

# Greco-Roman Wrestling National Championships: Iranians to kickstart hunt for Paris places

## Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers will begin their quest for a place in next summer's Paris Olympics when the Greco-Roman National Championships kick off in Qom on Wednesday.

Iran has already booked three quotas for the Games in the French capital, thanks to medal-winning runs by Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg), Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) and Mohammadreza Geraei (67kg) in last September's World Championships in Belgrade, with the 60kg, 77kg, and 87kg slots still up for grabs.

The three world medalists as well as Danial Sohrabi (67kg) and Amin Kavianejad (77kg), who won a bronze and silver in October's Asian Games respectively, have been excluded from the event, which will serve as the Iranian trials for the upcoming Olympic qualification tournaments.

All eyes will be on the 87kg contests, where Alireza Mohmedi – an 82kg runner-up in Belgrade – and Nasser Alizadeh, who took the silver of the weight class at the Asian Games, will be the favorites for the top podium. Should both make it to the final showpiece in Qom, it will likely be the first episode of a head-to-head between the two in the coming months, which could feature international outings at the Zagreb Open Ranking Series

in January, and next April's Asian OG Qualifier in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Having already secured seven Greco-Roman and freestyle spots for the Olympics, Iran hope to make a clean sweep of 12 berths before heading to Paris.

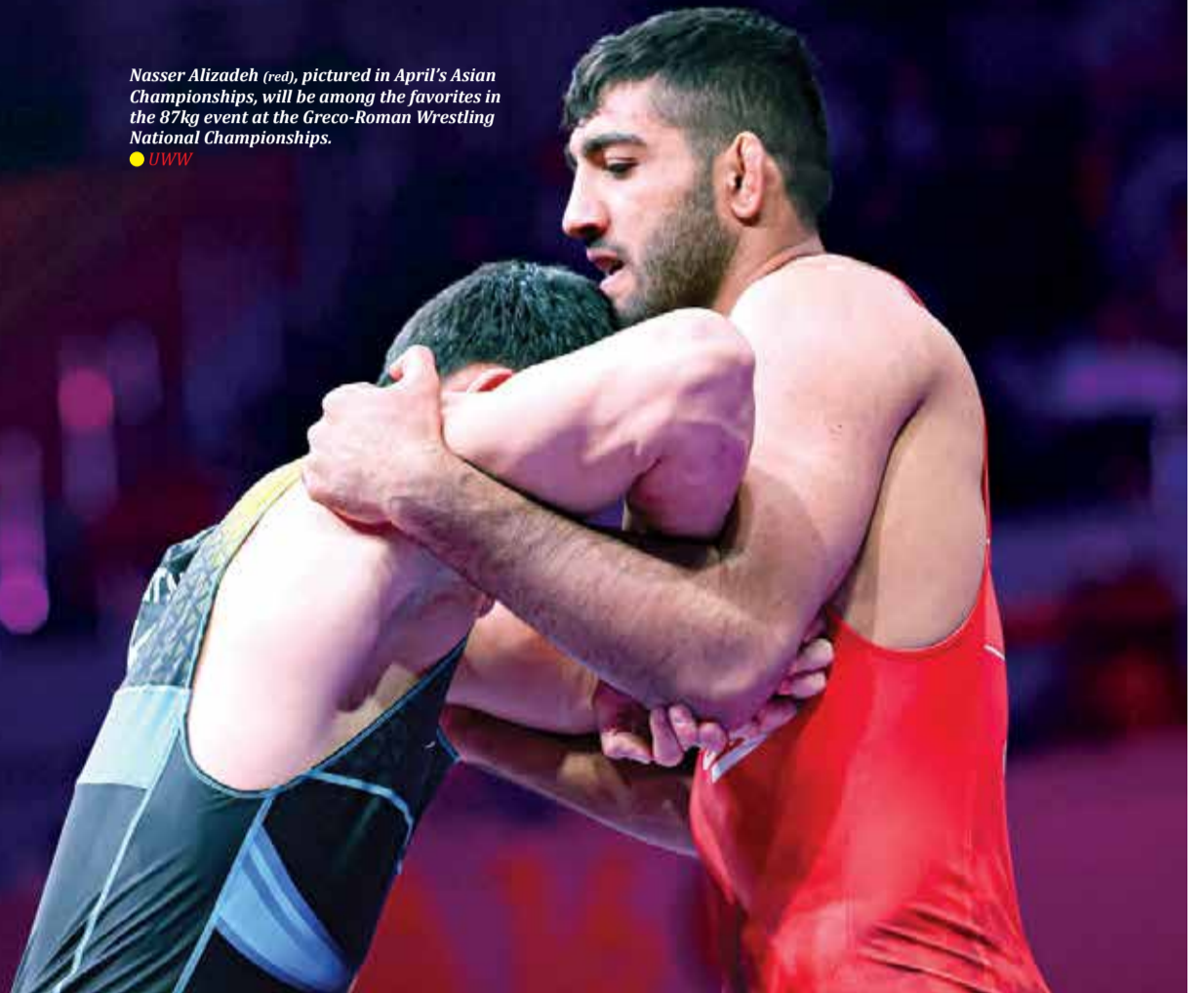
Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) and Hassan Yazdani (86kg) finished on the podium in Belgrade, while Rahman Amouzad, despite the failure in defending his world 65kg crown, managed to finish fifth to book a third freestyle spot for the country.

Kamran Qasempour missed out on the National Championships in mid-December with an injury, but has been given a second chance by the coaching staff at the Zagreb Open, where he will represent the country – alongside reigning Iranian champion Amir-Ali Azarpira – in the 97kg event, as he will be looking to add the Olympic glory to his double world 92kg golds in 2021 and 2022.

A gold winner in the National Championships, Hossein Abouzari and world 79kg silver winner Mohammad Nokhodi will be the frontrunners in chasing the 74kg quota for Iran, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan will be looking to build on a dominant 57kg campaign in the national event – featuring a final victory over former world silver medalist Alireza Sarlak – to punch a ticket for Paris.

Nasser Alizadeh (red), pictured in April's Asian Championships, will be among the favorites in the 87kg event at the Greco-Roman Wrestling National Championships.

UWW



## Guardiola wants more after Manchester City claim Club World Cup title



Kyle Walker holds aloft the Club World Cup trophy as Manchester City players and manager Pep Guardiola celebrate winning the final against Fluminense at the King Abdullah International Stadium, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Dec. 22, 2023.

JOSE BRETON/IMAGO

AFP – Pep Guardiola said Manchester City must start over and find new targets after he completed his trophy haul in charge of the English champions by thrashing Fluminense 4-0 to win the Club World Cup.

Guardiola's 16th trophy as City boss, and the 37th of his coaching career, means he has won the Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup, League Cup, UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup since taking charge at the Etihad in 2016.

"I had a feeling we close a chapter, we won already all the titles. There is nothing else to win. I have the feeling the job is done, (it) is over," said Guardiola. However, Guardiola, whose contract runs till 2025, dismissed suggestions he could now walk away.

### Time for a new Pep book

"Now it's Christmas time, buy another book and start to write it again. The last eight years it's over," he added when questioned whether he has the hunger

to continue winning silverware.

Guardiola made history in Jeddah as he became the first coach to win the Club World Cup four times and with three different clubs.

City matched the largest margin of victory ever in a Club World Cup final, also set by a Guardiola side when Barcelona beat Santos 4-0 in 2011.

European sides are unbeaten in the competition stretching back to 2012 and there was little doubt over the outcome at the King Abdullah International Stadium once Julian Alvarez opened the scoring inside the first minute.

Fortune did not favour Fluminense as captain Nino then turned into his own net after a bright spell by the Brazilians. City were able to coast to a fifth trophy of the year in the second half and rounded off victory with two more goals in the final 20 minutes as Alvarez squared for Phil Foden to score before the Argentine fired in his second of the night.

"We don't do a parade (in Manchester) but

I said to the players this trophy you will remember forever," added Guardiola.

"It means you are the best team in one year in the world. It's unique and special. It's really cool.

"I'm really pleased for many people in the club for many years. It's a beautiful day, I could never think when we arrived in Manchester we could do this and finish with the World Cup."

Meanwhile, Fluminense boss Fernando Diniz stuck by his promise to stay loyal to an attacking brand of football. But he acknowledged the huge task facing clubs from around the globe when coming up against the financial might of Europe's elite teams at the Club World Cup.

"Money makes a lot of things easier," said Diniz.

"With money you can have the best pitches, structures, players and you put together everything you have.

"In terms of the cash flow of the clubs this is really different for our clubs compared to the Champions League."

## Inter eager on Taremi deal: Report

### Sports Desk

Serie A giant Inter will be looking to secure the services of Porto striker Mehdi Taremi when the Iranian international's contract at the Portuguese club comes to an end next summer, according to high-profile Italian journalist Fabrizio Romano.

"Inter are still working on deal to sign Mehdi Taremi as free agent in June 2024 – as FC Porto want to keep him in January," Romano, best known for his transfer reports and predictions, wrote on X.

"Inter wanted him last summer and they will try to push again for next season," added the Italian. Romano said Inter's top priority for the mid-season transfer window will be Canadian winger Tajon Buchanan, who has bagged three goals and four assists in 20 appearances for Belgian side Club Brugge across all competitions this season.

However, Porto could still be tempted to cash

in on its Iranian asset in January rather than let him leave for free by the end of the season.

Taremi was on the verge of signing for Inter archrival Milan last summer but a deal fell through on the deadline day after the striker's camp and the Rossoneri failed to reach agreement on personal terms.

Having finished as the leading marksman in the Portuguese top flight last season with 22 strikes, Taremi has had a below-par run in the ongoing campaign, by his own standards, as he has only managed three goals in 14 league appearances, while finding the net twice in the Champions League group stage.

Taremi, whose last league goal for the Dragons came on Dec. 2, will lead the line for the national team – alongside AS Roma forward Sardar Azmoun – in the upcoming AFC Asian Cup, starting January 12 in Qatar, where the three-time champion Iran will be chasing a first trophy in the continent's flagship international event since 1976.



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