

Iranian Javer opens up on emotional road to glory at Asian Games



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September's rowing contests at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China saw Iranian girl Mahsa Javer take her personal tally in the history of the prestigious event to four medals.

A lightweight quadruple sculls bronze medalist in Incheon 2014, Javer was part of the Iranian team that finished as the runner-up in the category in the cohost Indonesian city of Palembang four years later, before taking credit for two of the seven Iranian female silvers in Hangzhou.

Javer teamed up with Zeinab Norouzi to finish second in the women's double sculls final and the Iranian duo then repeated the success, along with Nazanin Malaei and Fatemeh Mojallal, in the quadruple event.

The buildup to the Games, however, was not an easy experience for Javer at all, for personal reasons, she told Iran Daily.

"We had a 30-day training camp in Russia and then I was in Iran for two or three days before spending 10 days in China for the Asian Games. I had to be



Iranian rower Mahsa Javer (l.) celebrates with Zeinab Norouzi after winning the women's double sculls silver at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, on September 24, 2023.

away from my six-year-old daughter and my eyes filled with tears every time I saw a little child during that period. I've always done my best to have some time for my daughter but hours of training sometimes take your energy away," said the Iranian. Javer says she was still

thrilled to see all that hard work eventually pay off when she and her doubles partner won a first medal for Iran in Hangzhou.

"We trained for hours on a daily basis in Russia. Zeinab and I bettered our personal record on several occasions in the training sessions and our coach believed those

records would be enough for us to compete with the best in the continent at the Asian Games," Javer said. "We put in all our efforts to overtake the Chinese teams in both finals, but in rowing, you can't expect to do exceptional things in a single race. You can't reach beyond your personal re-

ords." China grabbed 11 of the 14 gold medals up for grabs across the male and female contests, including the ultimate prize of the women's quadruple sculls final for Chen Yunxia, Zhang Ling, Lü Yang, Cui Xiaotong, who stepped into the event on home soil as the reigning

Olympic champions. Uzbekistan also enjoyed a couple of final victories in Hangzhou, with the other gold going to Hong Kong. "I was still thankful to God that all those hours of training and the long time away from my child eventually yielded success at the Asian Games. I want my daughter

to be proud of her mother's achievements when she is a grown-up," said Javer, who shed tears when speaking about her daughter, Melin, during a TV interview after receiving the double sculls silver.

"I could only count the minutes to return to Iran after my campaign in Hangzhou was finally over. You can not imagine how I felt when I saw her in the airport. She told me: 'What took you so long to come back, mom? Now you'll have to take me to the park.' We were literally inseparable for a week as it was the time for me to resume my motherhood duties," added Javer, who is full of gratitude for her mother for being with her through all her training sessions in Iran just to look after Melin.

The professional career, meanwhile, remains a priority for Javer as she is back in training ahead of next May's Olympic qualifiers in South Korea.

A medal in the Paris Olympics might be far beyond the Iranian girl's reach, given "the lack of proper sculls, oars, and rowing lakes in the country," she says, but Javer will still be looking to exceed her own personal best time in the French capital.

Azmoun off the mark in Serie A, spearheads Roma's dramatic win



AS Roma striker Sardar Azmoun (l.) celebrates with Argentine Paulo Dybala during a 2-1 victory over Lecce in Serie A at the Stadio Olimpico, Rome, Italy, on November 5, 2023.

Sports Desk

Sardar Azmoun opened his account for AS Roma to help the Italian club come from behind in the stoppage time and beat Lecce 2-1 in Serie A.

The Iranian striker came off the bench with 17 minutes left on the clock at the Stadio Olimpico to bag the equalizer for Jose Mourinho's men with a thumping header from near the penalty spot in the 91st min-

ute, canceling out Pontus Almqvist's 71st-minute opener for the visiting side. This was a first club goal since April 8 for the Iranian international, who joined AS Roma on loan from German top-flight club Leverkusen in the summer but has seen his contribution in the new season limited to six cameo appearances.

Romelu Lukaku's left-footed effort from the center of the box found the top corner in the fourth min-

ute of added time as Roma salvaged the maximum points - bringing a sigh of relief for the Belgian, who had been denied from the spot by Lecce keeper Wladimiro Falcone early in the first half.

"We knew it was going to be difficult today, but we were focused until the end so as not to lose. We showed character, it's the right reward for our hard work," an ecstatic Azmoun told DAZN after the game.

"Scoring my first goal was an incredible moment. I've been waiting for this moment. I worked a lot to be ready tonight. I love this team and this city; my daughter was born here," added the Iranian, who dedicated his first Serie A strike to "my parents and my wife."

"We took the old philosophy that losing by one or 10 is the same," Portuguese Mourinho told DAZN.

"In the first half the game could have been almost over for us, but in the end the team had put in the heart and responded to a very risky situation.

"These three points were really important for us, now we are closer to the others." A fifth victory in 11 league outings took the Giallorossi's tally to 17 points for the season, leaving Mourinho's side seventh in the table - four points adrift of the Champions League qualification zone.

Inter is on top with 28 points - thanks to Saturday's 2-1 away victory over 10-man Atalanta - followed by Juventus, which walked away with a 1-0 win at Fiorentina on Sunday. Milan is third on 22 points and fell further off the pace after a 1-0 setback against Udinese at San Siro, with Napoli overtaking Atalanta for the fourth spot after a 2-0 win at Salernitana.

Tola crushes competition in men's NYC Marathon, Obiri wins women's race



Ethiopian Tamirat Tola crosses the finish line in the men's race of the New York City Marathon on Nov. 5, 2023.

CRAIG RUTTLE/AP

REUTERS - Ethiopian Tamirat Tola crushed the competition to win the New York City Marathon in a course record two hours, four minutes and 58 seconds on Sunday, while Kenyan Hellen Obiri won the women's race in 2:27:23. The 2022 world champion left no doubt that the win was his as he built a nearly two minute lead by the 40-kilometre mark. Kenyan Albert Korir finished second in 2:06:57, while Ethiopian Shura Kitata was third in 2:07:11. Competing in perfect conditions, Tola exorcised the

disappointment of two prior fourth-place finishes in New York, relying on the boisterous Big Apple crowd for motivation as he ran on his own for several kilometres.

"The people of New York (are) amazing," said Tola, who hoisted his arms aloft as he claimed his first World Marathon Major title after taking third in London earlier this year. "I work hard training so it is confidence for me." Obiri produced an extraordinary final kick in the women's race to outlast Ethiopian Letesenbet Gid-

ey, who crossed the finish line about six seconds behind, as last year's winner, Kenyan Sharon Lokedi, finished third in 2:27:33.

"My first debut here was terrible for me," said Obiri, after finishing sixth last year. "Sometimes you learn from your mistake... Finally, I made it."

The star-studded women's field began at a surprisingly slow pace, as a crowded lead pack kept together through the 30-kilometre mark, before the tempo picked up considerably with less than eight kilometres to go.