

Future bright for Iranian taekwondo after double world junior crowns



Sports Desk

The recently-finished World Junior Championships was yet another indication of Iranian taekwondo being on the right track under Hadi Saei, the head of the sport's national governing body, over the past three years.

Iranians collected seven gold medals as well as double silvers and bronzes apiece to beat host South Korea to the men's and women's team titles in Chuncheon.

Amirmohammad Ashrafi, the MVP in the men's competitions, Sina Mohtarami, and Mahdi Razmian were the Iranian gold medalists in the men's contests, while Ali-Akbar Ebrahimi won a silver and Amir-Mohammad Nasirahmadi and Amin Ahmadvand bagged a couple of bronze medals.

In the women's draw, Ghazal Houshmand, Parnian Nouri, Aynaz Nasiri, and Hana Zarrinkamar all walked away with ultimate prize of their respective events, with Saghar Moradi settling for a silver medal.

Perhaps Iranian fans should keep all those names in mind as it won't be long before these young prodigies make their senior breakthrough in

the world and Asian competitions. "We're not going to abandon this young generation. We'll keep nurturing them through a right program so that all of them can succeed in the future seniors' events," Saei told IRNA on Tuesday.

"That's what the federation did two years ago and we all saw how it paid off," added the Iranian.

Two-time Olympic champion Saei, who took the helm at the federation in January 2022, built on his winning mentality and years of experience as a taekwondo legend as the country made a clean sweep of medals across four men's and women's weight classes in the Paris Games in August. Of the four medalists, Arian Salimi was only 20 when he won a first Olympic taekwondo gold for Iran since Saei's triumph in Beijing 2008, while former world junior champion Mobina Ne'matzadeh, a women's bronze winner in Paris, is still a teenager.

Iran's Amirmohammad Ashrafi (red) is seen in action during his victory over Italian Matteo De Angelis in the men's +78kg semifinals at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, on Oct. 2, 2024.

WORLD TAEKWONDO

Iran's Jahanbakhsh set to join Genoa: Report

Sports Desk

Iranian international midfielder Alireza Jahanbakhsh is closing in on a move to Serie A club Genoa, according to Varzesh3.

Jahanbakhsh, 31, has been without a team since leaving Dutch heavyweight Feyenoord in July but the Iranian website wrote the winger and his representatives were in Italy in recent days for negotiations with the Italian top-flight side.

The Iranian is now with the national team in Tashkent for a match against Uzbekistan in the World Cup Asian qualifiers on

Thursday, followed by the home game against Qatar in Mashhad's Imam Reza Stadium five days later.

Should Jahanbakhsh join Genoa he will become the second Iranian to move to the Italian top flight this season, following international teammate Mahdi Taremi, who signed for Inter Milan as a free agent from Porto in the summer.

Jahanbakhsh spent three seasons with Feyenoord, bagging 17 goals and 16 assists in 106 appearances across all competitions – including nine Eredivisie strikes.

First introduced to the European club football with Dutch club NEC Nijmegen in 2013, Jahanbakhsh enjoyed his most prolific spell with AZ Alkmaar between 2015 and 2018, where he contributed with 37 goals and 31 assists in 111 outings.

A stellar 2017/18 campaign, in

which Jahanbakhsh finished as the league's leading marksman with 21 strikes, saw the Iranian join Brighton & Hove Albion for a then-club record fee of €22.5 million.

His contribution for the Premier League outfit, however, was limited to four goals and two assists in 61 games, with 31 of those appearances coming in the starting XI.

Jahanbakhsh, who won the Eredivisie title with Feyenoord in 2023 before lifting the KNVB Cup the previous season, while finishing runner-up to AS Roma in the inaugural UEFA Europa Conference League in 2022, will be looking to have a more impressive stint in another major European league with Genoa.

Genoa, which won promotion back to the top division in 2023, has endured a disappointing start to the new campaign as Alberto Gilardino's side has managed one win in seven league games, sitting third from bottom in the table with five points.

AFC Women's Champions League:

Iran's Khatoon keen to bounce back against Kaya FC

Sports Desk

Iran's Bam Khatoon will be looking to build on an impressive second-half performance in the 2-1 defeat against Melbourne City FC when taking on Filipino club Kaya FC in Group B of the AFC Women's Champions League in Pathum Thani, Thailand, today.

Rhianna Pollicina and Marina Speckmaier scored a couple of late first-half goals for the Australian side on Sunday but a much-improved display after the break saw Khatoon find the net through Mona Hamoudi, whose in-swinging corner kick went straight past Melbourne keeper Malena Garcia with 20 minutes left on the clock.

Hamoudi's strike showed Marziyeh Jafari's side is capable of finding the back of the net against even the toughest of defenses and the Iranian coach will surely adopt a more aggressive approach against Kaya.

Kaya, meanwhile, played to a goalless draw against the group host College of Asian Scholars – a result that left Khatoon bottom of the table, although even

a draw today will see the Iranian side have something to play for against the Thai champion on the final day of the group stage.

Kaya head coach Let Dimzon admitted after the first-day stalemate that improvements are needed in the finishing department.

The top two in each of the three groups will be joined by the best two third-place teams in the last-eight round, which will be played in a single-leg knockout format.



Bam Khatoon's Mona Hamoudi (right) and Samaneh Chahkandi celebrate a goal against Melbourne City FC in the AFC Women's Champions League in Pathum Thani, Thailand, on October 6, 2024.

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