

Iranian hopefuls looking to end medal drought in Paris

Sports Desk

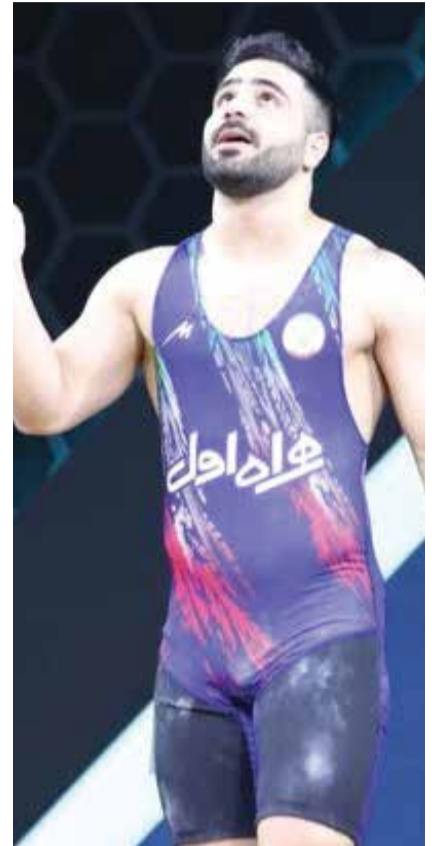
Iranian athletes will be hoping to end the country's wait for a first medal in the Paris Olympics when they get their campaigns underway in the coming days.

The Iranian saber team came within inches of a historic medal in the fencing event on Wednesday, only to suffer a gut-wrenching, last-ditch defeat against Hungary in the semifinals before a loss to the host in the bronze-medal contest.

Meanwhile, the final outcome was nothing more than expected in the rowing, archery, shooting, swimming, and table tennis competitions for the Iranian participants, who were only hoping to improve their individual records and results rather than eyeing a podium finish.

However, with the wrestling, weightlifting, and taekwondo events – the most productive sports for Iran in the history of the Games – coming in the second week of action, several Iranians will be chasing the coveted prizes in the French capital, not to mention Reza Alipour will fancy his chances in the Tuesday's speed-climbing contest.

The gold hunt will begin in Grand Palais Éphémère on Monday, as world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh will be among the favorite two – alongside Cuban great Mijaín López – to walk away with ultimate prize of the Greco-Roman 130kg contests in the wrestling competitions.



L-R: Amirhossein Zare' and Hassan Yazdani (wrestling) as well as Nahid Kiani (taekwondo) and Mirmostafa Javadi (weightlifting) will be in action in the second week of the Paris Olympics.

Mahdi Mohsennejad (60kg) will also be in action on Monday, with Amin Kavianejad (77kg), and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) – a bronze winner in Tokyo Olympics – stepping onto the mat a day later, before Saied Esmaeili and Alireza Mohmadi begin their campaigns in the 67kg and 87kg classes respectively a day later. In taekwondo, Nahid Kiani – a gold medalist in last year's

World Championships – will be looking to become only the second Iranian girl to claim an Olympic medal – following Rio 2016 bronze medalist Kimia Alizadeh – in Thursday's -57kg event, while Mobina Ne'matzadeh (women's -49kg), Mehran Barkhrodari (men's -80kg), and Arian Salimi (men's 80kg) will also have their shot at Olympic glory. Thursday's freestyle wrestling

contests will be highly anticipated for Iranian fans, as Hassan Yazdani will kick off his quest to overtake taekwondo great Hadi Saei as the most-decorated Iranian in Olympic history by adding the 86kg crown to his previous gold and silver medals. Amirhossein Zare' – a winner of double world golds following his bronze-winning run in Tokyo Games – will be the ulti-

mate favorite to win the 125kg gold after a dominant display in last year's world event in Belgrade, during which outmuscled familiar foes Taha Akgül and Geno Petriashvili. Younes Emami (74kg), former world champion Rahman Amouzad (65kg), and Amir-Ali Azarpira (97kg) will be the other three Iranians in the freestyle wrestling. Iran will only be represented

by two weightlifters in Paris, though both will be among the medal contenders in their respective weight classes. Mirmostafa Javadi will step onto the men's 89kg stage as the reigning world champion while Ali Davoudi will be eager to add to his superheavyweight silver in Tokyo, though the +109kg class will likely remain Georgian sensation Lasha Talakhadze's territory.



ICON SPORT

Persepolis signs Algerian keeper Guendouz

Sports Desk

Persepolis's long wait for a new goalkeeper came to an end as the Persian Gulf Pro League champion signed Algerian shot stopper Alexis Guendouz on a three-year contract from CR Belouizdad on Thursday for an undisclosed fee. Guendouz, 28, will replace Ira-

nian international Alireza Beiranvand, who parted way with the Tehran Reds after helping the club win a seventh Iranian top-flight title in eight years last season to join Tractor. A former player of Saint-Étienne and Pau FC in France, as well as USM Alger in his country, Guendouz made 33 appearances for Be-

louizdad last term – including 22 in Algeria's Ligue Professionnelle 1 – keeping 22 clean sheets, while conceding 19 goals, as his team finished runner-up in the league table and won the Algerian Cup. Capped on five occasions for the national team, Guendouz was Algeria's No. 1 in the run to the final showpiece of the African

Nations Championship last year, which finished in a shootout heartbreak against Senegal. The Algerian is the fourth summer signing for the Reds' new Spanish head coach Juan Carlos Garrido, following Ali Alipour, Farshad Ahmadzadeh, and Moroccan fullback Ayoub El Amoulou.



Paris Olympics:

Biles head and shoulders above rivals after clinching all-around gold

REUTERS – If anyone needed any confirmation about Simone Biles' standing in gymnastics, the sparkling GOAT necklace she slipped on and ecstatically showed off to a TV camera after she sealed the all-around title at the Paris Olympics on Thursday verified her status as the greatest of all-time.

The world's most decorated gymnast clinched her sixth Olympic gold medal in front of a delirious crowd at Bercy Arena after she left all her challengers in her shade, completing a triumphant comeback three years after withdrawing from the same final at the Tokyo Games.

Aged 27, Biles edged past Brazil's Rebeca Andrade by 1.199 points to become the oldest athlete since 1952 to win the most coveted individual title in women's gymnastics.

"My GOAT necklace is kind of an ode ... it is crazy that I am in the conversation of greatest of all athletes because I still

just think that I'm Simone Biles from Spring, Texas who loves to flip," said the American who owns a jaw-dropping 39 world and Olympic medals.

Shooting

Switzerland's Chiara Leone ensured Olympic gold in the women's 50-metre rifle three positions remained in her country's possession after triumphing in a rollercoaster final at the Paris Games on Friday.

The top five in the eight-strong field frequently exchanged places heading into the elimination round where the 26-year-old prevailed with an Olympic record tally of 464.4.

Sagen Maddalena (463) of the United States won the silver while Chinese world champion Zhang Qiongyue took bronze.

Diving

China's Wang Zongyuan and Long Daoyi retained China's men's syn-

chronised 3-metre springboard title at the Paris Olympics on Friday, claiming the country's fourth gold in the sport and keeping alive their goal of taking all eight on offer.

Mexico's Juan Celaya and Osmar Olivera took silver and Anthony Harding and Jack Laughler from Britain won the bronze.

Rowing

Croatia's Valent Sinkovic celebrated his 36th birthday in style by coming from behind to win a sensational gold in the men's pair together with his brother Martin on Friday.

In the women's race minutes later, the Netherlands took control from the start, opening up a big lead that they never relinquished and cruised to victory to take gold.

The dominance of Dutch women's pair Ymkje Clevering and Veronique Meester in their race was never threatened as they eased to victory in



American Simone Biles poses with her gold medal after the artistic gymnastics women's all-around final at the Paris Olympics on Aug. 1, 2024. HANNAH MCKAY/REUTERS

6:58.67, leaving Romania and Australia in a furious battle for second place that came down to the last few metres. The Australians looked like they had it

wrapped up, but the Romanian crew squeezed past them just before the finish line to take the silver medal by just over half a second.