



Leader extols Iran's performance at Paris Olympics



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the remarkable performance of Iranian athletes, leaders of federation and coaches who participated at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The Leader on Monday responded to a message sent by President of National Olympic Committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa, who explained the sports and cultural achievements of the Iranian teams participating at the international event.

Ayatollah Khamenei acknowledged the dedication and resolve of the "dear athletes," the presidents of the federations and coaches as well as the National Olympic Committee of Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei thanked them for bringing joy and pride to the Iranian nation through their impressive sporting achievements and wished them success.

Iranian Olympians secured a total of 12 medals—comprising 3 gold, 6 silver, and 3 bronze—across freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman wrestling, and taekwondo, finishing 21st out of over 200 participating nations.



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Sports Desk

It was more or less business as usual for Iran at the Paris Olympics as the country again had wrestling and taekwondo representatives to thank for the taste of glory in the sporting extravaganza.

Eight of the 11 wrestlers left the French capital with a medal, while all four members of the taekwondo squad finished on the podium as Iran's 40-athlete delegation stood 21st in the medal table – six places better off than the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, where Iran had to settle for seven medals despite sending 65 athletes to the Games.

Elsewhere in Paris, the weightlifting contests – Iran's second-most prolific event throughout the previous editions – turned out to be an absolute disappointment, while the results indicated much more work needs to be done if the country is to succeed in other sports, when the Games return to Los Angeles in four-years' time.

Meanwhile, the Iranian four-man saber team – beaten by the host in the third-place matchup – regretted some controversial refereeing in the last-four game against Hungary for eventually missing out on the podium, with speed climber Reza Alipour also filling unlucky to leave the Games empty-handed after American Sam Watson clocked a world-record 4.74 seconds to pip the Iranian to the bronze.

Taekwondo landmark

Iran's taekwondo campaign

was one for the ages after the team made a clean sweep of four medals.

Young gun Arian Salimi came out victorious against British fourth-seed Caden Cunningham 2-1 to walk away with the ultimate prize of the men's +80kg contests on Saturday night, rounding off a thrilling, action-packed four days for the Iranians in the French capital's Grand Palais – a first Olympic taekwondo gold for the country since Hadi Saei's triumph in Beijing 2008.

The most-decorated Iranian in the Olympic history with double golds and a bronze, Saei also played his part in the latest success as the head of the sport's national governing body.

Nahid Kiani and teenage sensation Mobina Ne'matzadeh made history in the women's competitions as the former became the first Iranian girl to reach the final showpiece in any Olympic event before taking the -57kg silver, while the latter's -49kg bronze meant this year's Games were the most productive for the Iranian female athletes.

Mehran Barkhordari also produced some magnificent performances to end Iran's 12-year wait for a men's final spot, though he eventually finished as the runner-up to Tunisian Firas Katoussi in the -80kg showdown.

Wrestling roller-coaster

The wrestling contests were filled with highs and lows for Iran.

While the country enjoyed the

introduction of some up-and-coming stars, not to mention sensational victories over high-profile opponents, there was a disappointing conclusion to Iran's quest for a first freestyle gold since Rio 2016.

Looking to dethrone Saei as Iran's all-time greatest Olympian, Hassan Yazdani headed to Paris in pursuit of a second gold despite spending eight months on the sidelines after a surgery on his shoulder last October.

He showed no signs of an injury struggle throughout his 86kg campaign, but the problem flared up in the untimeliest fashion imaginable – the early seconds of the final showdown against Bulgaria's Magomed Ramazanov, which saw the Iranian suffer a 7-1 defeat. Stepping into the 125kg contests as the reigning world champion, Amirhossein Zare' was the ultimate favorite for the superheavyweight crown in Paris and delivered a familiar composed display against Turkish great Taha Akgül for a place in the final.

However, A crazy three minutes of action in the final saw the 24-year-old Iranian trail Georgian Geno Petriashvili by nine points at the break and the second-period surge proved too little too late as it finished 10-9. The story was the same for Rahman Amouzad, who ran riot against two world champions in American Zain Retherford and Bulgaria's Ismail Musukaev but was stunned by low-profile Japanese Kotaro Kiyooka in the 65kg final 10-3 to take Iran's silver tally to three.

In the 97kg class, young Iranian Amir-Ali Azarpira fell to a first-round defeat against eventual gold medalist Akhmed Tazhudinov but still capped his decent run with a consolation bronze thanks to a massive win against American Kyle Snyder. There was more joy for the Iranian fans in the Greco-Roman competitions, with Saeid Esmaeil and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi emerging as surprise gold medalists.

Having outclassed Cuban world champion Luis Orta by technical superiority in the quarter-finals, Esmaeil, turning 21 last month, rallied from behind twice to beat Tokyo silver medalist Parviz Nasibov of Ukraine 6-5 in a thrilling 67kg final at the Grand Palais Éphémère, a day after Saravi had notched up his first win in four career meetings with Armenian superstar Artur Aleksanyan for the top prize in the 97kg class. Alireza Mohmadi, 21, will also have every reason to be proud of his Olympic debut despite an 87kg final setback against Bulgarian Semen Novikov, while 130kg bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh would have definitely finished with a more prestigious medal, had it not been for a second-round loss to legendary Cuban Mi-jaín López, who went on to grab an Olympic-record fifth successive gold.

At the end, the haul of 12 medals – three golds, six silvers, and three bronzes – was the second best for Iran in 19 Olympic participations as London 2012 remains the most prolific with 13, including seven golds.



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The closing ceremony of the Paris Olympics is held at the Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France, on Aug. 11, 2024.

● LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES

Paris Olympics: Wrestling, taekwondo save the day as Iran tops Tokyo haul