

Iranian saber team remains on course for Olympic berth



Mahdieh Qazvinian
Staff writer

Iranian fencer Mohammad Rahbari said the country's saber team has "a decent chance" to secure a quota for next year's Paris Olympics. Rahbari was part of the Iranian trio - alongside Ali Pakdaman and Mohammad Fotouhi - that beat China to make it to the last eight of the men's team event at the FIE World Cup in Algiers, only to suffer a 45-40 defeat against Hungary. The result left Iran in the sixth spot of the FIE Team Ranking - second to South Korea in the continent - with Japan in seventh after a quarterfinal loss to the South Koreans. "We collected 26 points in the Olympic qualification process and have a decent chance to book a berth for the Games in Paris," Rahbari told Iran Daily. Iran got off to a flying start against Hungary as Pakdaman and Rahbari

came out on top against Aron Szilagyi and Csanad Gemesi respectively. However, the Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist bounced back with five successive wins to seal the victory, with Rahbari's triumph over Szilagyi only a consolation for the Asian team. "We will have to participate in four more qualifiers in France, Tunisia, Poland, and Italy before the final qualification tournament in Hungary in April," added the Iranian. "We've already set sights on winning a maiden fencing medal at the Olympics for the country and will give it our best shot to finish on the podium," Rahbari said. Rahbari stepped into the tournament in the Algerian capital on the back of an impressive campaign at the Hangzhou Asian Games, where he bagged the individual and team bronze medals. "The level of the competition in Hangzhou was equal to the top international events of the

sport, as some world and Olympic medalist took part at the event. South Korea and China are the world heavyweights in fencing," said the world No. 32, who fell to a semifinal setback against Oh Sang-uk - a member of South Korea's gold-winning side in Tokyo - to share the bronze with Yousef al-Shamlan of Kuwait, while Oh went on to beat his fellow coun-

tryman Gu Bon-gil for the gold. The bronze was followed by another third-spot finish for Rahbari, who teamed up with Pakdaman, Fotouhi and Farzad Baher to beat Hong Kong in the quarterfinals before a 45-41 loss to the host - a fourth Asian Games medal for Rahbari after he grabbed double team silvers in the previous two editions.



Iranian fencer Mohammad Rahbari celebrates during a saber contest at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China in September 2023.
● NOCI



Iranian weightlifters eyeing glory at world junior event



Iranian Alireza Yousefi will put his three gold medals on the line in the men's superheavyweight contest of the IWF Junior World Championships.
● jamaran.news

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifters will be looking to have a decent run at the IWF Junior World Championships when getting their campaign underway in Guadalajara, Mexico, on Sunday. Alireza Yousefi will headline the Iranian 10-man squad at the event, chasing a clean sweep of +109kg gold medals for a second year running,

after he shattered the world snatch record of the age group on his way to triple golds in Heraklion, Greece, last year. Yousefi will enter the tournament with a highest entry record of 380kg, while his fellow Iranian Taha Nemati will also fancy his chances for a podium finish, having registered a second-best 370kg record. Iliya Salehipour and Abdollah Beiranvand in action, rep-

resenting the country in the 81kg weight class. Amir-Mohammad Soleimani, Hamidreza Zarei (89kg B); Alireza Nasiri (96kg); Abolfazl Zare' (102kg); as well as Arya Paydar and Kouros Zare' (109kg) complete the Iranian lineup in the Guadalajara. The United States and the host country have also introduced a complete a squad, while China is absent at this year's event.

Alcaraz loses to Zverev in ATP Finals debut, Medvedev beats Rublev

BBC - Carlos Alcaraz suffered defeat on his ATP Finals debut as Alexander Zverev fought back to win in Turin, Italy. Wimbledon champion Alcaraz lost 6-7 (3-7) 6-3 6-4 to Germany's Zverev, who won the event in 2018 and 2021. It is the first time the 20-year-old Spaniard has lost three matches in a row since March 2021, when he was ranked outside the world's top 100. In the day's other Red Group singles match, third seed Daniil Medvedev beat fellow Russian Andrey Rublev 6-4 6-2. World number two Alcaraz missed last year's tournament with an abdominal injury and was making his debut at the season-ending men's event for the world's top eight players.

He had been hampered by foot and back problems last month and lost in his opening match at the Paris Masters on his return from injury. His shaky form continued on Monday as he struggled for consistency on the fast indoor hard court against Zverev. There was a worrying moment for the German - who missed last year's event while recovering from a nasty right ankle injury sustained at the 2022 French Open - when he fell on his left ankle towards the end of the match. "I didn't twist my ankle. I kind of slipped. There was a pain for a while and I don't think any damage has been done," the ATP Finals website quoted Zverev as saying. "I hope not and we will see when it settles down. It is

nothing comparable to Paris."

Medvedev halts losing run
World number three Daniil Medvedev was defeated in all three of his round-robin matches in Turin last year, losing all of them in third-set tie-breaks. But the 2020 champion has got off to a much better start this time and was in dominant form against compatriot Rublev, whose increasing frustration boiled over at times. The ATP Finals features eight of the year's best men's players split into two groups of four, with the top two qualifying for the semi-finals. Novak Djokovic is the defending champion and secured the year-end number one status with victory over Denmark's Holger Rune on Sunday.



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz is seen in action against German Alexander Zverev at the ATP Finals in Turin, Italy, on November 13, 2023.
● VALERIO PENNICINO/GETTY IMAGES