

## Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship:

## Iran coach Mo'menimoqaddam hails 'commanding' title run

## Sports Desk

Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam lavished praise on his team after retaining the crown at the Asian U20 Volleyball Championship in emphatic fashion.

Iran outclassed South Korea in straight sets (25-12, 25-18, 25-22) in Tuesday's final showpiece in Surabaya, Indonesia, for a record-extending eighth trophy – third in succession – in the competition. The game was a second meeting between the tournament's two most-decorated sides after Iran had surrendered a two-set lead but still managed to come out on top in the decider to top Pool F.

"Congratulations to the Iranian people and volleyball family. My players produced a commanding performance in the final. I just have to thank my staff for all the hard work over the past three-and-a-half months. They, along with all coaches in the country, have done an excellent job to help this group of young talents flourish," said Mo'menimoqaddam, who also hailed his players for "showing great determination throughout the event."

Tuesday's title was a third successive major trophy in as many years for Mo'menimoqaddam on Iran's youth team bench, as he also steered the country to the world under-21 crown last year in Manama.

"Thank God we have won two Asian titles and a world crown, not losing a single match, during the three years that I've been in charge of the team. That's only a testament to the potentials and prowess



Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam celebrates with his players after winning the title at the Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship in Surabaya, Indonesia, on July 30, 2024.  
● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

of Iranian volleyball. We have decent young players who could help the seniors team succeed in the world and Asian events again in the near future," added

the Iranian head coach, whose team made a clean sweep of seven victories – six in straight sets – en route to the title. There were further glories for the Ira-

nian team in the competition, as four of Mo'menimoqaddam's boys walked away with the individual awards. Pouya Aryakhah was named the Most

Valuable Player of the tournament, while Emran Kook-Jili grabbed the Best Setter award, with Taha Behboudnia and Armin Qelichniazi sharing the prize for Best Middle Blocker.

"I'm thrilled to be named the best setter, though the team title was much more valuable than the individual prize for me. I just hope my teammates and I could keep up the good work to find our ways into the seniors' squad," Iranian captain Kook-Jili said.

"South Korea is a decent side and has only been beaten by Iran over the past two years, which is why I they were a bit intimidated by us prior to the game. We had to dig deep for the victory against them in the group stage, but we played with much more hunger today. We began preparation for this event with a champion's mindset since day one," added the Iranian setter.

Behboudnia, meanwhile, was glad to his team "take lessons from the incidents of the previous game against the South Koreans" for the final.

"Their coach tried to drag us into mind games in that game and his behavior cost us in the third and fourth sets. The coaches told us to stay fully focused on our own performance today and that's exactly what happened."

Iranian left-handed outside hitter Aryakhah was full of gratitude for his teammates helping him pick up the MVP award, saying: "I wouldn't have won this, had it not been for their contribution with the best receptions and passes throughout the tournament."



## Paris Olympics:

## Biles leads U.S. gymnastics team to gold; swimming glory for GB, Australian McKeown

REUTERS – Simone Biles clinched her fifth Olympic gold medal as she made a triumphant return to the women's gymnastics team final at the Paris Games on Tuesday, reinforcing her status as one of the world's greatest athletes just three years after abruptly withdrawing from the same event at the Tokyo Games. Biles, the most decorated gymnast of all-time, earned the United States their fourth Olympic gold in the women's team event with dazzling performances on all four apparatus.

The American has been on what she described as a "redemption tour" at the Paris Games after she shocked a global TV audience by suddenly withdrawing from the team final in Tokyo suffering from the "twisties," a condition involving temporary loss of spatial awareness experienced by gymnasts while performing high-difficulty elements.

The United States finished with a total of 171.296, an impressive 5.802 points ahead of second-placed Italy.

Biles said it was too soon to reflect on her legacy and was surprised to hear from a reporter that she has now won a jaw-dropping 38 world and Olympic medals combined. "I'm doing what I love and enjoying it, that's all that matters to me," she said. "Yes, it's amazing but I don't think I'll truly understand the depth of it until I walk away from the sport."



Simone Biles (C) and her American teammates pose with their gold medals after winning the women's gymnastics team final at the Paris Olympics in Bercy Arena, Paris, France, on July 30, 2024.  
● LIONEL BONAVENTURE/AFP

## Swimming

Australian dominator Kaylee McKeown crushed Regan Smith to extend her reign over the 100 metres backstroke before Irish trailblazer Daniel Wiffen became his nation's first man to win an Olympic swimming medal with 800m freestyle gold on Tuesday.

Great Britain capped the night session on day four by defending

their men's 4x200 metres freestyle relay crown at a heaving La Defense Arena.

Britain's late triumph was their first gold medal of the Paris swimming meet and condemned the United States to a second straight day without a title.

Instead, Americans had to settle for minor medals in all three events as Australia extended

their lead at the top of the table with four titles to the U.S. team's two.

Three years after driving Australia to a record haul of nine gold medals at Tokyo, the nation's brilliant women have again done all the heavy lifting. Backstroke queen McKeown may well end up the best of the lot, having stared down American rival Regan Smith, the would-

be challenger who snatched her world record weeks before the Games.

She joins teammate Titmus and swimming icons, Ian Thorpe and Dawn Fraser, among Australians with three individual gold medals.

## Fencing

Top-ranked Italy silenced a partisan crowd as they claimed the women's epee gold medal by beating arch rivals France 30-29 in a high-octane, sudden-death fencing contest, Juliette Jabkhiro and Julien Pretot report.

Italy's Alberta Santuccio let out a deafening scream as she touched her opponent's arm to guarantee the gold medal as France's Auriane Mallo-Breton, who received raucous backing from the home fans, failed to overturn Italy's one-point lead going into the final leg.

"It was not easy to play in their home. We worked in practice to be ready to have the fans against us. The girls were good at getting past that," Italy coach Dario Chiaido told reporters.

## Triathlon

AP – Cassandre Beaugrand of France won the women's Olympic triathlon on Wednesday, making her way through a Seine River that was under scrutiny for its water quality and navigating slick roads that turned the cycling portion into a series of spills.

Her time of 1 hour, 54 minutes, 55 seconds edged Julie Derron of Switzerland by six seconds. Beth Potter of Britain captured bronze.

In the men's race, Alex Yee of Britain held off Hayden Wilde of New Zealand by six seconds to win gold. Leo Bergere earned another medal for France by taking bronze.

Biles, the most decorated gymnast of all-time, said it was too soon to reflect on her legacy and was surprised to hear from a reporter that she has now won a jaw-dropping 38 world and Olympic medals combined. "I'm doing what I love and enjoying it, that's all that matters to me," she said. "Yes, it's amazing but I don't think I'll truly understand the depth of it until I walk away from the sport."