

## Khodabakhshi takes silver in world karate meet



● IKF

### Sports Desk

Iranian Mahdi Khodabakhshi won a second medal for the country in the World Karate Championships in Budapest, grabbing a kumite silver in the men's -84kg weight class. Khodabakhshi overcame opponents from Qatar, Libya, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Jordan before a last-four victory over Japan's Rikito Shimada but fell to a 9-2 defeat against defending champion Youssef Badawy of Egypt in the final showdown.

Reigning Olympic champion Sajjad Ganjzadeh got Iran off the mark in the event with a bronze in the +84kg contests on Saturday, thanks to a 1-0 win against Croatian Andelo Kvesic.

Meanwhile, Fatemeh Sa'adati was unlucky to miss out on a podium finish in the women's -55kg event after an injury ruled her out of the third-place bout against Ukrainian Anzhelika Terliuga.

Iran had to send a depleted squad to the Hungarian capital after the host country refused to issue entry visas for the male kata representative Ali Zand as well as the country's female kata trio and the whole para karate team.

# Iran's Alipour eyeing Paris podium after reaching Hangzhou heights



Mahdieh Qazvinian  
Staff writer

The speed climbing may not enjoy the level of publicity that football, basketball, tennis, boxing and etc. get in the world of sports, as far as television audiences are concerned, but the Iranians have been privileged to watch a fellow countryman ascend to a superstar status in the sport since his international breakthrough came a decade ago.

Reza Alipour first made a name for himself at the 2013 IFSC Climbing World Cup, though it was his world-record breaking performance at the event in Nanjing, China, four years later that earned him the nicknames of 'Persian Cheetah' and 'Usain Bolt of speed climbing' – when the footage of him scaling the 15-meter wall in 5.48 seconds went viral on social media.

However, a gold medalist at the World Championships and the Asian Games in 2018, the 29-year-old Iranian gradually faded away from the international stage over the course of the past five years.

"I guess the lack of climbing infrastructure and required facilities in the country made me lose my ambitions for further achievements," Alipour told Iran Daily. When Alipour stepped into the climbing competitions at the recently-finished Hangzhou Asian Games in China he was regarded as an underdog as there were some high-profile names of the sport in recent years



Iranian Reza Alipour celebrates winning the men's speed climbing gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China on Oct. 3, 2023.  
● YANG GUANYU/XINHUA

competing for the top prize. Current world-record holder Vedriq Leonardo and his fellow Indonesian Kiromal Katibin, who shattered Alipour's four-year record, as well as the host's duo Long Jinbao – a reigning World Championships runner-up – and Wu Peng – a winner in September's IFSC World Cup – were clearly the favorites for the gold but the Iranian showed resilience to beat the odds and become one of the 13 Iranians in the 285-athlete delegation to leave the Games with the

coveted prize. "Climbing at the Asian Games is always considered among the top-notch events of the sport. It was really tough for my opponents to compete with me in Hangzhou and I'm so thrilled to have bettered my personal record for the gold," Alipour said.

Having finished fourth in the qualification round with 5.184 seconds, the Iranian stunned Leonardo, who slipped on the wall, in the semifinal before taking advantage of Long's fall in the

final showdown to defend his title, clocking 5.302 seconds.

Alipour was also a part of the Iranian trio in the speed relay contest, which, despite a third best qualification time, was unfortunate to finish its campaign empty-handed after a false start against Singapore in the last-eight round.

"That's what speed climbing is all about. Milliseconds can cost you dearly," added Alipour.

And now the Iranian says he will be looking to build on

the recent success in pursuit of the prize missing in his illustrious career: The Olympic gold.

"I'll participate in a tournament in Indonesia next month, where the winner will be granted a berth at the Paris Olympics. Six more quotas will be decided through three qualification events before the Games. I'm confident I will secure a place for Paris. My ultimate goal is to win the gold in next year. I'll give it my best shot and I'm sure God will help me toward that suc-

cess," added the Iranian. Alipour has headlined the Iranians' campaigns in the international events over the years but he believes there are plenty more of his compatriots, who could star on the global stage.

"Iran is among the top speed climbing countries in the world, pretty much owing to my achievements, but other Iranians – namely Elnaz Rekabi – are also capable of succeeding in boulder and lead competitions, should they be provided with the world-class facilities."

## Ancelotti praises 'stupendous' Bellingham after Clasico double

Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham celebrates after a 2-1 victory over Barcelona in Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys, Barcelona, Spain, on October 28, 2023.  
● ALBERT GEA/REUTERS

REUTERS – Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti hailed Jude Bellingham as 'stupendous' after the midfielder scored twice to earn his side a 2-1 fightback win at Barcelona in Saturday's LaLiga 'El Clasico'.

Ancelotti said the 20-year-old Englishman kept surprising him with his maturity and that he gave Real the spark they needed to recover against a Barcelona side who dominated proceedings before succumbing due to two late stunners.

"(Bellingham) looks like a veteran out there because of his attitude. His first goal changed the dynamic completely of what was a difficult game for us," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"I can't deny that we are all surprised with his vein of form, especially with his

level and his effectiveness. He is everywhere on the field.

"Today he was stupendous and shocked everyone with his wonderful goal from the edge of the area."

Bellingham, LaLiga's top scorer with 10 goals, has made a smooth transition to Spanish soccer since his arrival from Borussia Dortmund in June.

"Bellingham's ceiling is easily scoring 20 or 25 goals this season," Ancelotti said.

"Even though we don't think of him as a goal scorer, at the moment he is scoring a lot of goals but we are expecting goals from the strikers as well."

Midfielder Luka Modric, who provided the assist to Bellingham's winner, also praised his team mate after another masterful performance.

"It seems like he's been here a long time, not three months. As they say in Spain, he landed on his feet. He exudes personality, character. It's no coincidence that he has adapted so well," Modric told DANZ.

"He's a top boy, with an extraordinary talent. I don't think even he can believe he's scoring so many goals... I congratulate him and I hope he keeps going, he can't slow down!"

## Fury survives knockdown in controversial win over Ngannou

WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury (R) is knocked down by Francis Ngannou during round three of a non-title fight in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on October 28, 2023.  
● GETTY IMAGES



BBC – WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury claimed a controversial split decision victory over former UFC fighter Francis Ngannou in Saudi Arabia.

Ngannou, 37, put Fury on the canvas in round three after connecting with a left hook. But while one judge scored it 95-94 in favour of Ngannou, two gave it to Fury at 96-93 and 95-94.

Fury's WBC heavyweight belt was not on the line.

"That definitely wasn't in the script," Fury told TNT Sports.

"I got caught round the back of the head [for the knockdown]. I wasn't hurt. I got up and got back to my boxing."

"He's an awkward man and a good puncher and I respect him a lot. He's given me one of my toughest fights of the last 10 years."

Fury's victory means a blockbuster bout with fellow heavyweight champion Oleksandr Usyk – who holds the WBA, WBO and IBF titles – which was agreed earlier this month, remains on the horizon.

An undisputed heavyweight contest, the first in the four-belt era, has been mooted for 23 December, but a cut and bruised Fury might struggle to recover so quickly.