

Wrestling U17 Asian Championships: Karami, Izadi grab golds as Iran bags seven Greco-Roman medals

Sports Desk

A prolific first day at the U17 Asian Championships saw Iranian wrestlers collect seven Greco-Roman medals in Amman, Jordan – including double golds for Abolfazl Karami and Danial Izadi.

Representing the country in the 51kg contests, Karami rounded off a dominant run with a technical-superiority victory (9-0) over Uzbekistan's Khojiakbar Kuchkarov in the final.

Izadi, meanwhile, took Iran's gold tally to two thanks to a thrilling 10-9 win against Adilet Toishy of Kazakhstan in the 92kg

showdown.

Elsewhere, Ahmad Badradini suffered a 14-3 loss to Uzbek wrestler Umidjon Karomov in the 45kg final and settled for the silver.

Alireza Amiri was also the second best against an Uzbek opponent, Khusniddin Abdulkarimov, falling to a 10-0 defeat in the 48kg final.

Amirali Heidari bounced back from a last-four setback to beat China's Maoxian Liao 8-0 for a joint bronze in the 55kg class.

Abolfazl Shiri also finished his campaign with a consolation bronze in the 60kg event, courtesy of a 10-8 win against Nodirjon

Sangov of Tajikistan.

Ayoub Hosseinvand claimed a third bronze medal for Iran when he outmuscled Kazakhstan's Aidos Kairatov 8-0 in the third-place bout of the 110kg contests.

The Asian under-17 event will be followed by the U23 Championships in the Jordanian capital until next Sunday.

Iran's Abolfazl Karami (L) and Danial Izadi won double Greco-Roman gold medals on the first day of the Wrestling U17 Asian Championships in Amman. **ADIB MOHMADI/IAWF**



Volleyball Nations League: Iran ends dreadful campaign with Germany defeat



German outside-hitter Moritz Reichert (5) hits a spike during a straight-set victory over Iran in the Volleyball Nations League in Manila, Philippines, on June 23, 2024. **SEPIDE ABDOLHAY/volleyball.ir**

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A horrible Volleyball Nations League campaign came to an end for Iran with a straight-set loss (25-20, 25-23, 25-20) to Germany in Manila, Philippines, on Sunday.

A 10th defeat in 12 outings meant Iran finished second from bottom in the 16-team table of the preliminary round – a lowest-ever finish for the team that had reached the VNL Finals twice since the competi-

tion was first introduced in 2018.

Outside-hitter Moritz Karlitzek contributed with a game-high 21 points for the Germans, while opposite spiker Amin Esmaeilnejad chipped in 19 for Iran – followed by Pouria Hossein-Khanzadeh, whose quiet night yielded 10 points.

"We put our all into the game as we desperately wanted to finish with a victory. I just hope the Iranian people will still give us their support so that we can make

amends for the setback next year," Hossein-Khanzadeh, who signed for Italian giant Lube on Saturday, said after the match.

Stepping into the event, Iran was hopping to embark on a new era under Brazilian coach Mauricio Motta Paes and put in a last-ditch effort to secure a place in July's Paris Olympics through the FIVB Ranking by the end of the preliminary round.

However, the Brazilian's time was cut short after seven successive defeats

for what was described by the Iranian federation as the 61-year-old's failure in "unleashing the players' potentials", with the decision aimed at protecting "the international reputation of the Iranian volleyball."

Paes's No. 2 Payman Akbari took over from the Brazilian but his appointment did little to change the team's fortunes, though Iran still managed a couple of consolation victories over USA and the Netherlands – both in five sets – in Week 3.

Golmohammadi named new Foolad head coach

Sports Desk

Former Persepolis manager Yahya Golmohammadi was appointed as the new head coach of the Persian Gulf Pro League side Foolad Khuzestan on a two-year contract, the southern Iranian club announced.

Golmohammadi, 53, had been without a team since parting ways with the Tehran Reds in January.

An ex-boss at Iranian top-flight sides Zob Ahan and Naft Tehran, Golmohammadi came close to taking over from Spanish Paco Jémez in Tractor in the closing stages of the newly-finished season but a deal eventually fell through.

The Iranian

center-back in the 2006 World Cup enjoyed a glorious four years on Persepolis bench, steering the Reds to three top-flight crowns – including a league and cup double in his last full season in charge – as well as the AFC Champions League final in 2020, before a falling-out with the club CEO Reza Darvish and long-term injuries to

key players led to a run of inept results and performances in the previous campaign.

Having had four coaches on the bench on the bench over the past 12 months, Foolad will be looking forward to a fresh start under the new manager, who played for them for three seasons in the early 2000s.

A two-time champion since the Iranian Pro League was introduced in 2021, Foolad finished 11th in the 16-team table last term – courtesy of seven wins and 15 defeats in 30 games – with the club having a Sasan Ansari's late winner at Nassaji on the final day to thank for avoiding relegation.

Portugal keep it simple after Martinez's experiment

REUTERS – Portugal coach Roberto Martinez seems to have settled his selection dilemmas for Euro 2024 by reverting to a more conventional shape in a comfortable 3-0 win over Turkey on Saturday. After fielding an experimental team in Portugal's often chaotic 2-1 opening win against the Czech Republic on Tuesday, Martinez went for a back four protected by Joao Palhinha who returned in midfield for the second group game.

Portugal arrived in Germany billed as one of the tournament favourites buoyed by 10 wins in their 10 qualifying matches.

But the abundance of talent in the squad has created the temptation to tinker for Martinez.

He started the match against the Czech Republic with three full backs, including Joao Cancelo who roamed all over the pitch, and ended it with five strikers as Portugal chased – and got – a last-gasp winner.

On Saturday, the stability provided by Palhinha – and his half-time replacement Ruben Neves – plus the more familiar roles for the rest of his side provided the foundation for a solid Portugal performance against a disappointing Turkey for whom star winger Arda Guler only appeared as a substitute.

Asked by reporters about the shape-shifting appearance of Por-

tugal, Martinez said he was able to change his approach thanks to the strengths of his players.

"It is important to have a tactical flexibility so we can balance the individual talent that we have," he said.

Guaranteed top spot in Group F, Martinez can rest some of his key personnel for Wednesday's game against Georgia after which Portugal will take on a third-placed side from another group in the last 16.

Despite the impressive qualifying campaign, some critics have continued to question the credentials of Martinez – a Spaniard who took

over as Portugal coach in January last year – after he failed as coach to turn Belgium's best crop of players in a generation into a tournament-winning side.

While Saturday's display against Turkey went almost without a hitch, Portugal did not match the scintillating football displayed by their Iberian neighbours Spain who beat Croatia and Italy in their opening two matches in Germany. One issue which dogs the Portugal team is whether Cristiano Ronaldo, 39, should remain an automatic choice up front.

On Saturday, Ronaldo went some way to quieting that debate when he generously rolled the ball to Bruno Fernandes to make it 3-0 when he could have scored himself, taking his number of assists in Euro tournaments to a record eight.



Portugal players celebrate a goal during a 3-0 win against Turkey in Euro 2024 in Dortmund, Germany, on June 22, 2024. **EFE**