

Iranian girls out to repeat historic success in Asian taekwondo meet

Sports Desk

Iranian women will be chasing a second successive team title at the Asian Taekwondo Championships when the event gets underway in Da Nang, Vietnam, on Thursday.

A historic campaign in 2022 saw the country collect six medals – including triple golds – for a maiden women's kyorugi trophy in the competitions in South Korea.

Reigning world champion Nahid Kiani will headline the Iranian six-woman squad in Da Nang, hoping to add a second Asian -53kg gold to her medal haul ahead of the Paris Olympics in August.

Mobina Ne'matzadeh will also be looking to flex muscles before heading to Paris when she competes in the -49kg contests.

The 18-year-old prodigy, who bagged the Asian silver in the previous edition, will step into the event on the back of an impressive run in recent months – during which she won the bronze at the Asian Games before punching her Paris ticket in the Asian qualification tournament in March.

Joining the two Iranian Olympians in Vietnam is Saeideh Nasri, who will represent the country in the -46kg weight class fresh from a bronze-winning campaign in April's Galeb Belgrade Trophy – Serbia Open.

Elham Haqiqi will hope to build on February's Fajr Open gold on home soil in the -62kg contests, while Yalda Valinejad will take part in the -67kg event with the WT President's Cup gold under her belt.

The heavyweight (-73kg) competi-

tion will see former Asian silver and bronze winner Melika Mirhosseini go after a second continental medal in less than 12 months, following her third-podium finish at the Asian Games.

The Iranian girls will be coached by Mino Maddah and her assistants Mahrouz Saei and Fatemeh Ne'mati at the Asian meet.

In the men's draw, the Iranian team will be eager to make amends for a forgettable Asian Games in Hangzhou, where the country failed to win a single gold under former coach Bijan Moghanlou across five weight categories.

The bad news for Iran head coach Majid Aflaki is the absence of team captain Mirhashem Hosseini, who suffered an untimely injury during a training session in Tehran days ago and will be replaced by President's Cup gold medalist Ali Khoshravesh in the -80kg class.

Meanwhile, Mahdi Haji Mousaei (-58kg) and Aryan Salimi (+87kg), who settled for a couple of silver medals in Hangzhou, will see the competition as a perfect preparation with less than 70 days until the Olympic Games.

Abolfazl Zandi (-54kg), Matin Rezaei (-63kg), Amir-Sina Bakhtiari (-74kg), and Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani (-87kg) complete the Iranian seven-man lineup at the 26th edition of the Asian Championships, which will be contested by more than 570 athletes from 36 countries across the kyorugi, poomsae, and para taekwondo competitions until Sunday.



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Taremi on target in Dragao farewell



Porto striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates his goal in a 2-1 victory over Boavista in the Primeira Liga at the Estadio do Dragao, Porto, Portugal, on May 12, 2024.
FC PORTO

Sports Desk

Mahdi Taremi came off the bench to score a last-gasp winner against Boavista in his final home outing for Porto at the Estadio do Dragao.

The Iranian striker is set to be unveiled as a new signing for Serie A champion Inter once his Porto contract runs out at the end of the season.

With the game tied at 1-1, the Iranian striker, introduced on the hour mark, was first to a Chico Conceicao's cross on the far post to head home in the eighth minute of the stoppage time. Bruno Lourenco gave Boavista a 60th-minute lead against the run of play but the visitors went down to

10 men four minutes later, courtesy of Pedro Malheiro's second booking for a reckless challenge on Taremi. Portuguese center-back Ze Pedro drew Porto level nine minutes from normal time before Taremi's header secured a vital three points for Sergio Conceicao's side in the race for a third-spot finish in the Portuguese top flight and a place in next season's UEFA Europa League.

Porto is one point clear of Braga in the table but will still have to avoid a defeat when visiting the fourth-place side in the final round of league fixtures next Sunday.

"This is an emotional moment for me right now as it was my final Porto appearance in this stadium. I'm so

thrilled to have found the net on this occasion and help the team win the game," said Taremi, who was reduced to tears at the final whistle while being surrounded by teammates and Porto officials on the pitch.

This was a 10th goal in 33 matches across all competitions for the 31-year-old Iranian this term, who missed several games due to international duty in January's Asian Cup before he fell down the pecking order at the club in the aftermath of his reported agreement with the Italian Nerazzurri in the mid-season.

"I've always had the utmost respect for Porto supporters but decided to join a new club at this stage of my career. I will remain a Porto fan for

the rest of my life," added the Dragons' third all-time top scorer behind retired Brazilian Mario Jardel and Jackson Martinez.

Having joined from Rio Ave in July 2020, Taremi has bagged 90 goals – including 22 strikes which saw him finish as the leading marksman in the league last campaign – and 55 assists in 180 appearances for Porto, inspiring the club to a domestic double in the 2022/23 campaign as well as last year's Taça de Portugal trophy.

"I am a striker and it is my job to score goals and provide my teammates with assists. It was an honor to deliver my best for this club," said a modest Taremi.

Denver beat Minnesota to level play-off series

BBC – Reigning NBA champions Denver Nuggets secured a 115-107 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves to level their Western Conference play-off semi-final series at 2-2.

Nuggets centre Nikola Jokic scored 16 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter, with Aaron Gordon adding 27 points and Jamal Murray ending game four in Minneapolis on 19 points.

Anthony Edwards led the overall scoring on Sunday with 44 points in total for Minnesota. "Never underestimate the heart of a champion," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said of his team.

"They were quick to write us off, but these guys, we won a champi-

onship a year ago."

The Nuggets, who lost the opening two games of the semi-finals in Denver, were 64-49 ahead at half-time, but the Timberwolves rallied in the final quarter to pull within six points of the lead in the final minute.

"This team has been tested time and time again, and we've found a way to solve whatever has been thrown at us," Malone said.

The series goes back to Denver for game five tonight.

In Sunday's other game, the Indiana Pacers demolished the injury-hit New York Knicks 121-89 to level up their Eastern Conference play-off semi-final series after four games.



BRUCE KLUCKHOHN/USA TODAY SPORTS