

Iranian Ne'matzadeh sets sights on LA gold

Sports Desk

Olympic bronze medalist Mobina Ne'matzadeh said she is already keen on walking away with the ultimate prize when the Games return to Los Angeles in four-years' time.

The teenage sensation was one of the four Iranians in a remarkable taekwondo event for the country at Paris Olympics, defeating Saudi opponent Dunya Abutaleb in straight rounds to win the women's -49kg bronze and become only the second Iranian girl to win a medal in Olympic history.

Her success was followed by silver medals for Nahid Kiani (women's -57kg) and Mehran Barkhordari (men's -80kg) before Arian Salimi grabbed the men's +80kg gold on the final day in the French capital's Grand Palais.

"The taekwondo contests featured the best in the world. I was the first Iranian representative in action at the sporting extravaganza and knew my performance would impact on my teammates' results," Ne'matzadeh told Mehr News Agency.

"Thank God my bronze motivated them for more achievements," added the 19-year-old, whose senior debut came at the Asian Championships two years ago, when she won a prestigious silver to help the women's team claim a first-ever title in the continent.

"The greatest champions in the world have won their first Olympic medal at a young age. That really inspired me, not to mention my coach Mahrouz Saei and my family, namely my father, always said: 'You have what it takes to stand on the Olympic podium.' They gave me the confidence and eagerness for the start of the Games."

Ne'matzadeh began with a comfortable win against Lesotho's Michelle Tau but perhaps the pinnacle of her campaign came in the quarterfinals, where she



came out on top in straight rounds against high-profile Spanish Adriana Cerezo, a silver winner in the Tokyo Games three years ago and bronze medalist in last year's World Championships. "We knew the draw prior to the Games, so I was fully focused on my opponents in the buildup to the event. The coaching staff and I analyzed all of them during the training sessions, which is why I

had a proper plan for the Spaniard and managed to keep her at bay throughout the contest," Ne'matzadeh said of her Olympic preparation. The Iranian's winning run came to an end in the last-four encounter against Chinese Guo Qing – a second setback against the world No. 6 after the seminal loss in last year's Asian Games. "I was in my best form for the

Olympics, despite a massive weight loss, and truly deserved to reach the final. I was intent on winning the gold when heading to Paris.

"I would have beaten the Chinese, had it not been for a refereeing mistake. Everyone in the venue saw that, though it's just part of the sports. Maybe it just wasn't meant for me to win the Olympic gold at such a young

age," said the former world junior champion.

However, the Iranian said she will "go all out to get the job done" in the LA 2028.

"I will be just 23 in the next Olympics. When I stepped down the podium in Paris, I was full of determination to make amends in Los Angeles and win the gold, though I know I'll have to work hard to make that happen."

Iran's Mobina Ne'matzadeh celebrates her last-eight victory over Spanish Adriana Cerezo in the women's taekwondo -49kg event at the Paris Olympics on August 7, 2024.

WORLD TAEKWONDO

Gallagher back at Chelsea as Atletico move stalls

BBC – Conor Gallagher is expected to return to training at Chelsea's Cobham training ground after landing back in London with his Atletico Madrid transfer in the balance.

The England international, 24, was pictured in the La Liga club's Metropolitan Stadium on Saturday and spent five days in a hotel in Madrid but has been unable to complete his £33m transfer. His move was halted because Chelsea's

£34.5m deal to sign Spanish striker Samu Omorodion collapsed over personal terms on Sunday.

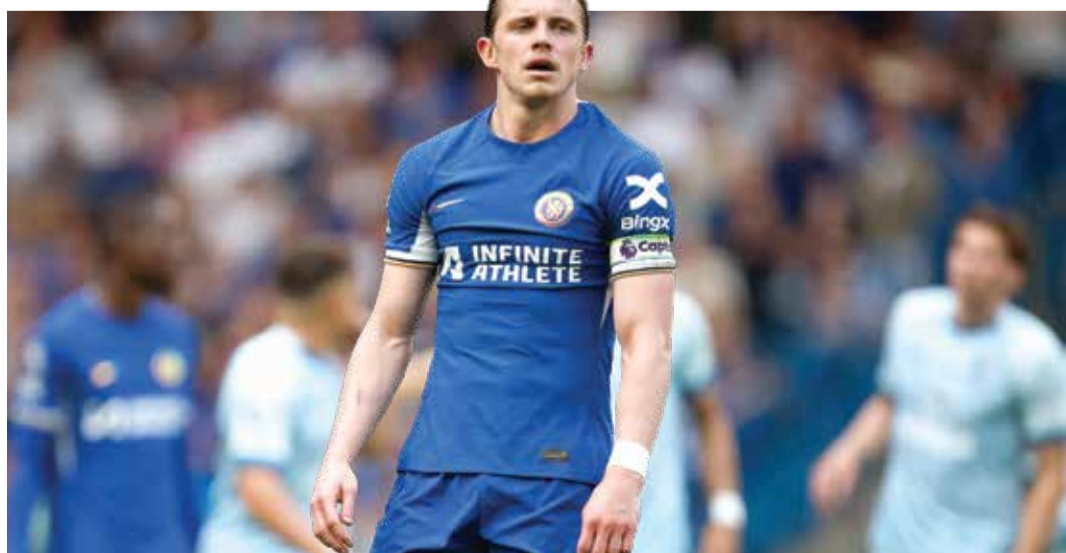
The Spanish club need to make one major sale to fund their move for Gallagher after signing Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez for £81.5m on Monday. Gallagher's move is not considered off but remains under threat of collapse.

An alternative deal for Chelsea to sign Portugal forward Joao Felix

from Atletico could salvage Gallagher's move but a fee must first be agreed.

Felix is ready to return to Chelsea after spending six months on loan at the club in 2023.

However, if a fee cannot be agreed for Felix then Gallagher's transfer will likely collapse. Chelsea want to make the sale to avoid losing Gallagher on a free transfer, with just 11 months left on his contract.



DAVID CLIFF/EPA

Sotiris Manolopoulos named new Iran basketball coach

Sports Desk

Greek coach Sotiris Manolopoulos took charge of the Iranian basketball national team, the sport's national governing body announced on Tuesday.

The appointment ends the Iranian federation's months-long quest for a new head coach after parting ways with Turkish Hakan Demir, following below-par results and performances in last year's FIBA World Cup and Asian Games.

Iran was one of the three teams to leave the World Cup without a single win across in five outings and then failed to progress beyond the quarterfinals at the Asian Games in Hangzhou in October.

Having served as the head coach and assistant at numerous clubs in his home country, including Panathinaikos and AEK Athens, Manolopoulos, 54, was last in charge of Dinamo Bucuresti in the Romanian top-tier league. An assistant coach on the Greek national team bench two years ago, Manolopoulos was also part of the coaching staff when Panathinaikos won back-to-back league titles as well as three Greek Cup trophies between 2013 and 2015.



EUROKINISSI SPORTS