

Wrestling event underway as Iran yearns for Olympic glory

Sports Desk

With less than a week until the closing ceremony of the Paris Olympics, Iran is yet to claim a single medal in the French capital but the wait could come to an end when two members of the Greco-Roman wrestling squad begin their quest for the coveted prize in Grand Palais Éphémère today.

Reigning world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh, who was unlucky to miss out on the Olympic podium in Tokyo three years ago, will be looking to continue his commanding run in the 130kg weight class, while Mahdi Mohsennejad will hope to be the Iranian dark horse in the 60kg contests.

History vs. form

Wrestling great Mijain Lopez will still be the man to watch in the 130kg event as the 41-year-old Cuban is eager to win the gold in a remarkable fifth Olympic Games – a feat never accomplished by any athlete in the 128-year history of the sporting extravaganza.

Lopez will be in action for the first time since he grabbed the gold at the Tokyo Olympics – a victory that put him in the pantheon of four-time Olympic champions with female Japanese wrestler Kaori Icho, Danish sailor Paul Elvstrom, athletics' Al Oerter and Carl Lewis of the United States, and legendary American swimmer Michael Phelps.

Lopez has compatriot Oscar Pino to thank for making it to the sixth Olympics of his career as it was the latter who won the



Iranian world champion Amin Mirzazadeh (R), pictured in a training session in Tehran, will participate in the Greco-Roman 130kg contests of the Paris Olympics. IAWF

world bronze in Belgrade last year to secure the Olympic quota for Cuba.

"I feel in optimal condition. It has been a very important time for me to keep the motivation to get to my sixth Olympic Games and fight for my fifth medal," Lopez told the United World Wrestling official website.

"I have tried to avoid injuries and

will be with motivation, desire and impetus which I always had for the Olympics."

you have to go all the way back to 2015 for the Cuban's last defeat, when he was beaten by Turkish Riza Kayaalp in the world final. In fact, since his first Olympic triumph in 2008, Lopez has conceded only two losses – the other also coming against Kayaalp

in 2011.

Perhaps, the only wrestler standing between Lopez and a historic gold will be Iranian Mirzazadeh. The two have met once before, with the Cuban scoring an emphatic 8-0 in the quarterfinals in Tokyo, but a probable second meeting in Paris will see the Iranian step onto the mat in his prime.

Mirzazadeh, who came from behind to defeat Kayaalp to the world gold last year, has been the superheavyweight to beat since his world final loss to the Turkish in September 2022, winning double golds at the Asian Championships as well as the ultimate prize in the Asian Games over that period. Mirzazadeh enters the event

as the top seed of his class and will begin his campaign against an unseeded wrestler in the round of 16, while Lopez is not in UWW's 130kg top-eight seeds, meaning the two could go head-to-head at any stage.

Mountain to climb

Iranian Mohsennejad, meanwhile, will be facing a mammoth task to finish on the podium in the 60kg contests – an event dominated by the Asian wrestlers in the World Championships last year.

A two-time Asian silver medalist, Mohsennejad – No. 5 in the class – will meet an unseeded opponent in the first round, and a win will likely see him 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.

Mohsennejad fell to a last-four defeat against Sharshenbekov – the number-one seed in Paris – in Belgrade and was then beaten by Uzbekistan's Islomjon Bakhromov in the bronze-medal bout, but still managed to come out on top against Armenian Gevorg Gharibyan to secure the Olympic berth for the country.

North Korean Ri Se-ung, European 63kg champion Murad Mammadov of Azerbaijan, and Cuban Kevin de Armas are also among the contenders for the Olympic medal.

The repechage battles and the medal bouts of the two classes will take place on Tuesday.



Paris Olympics:

American Ledecy wins record-equalling ninth swimming gold

BBC – American swimming superstar Katie Ledecy equalled the record for the most gold medals by a female Olympian as she won the 800m freestyle title at the Paris Games.

Ledecy clocked eight minutes 11.04 seconds to become the only woman – and only swimmer other than the great Michael Phelps – with four Olympic golds in the same event.

It was Ledecy's ninth Olympic gold, moving her level with former Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina, and taking her overall tally to 14 medals. Phelps has the most medals of any Olympian with 28, including 23 golds.

"The four-times record is the one that means the most to me," Ledecy, 27, said afterwards.

"3 August is the day I won in 2012, and I didn't want 3 August to be a day I didn't like moving forwards.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself, so I'm happy I got the job done."

Earlier on Saturday, Summer McIntosh's astonishing debut Games continued, with the Canadian 17-year-old securing her third gold with victory

in the women's 200m individual medley.

Athletics

Julien Alfred stormed to the women's 100m title in Paris to make history as St Lucia's first Olympic medallist.

As the rain teemed down at a raucous Stade de France, Alfred, 23, dominated the final and sealed victory by a clear margin in a national record 10.72 seconds.

American world champion Sha'Carri Richardson took silver in 10.87, with compatriot Melissa Jefferson (10.92) third. Jamaican sprint icon Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce withdrew from the competition before her semi-final.

Elsewhere, Thea LaFond made history for the Caribbean island nation of Dominica by winning gold in the triple jump to claim the country's first-ever Olympic medal.

Jamaica's Shanieka Ricketts took silver and American Jasmine Moore claimed bronze. American Ryan Crouser became the first man to "threepeat" in the Olympic shot put on Saturday, adding another gold medal to his packed trophy cabinet with a mighty throw of 22.90 metres.



American swimmer Katie Ledecy poses with the women's 800m freestyle gold at the Paris Olympics on August 3, 2024. BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

His compatriot Joe Kovacs won his third straight silver and Jamaica's Rajindra Campbell took bronze.

Gymnastics

Simone Biles won her third Olympic gold of the Paris Games when she took the vault title in emphatic fashion.

After helping the USA to women's team gold and then taking the all-around title, the 27-year-old reclaimed another of the titles she first won at Rio 2016, having lost them in Tokyo when she pulled out of several events. She nailed her huge Biles II

vault before sticking her 'easier' vault – whose difficulty is harder than many attempt as their best vault – to score an average of 15.300.

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, the only gymnast who has skills that can come close to Biles and who won the title in Tokyo, took silver with 14.966

and American Jade Carey got bronze with 14.466.

Tennis

Zheng Qinwen became the first Chinese player to win an Olympic tennis singles gold medal when she held off Croatia's Donna Vekic for a 6-2 6-3 win in a tense final on Saturday.

The 21-year-old sixth seed was given enthusiastic backing by a sizeable Chinese contingent inside Roland Garros's Court Philippe Chatrier and responded with a composed performance.

Vekic, herself bidding to become Croatia's first Olympic singles champion, battled hard to try to turn around the match but failed to capitalise on her opportunities.

"This Olympic journey has not been easy, I had a lot of tough fights and some matches I nearly lost," Zheng, runner-up at the Australian Open this year, told reporters. "But there is a strength holding me. I never give up."

"For the final today the atmosphere was incredible, all the Chinese fans yelling for me. Two years ago that would have been pressure but today I kept calm and handled it well."