

## Iranians bag five Asian junior boxing medals



● ISNA

### Sports Desk

The Iranian junior team collected five medals – including one gold – at the ASBC Asian Youth & Junior Boxing Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The final showdowns across 13 junior weight classes took place on Thursday, where Iran's Mohammad-Saleh Mesbahi came out on top against the host's Bekarys Nurmukhan to walk away with the ultimate prize of the men's welterweight (66kg) contests.

A second final featuring Iranian and Kazakhstani boxers saw Abdolrahman Dara fall to a 3-2 defeat against home-favorite Zhandos Alpybayev and settle for the middleweight (75kg) silver. Ashkan Hashemi (60kg), Amir-Mohammad Rostampour (63kg), and Abbas Garshasbi (+80kg) were the other Iranian medalists in Astana, finishing their campaigns with three bronzes after last-four losses in their respective weight classes. Hashemi was beaten by Uzbekistan's Sardorbek Saidakbarov in the lightweight semifinal, while Rostampour's run came to an end against Akhmedi Arvaz of Kyrgyzstan.

Garshasbi, meanwhile, left the Kazakhstani capital with a consolation bronze following a setback against Indian Hemant Sangwan in the heavyweight class.

# Sepahan appealing to CAS after AFC hands 3-0 loss

### Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan said it will lodge an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after being handed a 3-0 loss against Saudi side Al Ittihad by the Asian Football Confederation.

Thursday's ruling came after Sepahan's home game against Al Ittihad in Group C of the AFC Champions League had been called off minutes before the kickoff on October 3.

The Iranian top-flight side was also fined \$200,000 by the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, while being banned from playing its next three home fixtures in the AFC competitions in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium.

According to the committee's verdict, Sepahan "persisted in displaying a military and/or political statue in the area surrounding the field of play, and religious, military and/or political banner(s) in the stadium" which led to the cancellation of the match because of "an unsafe and unstable security environment within the stadium."

Sepahan "did not act in a politically neutral manner, and caused reputational damage to the AFC, the AFC Champions League competition and the Asian football generally," the committee's statement read, adding the Iranian club "failed to comply with and implement existing safety rules," as required in the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code, while its acts "provoked the general pub-



● Sepahan fans are seen in the stands at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium for a AFC Champions League game against Al Ittihad in Isfahan, Iran, on October 3, 2023.  
● RASOUL SHOJAEI/IRNA

lic during the match." Al Ittihad players refused to take to the pitch against Sepahan and flew back to Saudi Arabia right after departing the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium, with the club writing on X later that they were informed by the AFC's organizing official that "the game would not take place on the scheduled date and

the team is allowed to leave the venue."

In a statement on Oct. 2, the Asian football governing body said the match was cancelled "due to unanticipated and unforeseen circumstances," adding: "The AFC reiterates its commitment towards ensuring the safety and security of the players, match officials,

spectators, and all stakeholders involved."

Several sources, including the Iranian Fars and Tasnim new agencies, reported that the decision to cancel the game was made because of a bust of Iranian Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a US drone strike near the Baghdad airport in January

2020, being placed at the entrance to the pitch.

The result leaves Sepahan third in the group at the Asian elite clubs' competition – equal on four points with second-placed Iraqi side Air Force Club and five adrift of Al Ittihad.

Back-to-back home fixtures will see Sepahan play Uzbekistan's AGMK FC and

Air Force Club – likely at Tehran's Azadi Stadium – on Monday and November 27 respectively, before a final-day away game against Al Ittihad on December 4.

The five group winners in the West Zone of the competition will be joined by the best three runners-up in the round of 16, starting February next year.

## Fury v Usyk world title fight pushed back to early next year

**THE GUARDIAN** – Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk will fight for the undisputed world heavyweight championship in Saudi Arabia early next year, Frank Warren, Fury's promoter, has confirmed.

The fight had been scheduled to take place on 23 December but Fury's unexpectedly difficult bout with Francis Ngannou last weekend forced a postponement. There had been genuine concern that the IBF, one of the four main sanctioning bodies, would refuse to ratify the fight and insist that Usyk, as their champion, face the mandatory contender instead of Fury. But Warren said on Thursday that the IBF had agreed to the delay, on the proviso that it takes place no later than mid-March. "The fight will happen before 2 March and it will be for the undisputed title and all four belts," Warren said. "The IBF have given consent for that now and it's all done. The fight is on. Ev-



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erybody's agreed, and it will be announced fairly soon."

The postponement followed Fury's battle to defeat Ngannou, the former UFC heavyweight champion who switched from mixed martial arts to make his professional boxing debut in Riyadh. Ngannou fought with surprising poise while bringing his customary power to the contest, and he knocked Fury down in the third round. Fury also suffered a cut

on his forehead and he was swollen around his left eye after he won a split decision in a bruising 10-round non-title bout. Warren said that Fury needed a break, even if the fighter himself had declared his readiness to fight Usyk next month. "It's not just the bruising, it's also the fact he was in a 12-week camp and he's got a new baby," Warren said. Fury will defend his WBC title while Usyk

brings his IBF, WBA and WBO belts to next year's fight in Riyadh which, barring a draw, will produce boxing's first undisputed world heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis in 1999. Looking ahead to next year's fight, which will probably happen in late February, Warren said: "I think Tyson beats Usyk, I really do. Tyson knows this and he knows what to expect. Usyk's not going to change his style."

## Smashed records bring new focus to marathon ahead of New York

**REUTERS** – As athletes gear up for Sunday's New York City Marathon, falling world records have brought new attention to the distance event after a blockbuster year.

Ethiopian Tigst Assefa shattered the women's marathon record in Berlin in September, lopping more than two minutes from the previous best, with a time of two hours 11 minutes and 53 seconds.

Days later Kenyan Kelvin Kiptum beat compatriot Eliud Kipchoge's world record mark on the men's side with a stunning win in two hours and 35 seconds in Chicago. While another benchmark is unlikely to be surpassed on Sunday – New York's hills stand in contrast to the flatter courses of Berlin and the Windy City – the falling records have brought an extra buzz. "What's happening in the sport globally right now with these super fast times... it does bring this interest and attention to (the sport)," Sam Grotewold, the general manager of professional athletes with New York Road Runners, told Reuters.

"Women running 2:11 in the marathon – something we never thought we'd see. That's a guy's time. I do think it brings this level of interest and sort of awe to



● Kelvin Kiptum poses for a photo after finishing in a world record time to win the Chicago Marathon at Grant Park, Chicago, IL, US, on Oct. 8, 2023.  
● PATRICK GORSKI/USA TODAY SPORTS

watch what's happening in the sport right now."

The Kenyan former world record-holder Brigid Kosgei will make her Big Apple debut after five previous major wins, while her compatriot Sharon Lokedi will defend her New York title. Rounding out a fearsome Kenyan foursome are Peres Jepchirchir, who won in Central Park months after picking up Olympic gold in Tokyo, and Boston Marathon champion Hellen Obiri. Undaunted, Lokedi said the strength of the competition has only made her more excited to return to New York.

"It's nice when you have all those people – like, you all want to win and all want to get the best out of it," she told reporters on Thursday. "So it's good to be in that group."

Kenyan Albert Korir, who won in 2021, Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Abdi Nageeye of the Netherlands and last year's second-place finisher, Shura Kitata, are among the highlights on the men's side, along with the 2022 world champion Tamirat Tola. The Ethiopian Tola ran 2:03:39 in Amsterdam two years ago and said he has already set his sights on the men's world record.