

# Iranian Olfati on historic gymnastics medal at Asian Games



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Staff writer

Of the 285 Iranian athletes in the recently-finished Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, only 12 – along with the men's volleyball team – managed to walk away with the ultimate prize of their respective contests.

The outcome was probably not what the Iranian Sport Ministry and the National Olympic Committee had hoped for prior to the Games, as the number of golds was seven short of the figure the country bagged in Jakarta-Palembang 2018, being the lowest haul since 2006, when the Iranian athletes grabbed 11 golds in Doha.

Despite all the lack of success and below-par performances during the 15 days, the Iranian sport still reveled in some impressive achievements in Hangzhou, which could offer new sources of joy and glory in the future international events.

The Iranian five-man team notched up a first-ever chess gold

in the Games for the country, with Faranak Parto-Azar becoming the first Iranian woman over the 19 edition of the event to win a mountain biking medal – a cross country bronze.

A couple of men's team and doubles bronzes brought Iran's 65-year drought in the table tennis competitions of the Asian Games to an end, while Taraneh Ahmadi was an unlikely hero for the country by winning a roller-skating silver.

Mahdi Olfati was also a surprise Iranian medalist in Hangzhou, who, despite failing to finish his campaign with a gold, wrote his name into history books, when he snatched a maiden gymnastics medal for the country at the Asian Games by taking a precious silver in the men's vault competition.

"The Asian Games are among the most prestigious sporting events for every athlete and country in the continent," Olfati told Iran Daily, adding: "The gymnastics competitions were held at the highest level as some of the world-class con-



Iranian Mahdi Olfati is seen in action in the men's vault final of the artistic gymnastics competitions at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, on September 29, 2023.  
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

testants took part at the event."

"China and Japan are among the gymnastics hubs in the world and had some top-ranked athletes in the Games. I'm thrilled to have competed with them in Hangzhou," said the 24-year-old Iranian, who scored 14.783 points to finish behind Japanese Wataru Tanigawa – a four-time world medalist and an Olympic silver winner in Tokyo two years ago. "We were barely regarded as the favorites for glory in the past, but now we are among the medal hopefuls at every tournament. I'm sure other Iranians also deserved to leave the Asian Games with a medal," Olfati said.

Olfati's silver sums up years of improvement and development in the gymnastics in Iran, headlined by Mahdi Ahmad-Kohani and Saedreza Keikha, who have won multiple world and continental medals in recent years, with the latter having several moves named after him in the pommel horse category.

"I wish I can also register a couple of moves in the FIG's Code of

Points one day, just like Keikha did," Olfati said of his future ambitions. Next for the Iranian are the Olympic qualifying tournaments in the coming months before the main event in Paris next year.

"I'll participate in four Olympic qualification events, which will get underway in March and will be hosted by Egypt, Germany, Qatar, and Azerbaijan. An overall top-two finish across the four tournaments will secure a berth in the Olympics," added Olfati, whose ultimate goal is "to win a medal in Paris."

Having started in the gymnastics in the age of seven, Olfati joined the national team in 2017 and went on to represent the country at the Summer Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires a year later before grabbing a vault silver at the FIG World Cup series in Cottbus, Germany, earlier this year.

When asked about his future plans, Olfati said he would be looking to "open a top-notch gymnastics academy in my home town in Golestan Province [in northeast Iran]."

## Iran completes lineup for world table tennis meet



Noshad Alamian (L) and Nima Alamian, pictured at the Hangzhou Asian Games, will represent Iran at the World Team Table Tennis Championships in Busan, South Korea, in February.  
● IRNA

### Sports Desk

Iran named the five-man squad for the 2024 World Team Table Tennis Championships – starting February 16 in Busan, South Korea.

Mohammad Mousavi and Matin Heydari finished as the top two after 13 rounds of matches in the national team trails to book a place at world event, which will also serve as part of the qualifiers for next year's Paris Olympics.

The Iranian duo will be joined by Amirhossein Hodaei, Nima Alamian, and Noshad Alamian, who will step into the competition fresh from an impressive run in the Hangzhou Asian Games in October, where they brought the

country's 65-year wait for a table tennis medal at the event to an end.

The trio finished second to Hong Kong in the group before defeating Vietnam and Japan – Olympic bronze winner on home soil two years ago – to progress into the semifinals.

A last-four defeat against South Korea saw Iran settle for a joint team bronze alongside the Chinese Taipei.

Alamian brothers then teamed up to beat the Japanese duo of Mizuki Oikawa and Taisei Matsushita in the men's doubles quarterfinals, but their fairy tale in Hangzhou came to an end in the semifinals, where a loss to the host's Fan Zhendong – a team gold medalist in Tokyo Olympics – and Wang Chuqin sealed bronze medal for Iran.

## NBA roundup:

### Warriors survive close call, edge Thunder

**REUTERS** – Stephen Curry scored 30 points, including the winning layup in the final second, to lift the Golden State Warriors to a 141-139 victory over the host Oklahoma City Thunder on Friday in an NBA in-season tournament game.

As Curry's ball was going through the basket, Draymond Green made contact with the rim. After a lengthy review, Green's contact was deemed "not to cause the ball to take an unnatural bounce" and the basket was counted.

Dario Saric added 20 points off the bench for the Warriors, who have won five consecutive games following an opening loss.

Luguentz Dort scored 29 points, making all six of his 3-point attempts, to lead Oklahoma City.

Elsewhere, Damian Lillard scored 15 of his team-high 30 points in the fourth quarter as Milwaukee Bucks beat visiting New York Knicks 110-105 in the teams' first game of the NBA's inaugural in-season tournament.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 22 points, Jae Crowder added 14, MarJon Beauchamp had 13 and Brook Lopez finished with 13 points and eight blocks for Milwaukee.

Jalen Brunson led the Knicks with 45 points. Brunson hit a 3-pointer with 1:10 left to give New York its first lead since early in the second quarter, but Lillard scored the next six points as the Bucks pulled away.

Myles Turner went for a season-high 27 points, Tyrese Haliburton buried a long-range 2-pointer with 17.7 sec-



Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) shoots a three point basket during a victory over the Thunder in an NBA in-season tournament game in Oklahoma City, OK, US, on Nov. 3, 2023.  
● ALONZO ADAMS/USA TODAY SPORTS

onds remaining and hosts Indiana Pacers beat Cleveland Cavaliers 121-116 in Indianapolis to become the first winner in the NBA's new in-season tournament.

Cavaliers' Donovan Mitchell led all scorers with 38 points to go with a team-high nine assists. He shot 4-for-7 on 3-pointers, but the Cavaliers were outscored 45-24 by the Pacers from beyond the arc.

Nikola Jokic had 33 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists, Michael Porter Jr. scored 24 points and grabbed nine rebounds and hosts Denver

Nuggets beat Dallas 125-114 in the in-season tournament opener for both teams.

Jamal Murray logged 18 points and 13 assists, and Aaron Gordon also scored 18 points for the Nuggets. Luka Doncic had 34 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, while Kyrie Irving scored 22 points in his return to the lineup for the Mavericks. Dallas was without head coach Jason Kidd, who didn't make the trip due to a non-COVID illness. Assistant Sean Sweeney served as the acting head coach.