

'Nothing is impossible': Mohmadi looking to be Iran's dark horse in Paris



● HOSSEIN NAQIZADEH/IRAN DAILY


By Sadeq
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Staff writer

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Alireza Mohmadi says he is confident of win-

ning a surprise medal at the Paris Olympics later in the summer. A world under-20 champion, Mohmadi, 22, impressed on his senior debut at the World Championships last year in Belgrade,

going all the way to the final showdown before a 2-1 defeat against high-profile Rafiq Huseynov – an Olympic bronze winner in Tokyo and the 2021 world gold medalist – saw him settle for the silver.

"Thank God I won a precious world medal on my first attempt, though I believe I would have won the gold if it was not for my opponent's higher experience," Mohmadi told Iran Daily.

Looking to build on his decent run in the world event, Mohmadi moved up to the Olympic 87kg class to take a shot at a place in the Paris Games. Having beaten domestic rival Nasser Alizadeh to the

national title in December, Mohmadi bagged a silver in January's season-opening Ranking Series event in Zagreb and then went on to secure the Olympic quota for the country in the Asian qualifiers in April,

convincing head coach Hassan Rangraz to name him in the Iranian six-man squad in Paris.

"I wanted to switch to the 87kg class two years ago but the national team coaching staff told me to stay in the 82kg division for the World Championships. The success in Belgrade, however, gave me the confidence to try my luck for the Olympics," said the Iranian.

While world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh and four-time world and Olympic medalist Mohammad-Hadi Saravi are widely regarded as the Iranian favorites for glory at the upcoming Games, Mohmadi also fancies his chances of leaving the French capital with a medal.

"Nothing is impossible at the Paris Games. Looking at 130kg and 97kg events, you can see there are only two or three medal hopefuls, but that's not the case in the 87kg class as there is no clear favorite and the race for the medals will be wide open till the end, which could even make it a tougher contest in my division," Mohmadi said.

Mohmadi was not part of the Iranian squad at the recently-finished Ranking Series tournament in Budapest, as he stayed in the national team training camp in Tehran to continue his Olympic preparation.

"That was a decision made by the coaching staff as even a gold in Budapest would not have changed my position in the world ranking ahead of the Olympics," added Mohmadi.

Iran coach Qalenoey rues fatigue in Uzbekistan stalemate



Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey lamented his team's fatigue after the Asian powerhouse played to a goalless home draw against Uzbekistan at the World Cup qualifiers on Tuesday.

There was little to separate the two sides at Tehran's Azadi Stadium, though Iran enjoyed the majority of the possession over the course of the 90 minutes and had the best chance of the game to break the deadlock, when Mahdi Taremi's effort hit the woodwork midway through the second half.

The result was still enough for Iran to beat the Central Asian opponent to the top spot in the qualification group and, according to the FIFA ranking, avoid Japan and South Korea in the third-round group phase.

"I'm glad we progressed as the group winners. I would like to thank the fans for their support until the last seconds. I would also like to give special thanks

to my players," the Iranian head coach said in the post-match press conference.

The game was a second in five days for Qalenoey's side following last Thursday's 4-2 away win against Hong Kong.

"These two games were played right after the final day of the Iranian league. We had to fly to Hong Kong with no training sessions and play in the 90-percent humidity before making a 20-hour trip back home. That's why we played with fatigue in the first half. We'll have to improve our performance for the next round," added Qalenoey.

"Uzbekistan has made proper investments in football in recent years and is achieving significant results. Two of their top players made massive contributions to the Iranian league title run-in," Qalenoey said, referring to Uzbek winger Oston Urunov, who lifted the Iranian top-flight trophy with Persepolis, and midfielder Jaloliddin Masharipov, a league runner-up

with Esteghlal.

Qalenoey's opposite number Srečko Katanec, meanwhile, was pleased with the result and his team's well-organized backline.

"The match went well and I am satisfied with the result," said the Slovenian, adding: "We were confident in defense and did not give Iran clear-cut chances."

"In the second half, the opponents hit the post but in general, we played a good game and I am glad that no player was injured.

"We showed good aggression on the pitch and while we could have done better from an attacking standpoint, it was important for us not to lose the game."

Iranian midfielder Mahdi Torabi (16) is seen in action during a goalless draw against Uzbekistan in the World Cup Asian qualifiers at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on June 11, 2024.

● HASAN PIRMUHAMEDOV/AFG

Ten Hag to remain United manager

BBC – Erik ten Hag will remain as manager of Manchester United following a post-season review by the club's board. It is understood they are now talking to Ten Hag about extending his contract, which is about to enter its final season.

United instigated their review immediately after the FA Cup final.

Ten Hag went into the game against Manchester City at Wembley amid a backdrop of reports claiming he

would be sacked no matter the outcome.

Instead, United's deserved 2-1 victory allowed the club hierarchy to approach the review in a more positive light.

It is understood what are being described as "constructive conversations" with Ten Hag have taken place around the outcome of the review.

All eventualities were considered and the clear preference was for the

54-year-old Dutchman to remain in charge.

Ten Hag is known to be delighted at the outcome, though there were suggestions he was getting irritated at the time taken for United to reach it.

United finished eighth in the league last season – their lowest position in the Premier League era. They suffered the most injuries, with 45 separate cases recorded, a fact Ten Hag often cited for some below-par displays.



● TOM JENKINS/THE OBSERVER