

Taekwondo World Cup Team Championships Series: Iranian girls lift historic trophy



Iranian girls celebrate on the top podium at the WT World Cup Team Championships Series in Chuncheon, South Korea, on July 2, 2024.
● IRNA

Sports Desk

Iranian girls made history on Tuesday by claiming a first women's title for the country at the WT World Cup Team Championships Series in Chuncheon, South Korea. Stepping into the final on the back of a 2-0 victory over the defending champion in their own backyard, the Iranian team came out on top against Morocco 2-1 (180-175, 120-

145, 145-79) to walk away with the ultimate prize. Melika Mirhosseini, Yalda Valinejad, Mahla Mo'menzadeh, and Saghar Moradi represented the Iranian team in Chuncheon, with Nahid Kiani and Mobina Ne'matzadeh skipping the tournament to continue preparation for the upcoming Olympic Games – starting July 26 in Paris. The girls' historic triumph

came a day after the Iranian four-man team – comprising Mahdi Abedini, Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani, Ali Khoshraveh, and Abolfazl Zandi – had also won the title, thanks to a straight-round victory over South Korea in the final. The three-day event will conclude with the mixed contests today, with Iran taking on China or South Korea for a place in the final.

Iran capable of winning 10 Asian Games medals: New athletics chief

Sports Desk

Ehsan Haddadi, the newly-elected president of the Iranian Athletics Federation, said the country is capable of grabbing 10 medals in the Asian Games in the near future. The sole Olympic medalist – a discus throw silver in London 2012 – in the history of the Iranian athletics, Haddadi garnered 40 votes in the electoral assembly of the federation on Monday to beat Abbas-Ali Maddih, who had 17 votes, to the four-year reign in the governing body of the sport. Widely regarded as the all-time greatest Iranian in the sport, Haddadi, 39, dominated the discus throw contests of the Asian Games between 2006 and 2018 before calling time on his

illustrious career last year in Hangzhou, where he settled for the silver at the Games – finishing second to fellow-countryman Hossein Rasouli. "I dedicated 23 years of my life to the athletics and I am proud of it. That is what I am going to do from now on," said the new chairman of the federation. "The burden of the responsibility is definitely going to be great, but I can promise you that the Iranian athletics will flourish, should we all stay united," added Haddadi, for whom the job is the first administrative role in his career. "Iran has won a single medal in the history of the Olympics, but I am sure the country has the potential for more.

"We are capable of winning 10 medals in the Asian Games, a feat that will make the athletics the number one sport in the country," said Haddadi, also a 2011 world bronze medalist and a winner of six golds at the Asian Championships. The discus throw top-two was Iran's only athletics achievement in the medals table in Hangzhou, with the 2010 event in Guangzhou, where Iran collected double golds and three silvers, remaining the most successful campaign in the recent history of the Games for the country. The 1974 edition on home soil was the most prolific campaign for Iran with eight medals, including three golds.



Ehsan Haddadi, the new president of the Iranian Athletics Federation, is seen with his discus throw silver medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games in October 2023.
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Persepolis, Esteghlal looking to reunite with former stars



Sports Desk

Tehran archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal are keen on bringing back two of their former strikers ahead of the next Persian Gulf Pro League season. Having lifted a seventh league trophy in eight years in June, Persepolis has approached Ali Alipour in recent days, according to Football360, after the Iranian parted ways with Portuguese club Gil Vicente at the end of the newly-finished season. The Reds' all-time leading marksman

Ali Alipour (L) and Mahdi Qayedi

in the Iranian Pro League with 56 strikes, Alipour left Persepolis for the Portuguese top-flight in 2020 but an injury-hit spell saw the 28-year-old manage 14 goals across four seasons with C.S. Marítimo and Gil Vicente – including two in 19 appearances last term. Persepolis is set for a new era under new Spanish head coach Carlos Garrido but faces the prospect of parting ways with several key players, namely Mahdi Torabi and Danial Esmailifar, who are on their way out as free agents. Meanwhile, Esteghlal, is eager to resign Iranian international Mahdi Qayedi for a second loan spell.

A member of the national team in January's AFC Asian Cup, Qayedi, 25, enjoyed an impressive season at Ittihad Kalba on loan from fellow-Emirati club Shabab Al Ahli, bagging 16 goals and six assists in 34 games across all competitions. Esteghlal, which finished second to its city rival in the league by a single point, has reportedly made contact with Qayedi's parent club, though the Emirati side's asking price could keep the winger wizard from returning to the Tehran Blues, with whom he was first introduced to the Iranian top flight in 2017.

Costa's heroics highlight match-winning goalkeepers at Euro 2024



REUTERS – Goalkeeper Diogo Costa was the match-winner for Portugal in their round of 16 victory, opens new tab over Slovenia on Monday but no keeper at the European Championship has been busier than the overworked Giorgi Mamardashvili from Georgia. Costa, 24, saved three penalties in the shoot-out, a record for a Euros final, as Portugal advanced to a meeting with France on Friday. Before that he produced an excellent stop to deny Benjamin Sesko on a one-on-one in extra time. He became the third keeper to receive a Man of the Match

award at the tournament after Mamardashvili in a 1-1 draw with Czech Republic and Poland's Lukasz Skorupski when they drew 1-1 against France. "I think this was the game of my life," Costa told reporters. "Maybe the game where I was most useful. I am very, very happy and I am also very excited that I helped the team." Mamardashvili, 23, stands head and shoulders above the rest of the keepers at the tournament in terms of shots saved, though he will not thank his defence for that. He made 29 stops in the four games he played, including the

4-1 round of 16 loss to Spain, more than double the next highest for a keeper at the tournament. Italy's Gianluigi Donnarumma, Koen Casteels of Belgium and Jan Oblak from Slovenia all made 14 saves and are out of the tournament. Georgia allowed 106 attempts on goal, so Mamardashvili deserves a great deal of credit for conceding only eight times. His performances have not come out of the blue and the Valencia keeper has been attracting interest from top clubs for some time, coming close to a move to Bayern Munich at the start of last season.

"My move to Bayern Munich was almost done," he told reporters. "My agent was in Munich with my father to find an apartment. But as far as I know, in the end they refused to pay 35 million (euros) for me." He has started all but one of Valencia's LaLiga matches over the last two seasons and his exploits in the last few weeks may reignite interest elsewhere. The keepers at Euro 2024 who played four games and had the fewest saves to make are Costa and Switzerland's Yann Sommer with six each. Germany's Manuel Neuer has made one more stop with seven.



Portugal's Diogo Costa saves a penalty during the shoot-out victory over Slovenia in the Euro 2024 last 16 in Frankfurt, Germany, on July 1, 2024.
● WOLFGANG RATTAY/REUTERS