

Asian Wrestling Championships:

Greco-Roman glory seals team title double for Iran

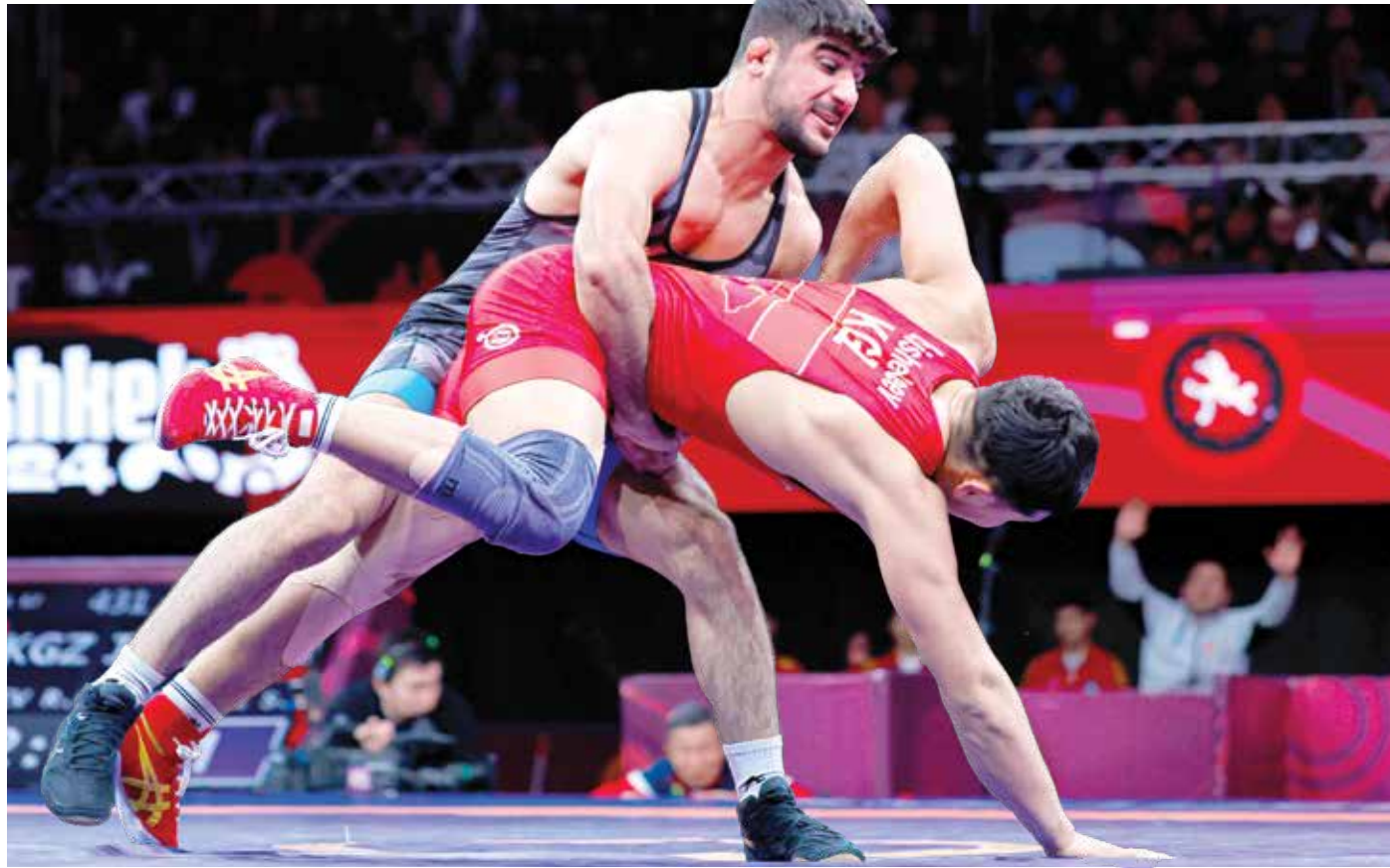
Sports Desk

Nine medals, including four golds, across 10 weight classes saw Iran clinch the Greco-Roman crown at the Asian Wrestling Championships, completing the men's team title double in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Iran tallied 200 points for a fifth team trophy in six years, and Japan notched up 144 to pip the host to the runner-up spot by two points.

On Tuesday, Saeid Esmaili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi rounded off an emphatic campaign by bagging double gold medals, while Mohammadreza Rostami and Rasoul Garmsiri had to settle for a couple of silvers after setbacks against Japanese oppositions in the final showpiece of their respective weight classes. Meanwhile, Amir-Reza Dehbozorgi was given a wrestling lesson by the host's reigning back-to-back world champion Zholaman Sharshenbekov in the semifinals, but managed to bounce back to defeat Ilkhom Bakhromov of Uzbekistan (9-0) to take a consolation bronze in the 60kg contests.

Stepping into the 67kg final on the back of three technical-fall victories, former world under-20 champion Esmaili came from behind to edge Kyrgyzstan's Razzak Beishekeev for his first Asian senior gold. The 21-year-old Iranian held out while on the bottom of par terre in the first period, but scored two in the second period with a good second effort when he was on top to silence the home crowd at the Bishkek Arena. Saravi, a winner of four world



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Saeid Esmaili (blue) goes for a lift against Razzak Beishekeev of Kyrgyzstan in the 67kg final at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on April 16, 2024.

● KOSTADIN ANDONOV/UWW

and Olympic medals, claimed his second 97kg gold in the competition in dominant fashion, cruising to the top podium without conceding a single point.

The Iranian outclassed Iussuf Matsiyev of Kazakhstan 9-0 in the final, thanks to a pair of gut wrenches from par terre, before a takedown-roll combination to see off the 2022 world U20 sil-

ver medalist in just under two minutes.

Saravi has now walked away with a medal in 16 consecutive international tournaments since 2019, all of which ended with victories – 11 golds and five bronzes – and is among the favorites for a podium finish in the upcoming Paris Olympics in the summer.

In the 72kg final, Rostami

thought he had done enough to beat Shingo Harada when he used a front headlock at par terre for a pair of rolls to go up 5-0, but the unheralded Japanese rolled the Iranian with a whizzer with two seconds left in the first period before making the most of his fatigue after the interval to win 9-5.

Garmsiri, meanwhile, was by far the second best against the

reigning world under-17 champion Taizo Yoshida in the 82kg showdown.

Leading 3-0 in the second period, Yoshida scored four with a reverse body lock throw and then stopped a front headlock roll attempt for another two points to end the bout at 5:31.

Tuesday's results came a day after the Iranians had won two golds as well as a silver and a bronze in

the Greco-Roman contests.

World superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh proved to be in his own league at the continental level, defeating the 2018 world bronze medalist Kim Min-seok of South Korea 5-0 in the 130kg final.

Nasser Alizadeh continued his dominance in the Asian Championships with a 5-0 triumph over Kazakhstan's Nursultan Tursynov in the 87kg final – a fourth successive gold at the competition for the Iranian.

Pouya Dadmarz, a world bronze winner last year, took the 55kg silver after a shock technical-fall loss to North Korean Ro Yu-chol, while Iman Mohammadi recovered from a last-four setback against Japan's Ayata Suzuki to beat China's Tan Haodong 10-0 for the 63kg bronze.

Amir Abdi (77kg) was the only Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler to leave Bishkek empty-handed following a 4-3 defeat against Ibragim Magomadov of Kazakhstan in the bronze-medal contest. The Greco-Roman title followed Iran's freestyle silverware earlier in the Kyrgyz capital.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg), Amir-Mohammad Yazdani (70kg), Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg), and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) all finished their campaigns with the gold, with Hossein Abouzari (74kg), Hadi Vafaiepour (86kg), and Mohammad-Hossein Mohammadian (97kg) adding three bronzes to Iran's medal haul as the country finished atop the table with 190 points – 60 clear of runner-up Japan, with the host in third on 121 points.

Nosrati named Tractor manager for the rest of season

Sports Desk

Former Iranian international center-back Mohammad Nosrati was appointed as the caretaker manager of the Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor for the rest of the Iranian top-flight season.

An assistant to former head coach Paco Jemez, Nosrati takes over of the west-northern Iranian side's bench after the Spanish tactician parted ways with the club in the aftermath of a 4-1 league defeat at home against Zob Ahan – a third successive game without a win for Tractor following home draws against Sepahan (0-0) and Iralco (1-1).

Tractor is third in the Iranian league table with 40 points – 10 adrift of leader Esteghlal and nine behind Persepolis with seven games to spare.

Nosrati's first game in charge comes away to bottom club Nassaji Mazandaran on Friday before a highly-anticipated home fixture against Esteghlal next Wednesday.

An ex-coach of LaLiga clubs Las Palmas and Rayo Vallecano, Jemez joined Tractor midway through last season and led the



Mohammad Nosrati (L) replaced Spanish Paco Jemez (R) on Tractor's bench.

● TASNIM

club a fourth-place finish in the table.

Despite a busy transfer window in the summer, his team had a disappointing start to the campaign, suffering three defeats in a row – including a 3-1 home setback against Emirati side Sharjah in the AFC Champions League playoffs – and an inconsistent run in the league, which saw the team register seven losses and four draws in 23 outings, coupled with a poor record against fellow top-flight

giants Persepolis, Esteghlal, and Sepahan eventually cost him his job.

During the Spaniard's 15-month stint in Iran, Tractor managed only two wins in nine meetings with the trio while leaving the pitch empty-handed on six occasions.

Tractor has also endured a below-par run against the other top-eight sides in the league this season, winning only two while losing seven in 11 head-to-heads.

Barcelona destroyed themselves in defeat to PSG, says Gundogan

REUTERS – Barcelona midfielder Ilkay Gundogan said his side had no-one to blame but themselves after they squandered a two-goal advantage and lost 4-1 to Paris St Germain to exit the Champions League on Tuesday.

After winning 3-2 in Paris and taking a 1-0 lead with an early Raphinha goal in the quarter-final second leg, Barca went down to 10 men when Ronald Araujo was shown a red card, before PSG took control of the match and secured a comeback win.

"Very frustrated. Very disappointed. It really felt like that we had full control of the game. Started with a one-goal lead, and then after 10-15 it just felt like we destroyed ourselves," Gundogan told TNT Sports.

"Yeah, (the red card changed the game). This is the Champions League. No matter who the opponent is, in such a tie, such an important game, going one man down so early... it's impossible, then you are out, unfortunately." Following Tuesday's defeat, Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez berated referee Istvan



● ALBERT GEA/REUTERS

Kovacs and said his performance cost the LaLiga club a spot in the semi-finals.

Kovacs showed red cards to Araujo and Xavi, with five Barcelona players also receiving yellow cards.

Gundogan concurred with his manager's opinion on the referee, saying he should have won a penalty after being tackled by PSG's Vitorinha in the box. "At halftime, (the referee) didn't have such a bad attitude. I haven't seen any of the crucial

actions on the replay, but it felt like he was very quick on the yellow cards for us," the German said.

"In the second half, I think I should get a penalty. He clearly kicks me with his leg – if not, I can continue running. If he doesn't kick me, I don't fall. For me, that's a penalty.

"That's what I told him, to at least have a check, and he gave me a yellow card. I don't know how it looks on TV – maybe my impression is wrong."