

## Panahi, Botshekan win Asian junior wushu golds for Iran

### Sports Desk

The fourth day of the Asian Junior Wushu Championships in Macau, China, saw Iranians Sana Panahi and Zahra Botshekan walk away with double gold medals in the women's taolu contests. Having settled for a nanquan silver earlier in the competitions, Panahi came out on top in the nangun event, while Botshekan bagged the nanquan gold in her respective age category. Sunday's triumphs took Iran's gold tally to five in Macau.

Diana Rahimi had beaten the host's contestant for the ultimate prize in the women's sanda -60kg weight class, with Amir-Hesam Mohammadi claiming the men's -45kg gold.



Iran's Sana Panahi (top) and Zahra Botshekan won a couple of women's taolu golds at the Asian Junior Wushu Championships in Macau, China.

● IRNA

Narges Shahbazi had also finished her campaign on a high note with a gold-winning run in the women's changquan event. Elsewhere on Sunday, a final defeat against the Kazakhstani opponent saw Mahan Ahmadpour grab the men's sanda -56kg silver. Samyar Sadeqi (men's qiangshu silver), Setayesh Barati (women's -56kg bronze), and Rojan Fattahi (women's -52kg bronze) were also among the Iranian medalists at the 11th edition of the competitions in Macau.

# Wrestling U20 Worlds: Iranians steal the show with triple GR golds on Day 5



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L-R: Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (63kg), Alireza Abdevali (77kg), and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) grabbed three Greco-Roman gold medals for Iran at the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Amman, Jordan.

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Iranians dominated Day 5 of the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Amman, Jordan, grabbing three Greco-Roman gold medals across five weight classes. Abolfazl Choubani had to settle for a silver in the 87kg category after a 4-1 loss to Georgian Achiko Bolkvadze, while a 9-0 defeat against Uzbekistan's Alisher Ganiev in the third-place bout of the 55kg contests saw Ali Ahmadi Vafa leave the event empty-handed.

Ahmadreza Mohsennejad spearheaded the Iranians' gold rush in the Jordanian capital, thanks to a 9-0 victory over Kyrgyzstan's Zhan-toro Mirzaliev – an Asian under-17 champion in 2022

– in the 63kg final. Mohsennejad opened the scoring with a turn when Mirzaliev was put in par terre and then a stepout gave the Iranian a 4-0 lead at the break. Double gut-wrenches on a second par terre in the second period secured the technical superiority for Mohsennejad, who follows in the footsteps of his elder brother Mehdi – a winner of multiple Asian and world under-23 medals. Alireza Abdevali bagged a second gold for the country on Saturday, coming out on top against Moldova's Alexandru Solovei – a silver medalist last year – in the 77kg final. The two wrestlers exchanged activity points with

Abdevali holding the criteria after it finished 1-1 to avenge his final defeat against the Moldovan in the U17 world event two years ago. Meanwhile, Fardin Hedayati bounced back from last year's final heartbreak in emphatic fashion by cruising to the 130kg gold. Hedayati eased into the final showdown, courtesy of three wins by technical superiority, before defeating China's Wenhao Jiang in a repeat of last month's encounter in Amman, where the Iranian came out victorious for the Asian under-20 gold. Hedayati scored four steptouts and two take-downs in the 8-0 win over the Chinese opponent, meaning he did not concede a single point in the competition

and was not in a par-terre position for being passive even once. The superheavyweight class is dominated by reigning world silver medalist Amin Mirzazadeh in Iran, but the 20-year-old prodigy said he has already set sights on the major seniors' glory in the near future. "I have great opponents in Iran, including Amin Mirzazadeh, and I respect all of them, but I'll be doing my best to be a decent representative for my country in the 2024 Olympics," Hedayati said. "I want to become a champion in Paris and the domestic rivalries only motivates me to train harder for my ultimate goal of Olympic success," added the Iranian.

### Freestyle crown

Saturday's medals for Iran came after the country's freestyle squad had claimed the world under-20 crown for a third year running last week in Amman. Reza Shakeri (65kg), Mohammad-Mobin Azimi (92kg), Abolfazl Babalou (97kg), and Amir-Reza Masoumi (125kg) inspired Iran's title-winning campaign by grabbing the gold medal in their respective weight classes. Ali Rezaei (70kg) and Hossein Mohammad Aqaei (74kg) added two silvers to the country's medal haul, with Ali Khorramdel taking a 61kg bronze, as Iran finished atop the table with 165 points – 13 points clear of runner-up USA.

## World Athletics Championships:

# Crouser hails title defence as 'performance of his life'

AFP – Shot put legend Ryan Crouser labelled the successful defence of his world title as "the best performance of his life" given at one point he was unsure he would even be able to get to Budapest due to blood clots in a calf. The 30-year-old American showed little sign of the health scare as he dominated Saturday's final from the outset and twice broke the championship record. World Athletics president Sebastian Coe had pinpointed the men's shot put as the event to savour and Crouser did not let him down, signing off with a stunning 23.51 metres effort, five centimetres off his world record. Crouser, who comes from a family of throwers, said the run-in to the worlds had been "the most stressful 20 days I've ever had". "The week before I was supposed to leave I woke up with calf pain and we thought I had a partial tear in my calf. "We treated it like that but after 10 days of no improvement we had a doctor look at it and he said you have two blood clots." The two-time Olympic champion said that he then faced a race against time to be cleared to fly. "My training camp was scrapped so I had to find a way to get here," he said. "Luckily I had a great medical team working with me and they got me safe to fly. "So it felt like a relief just to get here, even though I didn't have proper training or preparation." Crouser, who in the 2016 Rio Games broke Ulf Timmerman's 28-year-old Olympic record, said his final throw would rank alongside his world record as the throw of his life.

"After all that it was the best performance of my life, given the health issues, the stress and all of it," he said. "It wasn't quite a world record but to me it was." However, despite his hold over the event, his great rival, two-time world champion Joe Kovacs, who had to make do with bronze, insisted that he was beatable. "Is Ryan playing in a different league? No, I don't think so," said the 34-year-old American. "Today you could see already in the warm-up that he would throw the pot outside the stadium. "He got one metre further than me, it's OK." Kovacs based his belief he could wrest the Olympic title from Crouser in Paris next year on having a smoother domestic run-in even though he admits he is "getting old".



American Ryan Crouser makes a throw during the men's shot put final at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on August 19, 2023.

● KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS