

# Iranians eyeing Paralympic kudos in Paris

## Sports Desk

Iranians will be looking to enjoy yet another glorious Paralympic campaign when the 17th edition of the Games get underway with the opening ceremony at the Place de la Concorde in Paris on August 28.

The Iranian delegation will be represented by 65 athletes in the 10 sporting events across the 11 days of action in the French capital, aiming to improve on the medal haul in Tokyo three years ago.

The country bagged 12 golds, 11 silvers, and one bronze to finish 13th in medal table – a second-best result after London 2012 since Iran first took part in the Paralympics in Seoul 1988. Iran will again be the team to beat in the men's sitting volleyball contests, having dominated the event with a remarkable seven golds and double silvers in nine Paralympic appearances – including back-to-back triumphs in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

The athletics, meanwhile, has been the most prolific event for Iran in the history of the Games – delivering 94 (36 golds) of the 160 medals.

Hashemiyeh Mottaqian (women's javelin throw), Mahdi Olad (men's shot put), Hamed Amiri, and Saeid Afrooz (men's javelin throw) were among the Iranian gold medalists in Tokyo and will be chasing further glory at the Stade de France from Aug. 30.

Reigning Paralympic champion Rouhollah Rostami will be joined by Ahamd Aminzadeh, Amir Ja'fari, Mohsen Bakhtiar, Ali-Akbar Gharibshahi, and Hamed Solhipour in the men's powerlifting contests, hoping to improve on the medal count in Tokyo, where Iran collected five.

In the shooting competitions, all eyes will be on Iranian sensation Sareh Javanmardi as the four-time Paralympic medalist will go after a third successive women's 10m air pistol gold. In taekwondo, Hamed Haqshenas, Saeid Sadeqianpour, Alireza



Bakht, Maryam Abdollahpour, will be looking to build on their medal-winning performances in last year's Hangzhou Asian Para Games when competing in their respective classes in Paris.

Three-time women's recurve gold winner Zahra Ne'mati will be among the high-profile absentees at the Games but Iran will still hope Alireza Manshazadeh, Gholamreza Rahimi, and Mohammadreza Ar-



ab-Ameri – gold medalists in Hangzhou – could add to the overall eight archery medals for the country. Other sporting events will see Shahin Izadyar and Sina Zieghaminejad, who have 11



Asian Para Games golds between them, take part in the swimming competitions, with Meysam Banitaba, and Mousa Gholam chasing a third men's judo gold for Iran after the double in Tokyo.

Saeid Hosseinpour and Shaha Behrouzrad will be the two Iranians in paracanoe, while the men's goalball team will take on the host, Brazil, and USA in the group stage of the eight-team tournament.



Shabab Al Ahli's Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun (10) is seen in action against Ajman in the UAE League Cup first round in Dubai, UAE, on August 18, 2024. [uae.proleague.ae](http://uae.proleague.ae)

## Azmoun's double leads Shabab Al Ahli to League Cup win

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Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun scored twice in the second half to steer Shabab Al Ahli to a first-leg 2-0 victory over Ajman in the UAE League Cup on Sunday. Azmoun broke the deadlock with a clinical finish in the 58th minute, and then capitalized on a one-on-one situation with

Ajman keeper Ali Al Hosani to double the scoreline five minutes later.

The brace took Iran international's tally to three goals in as many appearances – first in the starting XI – for Shabab Al Ahli following a three-year move, worth from €5 million, from German Bundesliga champion Leverkusen.

Elsewhere in the UAE League Cup first round, ex-Sepahan striker Shahriar Moghanlou found the net from the spot in the 85th minute, with Mahdi Qayed providing Brazilian Caio Eduardo with an assist, but Ittihad Al Kalba suffered a 3-2 defeat against AFC Champions League champion Al Ain at home.

## Ancelotti frustrated with Real defending in Mallorca draw

REUTERS – Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti was critical of his team's lack of balance and bad defending in a 1-1 draw at Mallorca in their LaLiga season opener on Sunday.

Ancelotti said his players lacked focus after taking an early lead through Rodrygo in the 13th minute but allowing Mallorca to rescue a point with a Vedat Muriqi

header after the break. "Today I am not happy. I think we could have been done much better," a visibly frustrated Ancelotti told a press conference.

"We need to be more concentrated, work better as a group... It's not a fitness problem, it was mental.

"I don't want to make excuses for anything. We had to do better and

show more attitude. We can learn a lot from this match, it's a match where you can see clearly where we can end up having problems." Ancelotti was specially critical of his team's defending, saying that he needs a more disciplined performance due to a system that plays with four attacking players like Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Jr, Rodrygo and Jude Bellingham up front.

"We started the game well, we took the lead and we had chances to score the second, but in the second half we lacked balance," Ancelotti said.

"It was a game we could have lost because we didn't have balance. It wasn't a good game. We are a very attacking team and defensive balance is a fundamental part of the way we are built."

