

Iranians learn Paris path as UWW announces Olympic seeding

Sports Desk

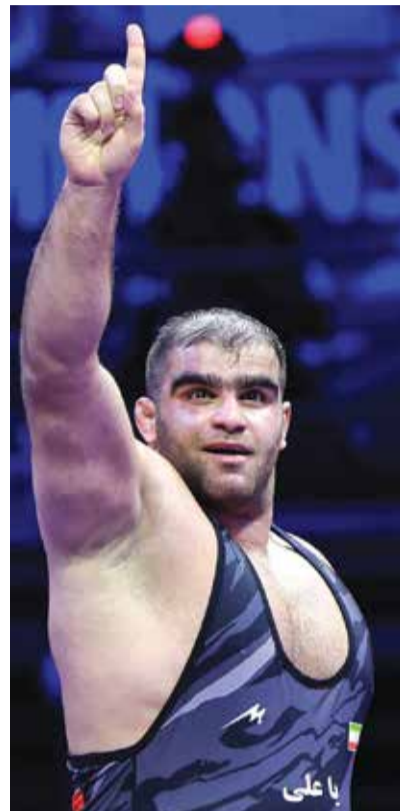
Iranian wrestlers learned their fate at the upcoming Paris Olympics after the United World Wrestling released the top eight seeds for each weight class across the freestyle, Greco-Roman, and women's event in the upcoming sporting extravaganza. The top side of the draw will feature the No. 1, No. 4, No. 5, and No. 8 wrestlers with the other four placed in the bottom half.

Apart from the eight seeded wrestlers, the remaining eight, who round out the 16-person bracket, will be randomly drawn into the bracket the day before each style begins in the Grand Palais Éphémère. Headlining the country's six-man Greco-Roman squad in the Games, world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh is the top seed in the 130kg contests and will begin his campaign against an unseeded wrestler in the round of 16 and a victory will see him take on the winner of the bout between American number eight Adam Coon and his unidentified for a last-four spot.

Legendary Cuban Mijaín López, who will be chasing a fifth successive Olympic gold in Paris, is not among the 130kg top eight and could confront the Iranian two-time world medalist at any stage.

Mahdi Mohsennejad – No. 5 in the 60kg class – will also meet an unknown wrestler in the first round, though he faces a demanding task to reach the final as he will likely lock horns with four-time world medalist and Olympic silver winner Kenichiro Fumita of Japan in the quarterfinals, with two-time defending world champion of Zholaman Sharshenbekov of Kyrgyzstan in the same half of the draw. Saeid Esmaeili (No. 7), who beat Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei to the Iranian 67kg berth, could face world and Olympic gold winner Luis Orta in the quarterfinals, looking to make up for the bizarre loss to the Cuban in last month's Ranking Series event in Budapest.

Amin Kaviani and Alireza Mohammadi will step into the event as unseeded wrestlers in the 77kg and 87kg classes respec-



L-R: Amin Mirzazadeh (Greco-Roman 130kg), Hassan Yazdani (freestyle 86kg), Amirhossein Zare' (freestyle 125kg), and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (Greco-Roman 97kg) will be among the 11 Iranian wrestlers at the Paris Olympics. UWW

tively, and will only know about their path in Paris.

Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will fancy his chances of reaching the 97kg final after being handed a rather favorable draw. An Olympic bronze winner three years ago, number three seed Saravi is yet to know his last-16 opponent but a win will send him into a likely clash against Finnish Arvi Savolainen – a former world U23 champion and European silver winner – in the quarterfinals, while high-profile Armenian Artur Aleksanyan, a three-time Olympic medalist and a winner of four world golds, will not come the Iranian's way before the final showpiece.

In the freestyle competitions, Iran will be represented by five wrestlers with Amirhossein Zare' and Hassan Yazdani

among the favorites to leave the Games with the ultimate prize of their respective classes.

A winner of two world golds and a silver since the Olympic bronze in Tokyo, Zare' is the top seed in the 125kg category and if he wins his last-16 bout he will square off against either No. 8 Chinese Zhiwei Deng or an unknown wrestler in the next round. Zare's familiar Turkish foe Taha Akgül, chasing a third Olympic medal, could land the Iranian in the semifinals in what will be a repeat of the world last-four meetings over the past three years, with Zare' enjoying a 2-1 head-to-head lead.

Second-seed Yazdani, who could become the most-decorated Iranian in the history of the Games with another gold, will begin his quest for the 86kg glory against an un-

seeded wrestler and if he goes through, he will have to battle Greece's Russian-born Dauren Kurugliev – European champion over the past two editions – in the quarterfinals.

San Marino's Myles Amine and Mongolian Bat Byambasuren are in the same part of the bracket with Yazdani, while Aaron Brooks, who came out on top against David Taylor in the US Olympic trials, will head to Paris as an unseeded wrestler. A last-16 win could see Iranian Rahman Amouzad, the 2022 world champion and No. 2 seed in the 65kg class, square off against European champion Islam Dudaev from Albania.

With Azerbaijan's Haji Aliyev – a winner of three world golds and the Olympic silver – and world champion Ismail Musukaev of

Hungary in the same half of the draw with the Iranian, the 'Ruthless' Rahman will have a tough path toward the final.

Representing Iran in the 74kg event, number-eight seed Younes Emami will also have to come up against a daunting challenge toward the final as top-seeded American Kyle Dake – a four-time world gold medalist – will await him in the last-eight round.

Iranian prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira is not among the 97kg top eight, though he could be a threat for any of the two big names of the class in Akhmed Tazhudinov and Kyle Snyder.

The four-day Greco-Roman competitions will kick off on August 5, with the freestyle contests getting underway four days later.

'Best moment of my life', Taremi says after sealing Inter deal

Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Mahdi Taremi described his move to Serie A champion Internazionale as "the best moment in my life."

Having spent the last four seasons at Portuguese giant Porto, the 31-year-old Iranian signed for Nerazzurri as a free agent on Saturday on a contract that could keep him at the club until June 2027.

"I am very happy to be here today. It is like a dream come true for me. I have to say that this is

the best moment of my life," Taremi said in his first interview with Inter TV.

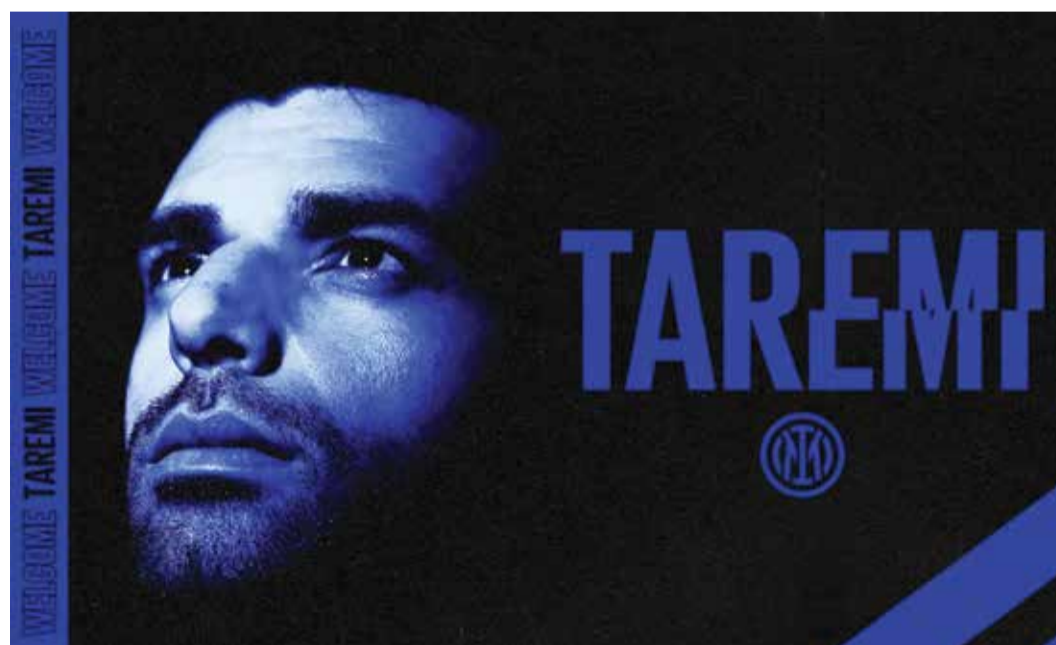
Taremi will be the fourth Iranian to play in the Italian top flight, following Rahman Rezaei and Ali Samereh in the 2000s, as well as international teammate Sardar Azmoun, who played for AS Roma on loan from Bayer Leverkusen last season.

"Serie A is one of the most prestigious leagues in the world. I will try to do my best as I have always done until now. I want to give my best here at Inter," said the former Persepolis and Rio

Ave player.

"I am at Inter, a great club. It's about winning as many matches as possible. We need to focus on this goal and give our best to achieve it. Winning is something that is achieved with the help of everyone: The staff, the players, and the whole club, step by step until the final goal."

Taremi helped Porto lift seven domestic trophies – including a Portuguese league and couple double in the 2021/22 campaign – bagging 91 strikes in 182 appearances to become the Dragons' third all-time top scorer.



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Iran beats Kyrgyzstan to lift CAFA under-20 trophy

Sports Desk

Iran came out victorious by three goals against host Kyrgyzstan to win the CAFA U20 Championship. Reza Ghandipour was the star of the show for Hossein Abdi's side in Friday's final in Jalal-Abad's Kurmanbek Stadium, bagging a hat-trick – including a spot-kick in the 48th minute – as Iran lifted

the trophy in the second edition of the competition, which features the Central Asian countries.

Iran began its campaign with a 3-0 victory over Turkmenistan in Group B and then played to a 1-1 draw against inaugural champion Uzbekistan to progress to the final showpiece.

Uzbekistan defeated Tajikistan 3-0 earlier on Friday to finish third in

the six-team tournament.

The event was part of Iran's preparation for the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers in September, with Abdi's boys taking on Mongolia, India, and host Laos in Group G.

The 10 group winners and five best second-placed teams will advance to the finals – to be hosted by China next February.

Iranian players celebrate lifting the CAFA U20 Championship trophy in Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, on July 12, 2024. FFIRI