedly accept this deal if Mbappe doesn't agree to a contract extension by July 31, per Hawkins.

Al-Hilal is also reportedly willing to let Mbappe leave for Real Madrid in 2024.