

Yazdani back to training in a bid for Olympic glory

Sports Desk

Iran's Hassan Yazdani made his long-awaited return to the wrestling mat this week in a bid to win a third successive Olympic medal in the upcoming Paris Games. Yazdani had been ruled out of action for more than six months after a surgery on his injured shoulder, with his latest appearance coming in last October's Asian Games, where he cruised to the free-style 86kg gold. Yazdani was to join the national team training camp in Tehran this week but decided to continue his recovery in his home town of Juybar in northern Iran and a video on his Instagram account on Thursday showed him in training with sparring partner Mahdi Yegane' Ja'fari. A winner of a national-high nine world and Olympic medals, Yazdani secured the Olympic 86kg quota for the country through last year's World Championships in Bel-

grade, where he fell to a fifth defeat in six meetings with familiar foe David Taylor in the final showpiece. However, Yazdani is yet to be guaranteed a place in the Iranian Olympic squad as there have been doubts over his fitness levels with three months to go until the opening ceremony of the Games in the French capital. Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, was first to question the future of Yazdani's career weeks after his surgery. "No wrestler in Iran has ever fully recovered from a shoulder injury over the past 20 years," said Dabir, whose illustrious career came to a premature end with the same problem when he was 25. Standing between Yazdani and a place in Paris will likely be fellow-Iranian Kamran Qasempour, who has been dealing with his own injury setbacks over the past 12 months.

Two-time world 92kg champion Qasempour missed out on the title defense last year before moving up the 97kg Olympic class for the start of the new year, though his failure in January's Zagreb Open left young prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira as the frontrunner to represent the country in the weight division. Iran head coach Mohsen Kaveh said last week that Yazdani would be sent to a tournament in Hungary or Armenia before the Olympics to have his fitness assessed, while the Iranian 86kg slot could be on the line in a highly-anticipated head-to-head featuring him and Qasempour. Having lost the final to Taylor in the Tokyo Olympics, Yazdani will be eager to add the Paris gold to his Rio 2016 triumph after the 34-year-old American was stunned by Aaron Brooks in the U.S. Olympic trials last Saturday and will play no part in Paris showdown in July.



● IWF



● IRNA

Iranian shooting duo wins WSPS World Cup silver

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Iranian pair of Nasrin Shahi and Mohammadreza Mirshafiei bagged a silver medal in the World Shooting Para Sport World Cup in Changwon, South Korea. Representing the country in the mixed team 10m air pistol SH1 event, Mirshafiei

dominated the qualification round with 288 points, with Shahi fourth in the table on 282, but the duo still had to settle for the runner-up finish after a final defeat against the Indian pair of Bhakti Sharma and Nihal Singh. This is the second WSPS World Cup of the year following the season open-

er in New Delhi in early March. Elsewhere in Changwon, Roqayyeh Shojaei took part in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 contest but was left empty-handed after an eighth-place finish in the final with a total 122.3 points. Indian Mona Agarwal grabbed the gold thanks

to a 250.8-point tally, with Slovakian Veronika Vadovicova and Anna Benson of Sweden on the following podiums respectively. A total of 125 shooters from 27 countries will be competing in Changwon until May 1 in part of their preparation in the buildup to the Paris 2024 Paralympics - starting August 28.

Feyenoord boss Slot confirms interest in Liverpool job

BBC - Feyenoord head coach Arne Slot has said he hopes to take over from Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager at the end of the season. Liverpool opened talks with Feyenoord on Wednesday about Slot's potential appointment. The Dutchman confirmed his interest in the job to ESPN before Feyenoord's 3-1 league victory on Thursday against Go Ahead Eagles. "It seems clear to me that I would like to work there," Slot said. "All I can say about it is that the clubs are in ne-

go-tiations. I'm in the waiting room." He added that he was "confident" Liverpool and Feyenoord would be able to reach an agreement. Slot, 45, led Feyenoord to the 2022-23 Eredivisie title and this season's Dutch Cup, and he has previously been linked with Tottenham Hotspur and Leeds United. Liverpool will have to negotiate a fee with Feyenoord if Slot is appointed, as he does not have a release clause for this summer. On Wednesday, Reds captain Virgil van Dijk said that Slot's playing philosophy would suit the club, describing him as

"one of the better Dutch coaches at the moment". It is believed that the attacking style of Slot's teams, his personality and his ability to develop players are key factors in making him Liverpool's preferred candidate.

He took over as Feyenoord manager in 2021 and confirmed his interest in managing in the Premier League when he was linked with Spurs in 2023. Xabi Alonso was linked with the Anfield vacancy but announced in March that he would remain with Bayer Leverkusen, while Sporting Lisbon's Ruben Amorim was also rumoured to be of interest.



● AAP

American Coleman believes Bolt's 100m record could fall soon

REUTERS - American sprinter Christian Coleman believes that Usain Bolt's 100-metres record of 9.58 seconds that has stood for 15 years is within reach and said there are several athletes fast enough to break it. "It seems like the times being run, 9.58 is obviously an extraordinary time but honestly I feel like it's a lot of guys who are competing today who are not that far off, if the track gods see fit for it to happen," Coleman told reporters on Friday ahead of today's Shanghai Diamond League meet. "But it has to be perfect conditions, on the right

physis or thought on it. I try to just focus on the next practice, the next rep, the next me and just trying to improve and get better and better and the times will come." Jamaica's Bolt set his 100m record in Berlin in 2009. American Tyson Gay is the second quickest after Bolt with a time of 9.69 set in Shanghai the same year.

Christian Miller, a 17-year-old from the U.S., ran 9.93 - the fastest time in the world this year - at a high school meet in Florida last weekend. Coleman, a five-times world champion who has a 100m personal best of 9.76 set in 2019, takes on U.S. rival Fred Kerley for the first time this outdoor season at the Shanghai Diamond League meet. The 28-year-old Coleman raced to gold in the 60m at the world indoor championships earlier this season in Glasgow.



day, the right competition and the right venue ... if you're focusing on running properly, like executing a good race, I feel like those type of magical moments happen. "I feel like it's in my wheelhouse, but I don't try to put too much em-

● TINGSHU WANG/REUTERS