

# Young gun Beiranvand confident of Olympic success



Iranian trap shooter Mohammad Beiranvand is seen in a training session in Tehran, Iran, on July 8, 2024.

● ALIREZA SOTANBARJESNA

## Sports Desk

Iran's shooting prodigy Mohammad Beiranvand says the Olympic medal will be within his reach, should he "live up to my potentials" at the upcoming Games in Paris. Beiranvand, 16, will be the youngest participant in the shooting competitions of sporting extravaganza, representing the country in the men's trap contests – starting July 29 in the Chateauroux Shooting Center. The young Iranian stole the show in January's Asian Shotgun Championships in Kuwait, where he grabbed the individual gold and then paired with Marzieh Parvarehnia for the mixed team silver. His gold secured him a place in Paris and now the teenage sensation will be eager to build on the success to notch up a second shooting medal for the country in the history of the Olympics – following Javad Foroughi, who walked away with the gold in the Men's 10m air pistol event in Tokyo three years ago.

"Thank God I could seal a first trap quota for the country and I'll hope to deliver my best in Paris and win the most colorful medal," Beiranvand said on Thursday. "The Olympics are the biggest sporting event and all participants will have their sights set on one target, though only one will eventually walk away with the ultimate prize. Asked about his chances of an Olympic medal, Beiranvand said: "I have no doubt about that. I'm confident about my skills and I'll just have to live up to my potentials to leave Paris with a medal. I know I'm even capable of winning the gold if everything plays into my favor on the day of the competition." Beiranvand will be the sole Iranian male shooter in Paris while Haniyeh Rostamian, Shermineh Chehel-Amirani, and Fatemeh Aminipajouh will be part of the women's draw. A total of 340 shooters, representing 81 countries, will be joined by two athletes from the IOC refugee team in chasing the Olympic glory across rifle, pistol and shotgun disciplines from July 27 – August 5.

## Iran's Maqsoodlou finishes third in Kasimdzhanov Cup

### Sports Desk

Iranian chess grandmaster Parham Maqsoodlou settled for a third-place finish in the 2nd International Rustam Kasim-

dzhanov Cup in Tashkent – named after the Uzbek chess great and former FIDE world champion. Heading into the final round of matches without a defeat, Maqsoodlou

needed a win to finish atop the 10-man table but a loss to Russian Alexander Grischuk saw the Iran stand third with 5.5 points. The host's 19-year-old prodigy Nodirbek Abdu-

sattorov tallied six points for the top spot, with fellow-Uzbek teenager Javokhir Sindarov finishing runner-up with six points. Kasimdzhanov and Azerbaijani Shakhriyar Mamed-

yarov shared the third spot with Maqsoodlou. Nine rounds of rapid chess were played over two tournament days, with a time limit of 15 minutes plus 10 seconds per move.



● chessbase.com



## Spain brought the thrills as England's late goals paper over cracks

AFP – England and Spain face off in Sunday's Euro 2024 final after taking very different routes to Berlin in a tournament that has at times lacked for thrills.

Spain have been a class apart despite a devilishly difficult draw that has seen them beat 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Croatia, holders Italy, hosts Germany and the pre-tournament favourites in France.

By contrast, England have stumbled their way into a first ever final on foreign soil thanks to a series of late goals to paper over the cracks despite the wealth of talent available to manager Gareth Southgate.

They were among the continent's powerhouses who were accused of turning European football's showpiece into a tough watch.

England topped Group C despite scoring just two goals in three games, from which drew such opprobrium from their own fans that Southgate was pelted with beer cups after a 0-0 draw against Slovenia.

Should Southgate's men go on to lift the trophy, Jude Bellingham's 95th-minute overhead kick to avoid a last-16 exit to Slovakia will go down as one of the most significant goals in English history.



⬆ Dani Olmo celebrates Spain's second goal during a last-four victory over France in Euro 2024 in Munich, Germany, on July 9, 2024.

● ANNEGRET HILSE/REUTERS



⬆ England striker Ollie Watkins (19) celebrates with Harry Kane after the last-four win against the Netherlands in Euro 2024 in Dortmund, Germany, on July 10, 2024.

● KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

But it was also their first shot on target of the match.

Similarly, Bukayo Saka's stunning strike to equalise against Switzerland on 80 minutes in the quarter-final was the first time England hit the target.

"Our intention is always to play well with the ball – in football you have an opponent that's trying to stop you," said Southgate when quizzed on the lack of entertainment in England games. "None of this is easy."

Yet Southgate was far from the only coach who stood accused

of failing to maximise bountiful resources by deploying overly-cautious tactics.

France advanced to the semi-finals without one of their players scoring a single goal from open play.

Despite that, coach Didier Deschamps was defiant when questioned by a Swedish journalist over the lack of entertainment offered by his side.

"If you are bored you can watch something else. It's ok. You are not obliged," the French boss hit back when criticised over his side's lack

of goals.

"We have the ability to share emotions, to make lots of French people happy with the results we have had, especially in what is a difficult time in our country...if Swedish people are bored that is not too important for me."

Portugal were another of the favourites who failed to fire. Blessed with one of the deepest squads in the tournament, coach Roberto Martinez's refusal to drop Cristiano Ronaldo backfired as his side crashed out on penalties to

France in the quarter-finals having failed to score in any of their last three games in Germany.

The 114 goals at the tournament so far, at an average of 2.28 per match, is down on the 2.78 at the previous Euros three years ago and the 2.69 at the 2022 World Cup.

Bucking the trend has been Spain's new generation, looking to follow in the steps of the all-conquering side that won three consecutive major tournaments between 2008 and 2012.

Drawn into the toughest group, Luis de la Fuente's men shone from the start, scoring three times in the opening half in a 3-0 win over Croatia.

A 1-0 victory over Italy did little justice for the scale of Spanish domination in Gelsenkirchen, before they rounded off the group stage with a 1-0 win over Albania despite making 10 changes.

Even an early own goal to give Georgia a shock lead in the last 16 did not derail the Spanish charge as they stormed back to dish out a 4-1 thrashing.

Spain ended German dreams in Stuttgart with their own piece of late drama as Mikel Merino's header edged the highest quality game of the tournament 2-1.

Lamine Yamal's stunning strike to become the youngest ever Euros goalscorer lit up the 2-1 semi-final win over France.

"They've been the best team," added Southgate, on the challenge of facing Spain. "We'll have to get the ball off them first."

England will need their best display to stop the Spanish juggernaut but the tournament could also do with a classic final if it is to be remembered fondly by neutrals in years to come.