

Brilliant Biles wins two more world golds on final day



● YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

REUTERS – American Simone Biles won the balance beam and floor events on the final day of the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships on Sunday as she wrapped up her first international competition in two years with a haul of five medals – four golds and a silver.

The 26-year-old increased her record world and Olympics medals tally to 37, including 23 world golds.

Biles posted a total of 14.800 in the balance beam final for her impeccable routine ahead of China's Zhou Yaqin with 14.700.

Brazilian Rebeca Andrade, who beat Biles on Saturday to gold in the women's vault, posted 14.300 for bronze.

The American claimed her second gold of the day in the floor final with 14.633, 0.133 points ahead of second-placed Andrade.

Brazilian Flavia Saraiva completed the podium with a score of 13.966 for her first individual medal at the worlds.

"I wasn't too worried about medal count or medal colour," Biles said. "I just wanted to go out there and do my routines again. It doesn't matter if I'm going to get up on the podium or not, that wasn't something I cared about. I just wanted to compete confidently again."

"I had to prove to myself that I could still get out here and twist. I could prove all the haters wrong, that I'm not a quitter. As long as I'm out there twisting again and finding the joy for gymnastics again, who cares?"

Biles led the U.S. women's team to gold before taking a milestone sixth all-around title. She also won gold on balance beam and floor exercise after clinching silver on vault.

Elsewhere, Jake Jarman earned Britain's first gold of the competition by winning the men's vault final earlier on Sunday to become world champion for the first time in his career.

"I was super nervous going into this competition. I don't know why. I kept telling myself, 'just enjoy it, just enjoy it, anything can happen', but I still got nervous," Jarman said.

The 21-year-old finished ahead of American Khoi Young who took silver to add to his second place in the pommel horse and bronze in the team event. Germany's Lukas Dauser won the men's parallel bars final while Japan's Daiki Hashimoto took gold in the horizontal bar.

Highs and lows of Iran's run at Hangzhou Asian Games



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

Sunday's closing ceremony in Hangzhou brought the curtain down on a campaign of mixed results for the Iranians at the 19th Asian Games. When Iran's Ministry of Sport and the National Olympic Committee decided to send full-strength wrestling and volleyball squads to the Games the message was clear: Go all out for the top prizes.

Eight members of the Iranian freestyle and Greco-Roman teams stepped onto the mat only two weeks after the World Championships in Belgrade, with the volleyball national team leaving Hangzhou right after the final showpiece to embark on a 57-hour journey to Rio de Janeiro to take part in the qualification tournament for next year's Paris Olympics.

The overall outcome of the Games, however, was not quite what the Iranian sport apparatus had hope for as the country's 285-athlete delegation managed to cap-

ture only 13 gold medals across the two weeks – seven short of the figure the Iranians tallied in Jakarta-Palembang 2018 and the lowest haul since 2006, when Iran grabbed 11 golds in Doha.

In fact, Iran had to wait till the penultimate day of the competitions to reach the double figures in gold count – courtesy of title-winning performances by freestyle wrestlers Younes Emami, Hassan Yazdani and Amirhossein Zare' as well as a men's chess team gold.

The Iranians also collected 21 silvers and 20 bronzes, meaning the total number of the medals was also down by eight from five years ago, though the country was represented by 93 more athletes in Indonesia.

A seventh-place finish in the medals table saw Iran drop by one spot compared to the previous edition. While it was business as usual for the Iranian participants in several sports – including wrestling, volleyball, and wushu – the performances in certain competitions will fairly go down as a failure.

"I personally expected more from our athletes in five or six competitions. We had a dozen contestants in some events but they failed to win a medal," said Manaf Hashemi, Iran's chef de mission in Hangzhou.

The Iranian under-23 side was knocked out of the football event after a 1-0 shock defeat against Hong Kong, with basketball team – silver medalist in 2018 – finishing fifth.

Iran was represented by 16 shooters in the Games but only grabbed a single medal – a 10m air pistol mixed team bronze for Haniyeh Rostamian and Amir Joharikhah – and it was even worse in the archery contests, where all 10 Iranians left Hangzhou empty-handed.

The Iranian 10-member weightlifting squad had to settle for Ali Davoudi's silver in the men's superheavyweight class, while in taekwondo and karate, in which the country is regarded as a continental force, the results were relatively average.

The country's female athletes and teams took credit for 18 of the 54 medals in

the Games, though none of the 77 Iranian girls walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective competitions, indicating there is room for more work in women's sport.

Despite all the lack of success and below-par performances during the 15 days, there were still reasons for joy and optimism for the Iranian sport after some significant achievements in the Games.

The five-man team of Parham Maqsoudloo, Bardia Daneshvar, Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei, Amir-Reza Pouraqabala, and Pouya Idani notched up a first-ever chess gold for the country, while Mahdi Olfati's men's vault silver was Iran's maiden medal in artistic gymnastics.

Faranak Parto-Azar also had a historic run as her cross country bronze was the first won by any Iranian female biker over the 19 editions of the Asian Games.

Parto-Azar was joined in the history books by roller skater Taraneh Ahmadi, who grabbed a precious silver in the women's inline freestyle

skating speed slalom, while her teammate Romina Salek set a world record of 4.254 seconds in the preliminary round, though she was unlucky to miss out on the podium.

In table tennis, meanwhile, Alamian brothers, Nima and Noshad, enjoyed a memorable campaign as they teamed up with Amirhossein Hodaei to win the men's team bronze – Iran's first medal of the sport in the Asian Games in 65 years – before finishing third in the doubles contest. Ehsan Haddai's 16-year discus throw domination at the Asian Games came to an end with a silver medal, though he was thrilled to see his Iranian heir Hossein Rasouli stand on the top podium.

"We'll be looking to see the Iranians still deliver in taekwondo, karate, wrestling, weightlifting, archery, and shooting in the future, though more work needs to be done," Hashemi said, adding: "However, the Games showed that we could also fancy our chances of more glory in other events such as gymnastics, table tennis, and roller skating."



The closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games takes place in Hangzhou, China, on October 8, 2023. ● GETTY IMAGES

Iran coach Qalenoey names squad for Jordan tournament

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey announced Iran's 23-man squad for the upcoming friendly tournament in Jordan.

The Asian powerhouse will play the host at Amman International Stadium on Friday with the winner taking on Qatar or Iraq in the final.

Should Iran be pitted against Qatar, there will be a reunion with former Portuguese manager Carlos Queiroz, who left the Iran job after last year's World Cup to take over at the reigning Asian Cup champion ahead of its title defense on home soil in January.

AS Roma striker Sardar Azmoun, who was absent for September's friendlies against Bulgaria and Angola to recover from an injury, will make a return to the team. Persepolis center-back Hossein

Kan'anizadegan is also back in the squad after missing the previous two matches for disciplinary reasons.

Sepahan strikers Shahriyar Moghanlou and Morteza Asadi, who have been in flying form in the Iranian top flight this season, are not in the list, making way for Karim Ansarifard as the veteran striker receives a first international call-up since the cameo appearance against USA in the World Cup.

Three-time champion Iran will begin the quest for a first Asian trophy since 1976 when facing Palestine in Group C of the continent's flagship international event – also featuring the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong – in Al Rayyan's Education City Stadium on January 14.

The following is Iran's full squad for the visit to Jordan:
Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiran-

vand (Persepolis), Payam Nia-zmand (Sepahan), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal)

Defenders: Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Hossein Kan'anizadegan (Persepolis), Morteza Pouraliganji (Persepolis), Mohammad Daneshgar (Sepahan), Amin Hazbavi (Al Sadd), Ehsan Hajsafi (AEK Athens), Milad Mohammadi (AEK Athens), Sadeq Moharami (Dinamo Zagreb), Ramin Rezaei (Sepahan)

Midfielders: Saeed Ezzatollahi (Vejle BK), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Ahmad Nourollahi (Al Wahda), Mohammad Mohebbi (FC Rostov), Mohammad-Javad Hosseinejad (Sepahan)

Strikers: Sardar Azmoun (AS Roma), Mahdi Taremi (FC Porto), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (Feyenoord), Saman Qoddous (Brentford), Mehrdad Mohammadi (Esteghlal), Karim Ansarifard (Omonia FC).

