

Iranian wrestlers vying for team titles on return to U23 Worlds

Sports Desk

Iran's Greco-Roman and freestyle squads will be will set sights on team crowns when the Wrestling U23 World Championships kick off in Tirana, Albania, on Monday.

Iranian wrestlers were unlucky to miss out on last year's event in the Albanian capital after being denied entry visas by the European country.

Fardin Hedayati, world junior champion in 2023, will headline the Greco-Roman team in Tirana as he will be among the favorites for the ultimate prize in the 130kg contests.

The Iranian, who defeated Turkish great Riza Kayaalp in June's Ranking Series event in Budapest, will see competition from Ukrainian Mykhailo Vyshnyvetskyi – victorious over Hedayati in the 2022 world U20 final – as well as Belarusian Pavel Hlinchuk, competing as a neutral athlete, who won the 97kg gold last year, and Turkey's Muhammet Bakir.

Ali Ahmadi Vafa (55kg), Mohammad-Mahdi Gholampour (60kg), and Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (67kg) will represent Iran on the back of gold-winning campaigns in in September's U20 World Championships in Pontevedra, Spain.

Erfan Jarkani will be looking to improve on his under-20 bronze when stepping onto the mat in



the 63kg contests, while Daniel Sohrabi will chase a second world under-23 gold in the 72kg event, having won the 67kg title in 2022.

Yassin Yazdi will take part in the 87kg event as a former world

junior silver medalist, with Ali Oskou (77kg), Mohammad Naqoussi (82kg), and Shayan Habib Zare' (97kg) completing the lineup of the Iranian Greco-Roman squad. In the freestyle competitions, Amirreza Ma'soumi will be

the superheavyweight to beat in the 125kg contests as the Iranian prodigy will go after a sixth world age-group gold medal in three years following his dominant display in Pontevedra.

Also a reigning world junior champion, Ali Rezaei will be part of the 74kg contests, perhaps the most competitive category in Tirana, which features two former world under-20 gold medalists in Dzhabrail Gadzhiev



Fardin Hedayati (blue), pictured during his famous victory over Turkish great Riza Kayaalp in June's Ranking Series event in Budapest, will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman 130kg contests at the upcoming U23 World Championships in Tirana, Albania.

● KOSTADIN ANDONOV/UWW

of Azerbaijan and American Mitchell Mesenbrink, as well as Asian senior champion Kota Takahashi of Japan.

Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg) will be in Albania for his third U23 World Championships, having won the bronze in 2021 and gold in 2022. The Iranian will be the favorite for the gold along with Russian Mustafagadzhi Malachdibirov, who won the under-20 title in Pontevedra.

Ebrahim Khari will be the Iranian 61kg participant, looking to build on his under-20 silver in September, though defending champion Bashir Magomedov will still be the wrestler to beat in the weight class.

Mahdi Yousefi (79kg) and Abolfazl Rahmani (86kg) will also hope to improve on their world junior bronze medals, with Mahdi Hajilouei getting his 92kg campaign underway as a former world U20 silver medalist.

Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Abbas Ebrahimzadeh (65kg), Sina Khalili (70kg) are the other members of Iran's 10-man freestyle team.

Iranian men, women victorious in Canoe Polo World Championships

Sports Desk

Iranian men's and women's teams claimed a couple of victories on the third day of the ICF Canoe Polo World Championships in Deqing, China.

Iranian men bounced back from a 6-5 loss to New Zealand earlier on Friday to beat the United States 10-4 in Group MS.

The result left Iran in the third place behind New Zealand and

Malaysia in the group table.

The Iranian team had finished third in the four-team group in the previous round and will be competing for the 15-18 classification. Iran will conclude the group phase against Malaysia and Hong Kong today.

Elsewhere, Elaheh Pourabdian, Melika Boroun, and Atousa Eslami were on the scoresheet as Iranian women came out 3-2 winners against Spain, before

falling to a defeat by the same scoreline against European champion the Netherlands later in Group WP.

Iran is third in the group with three points, trailing the Dutch women and Singapore.

Iranian girls will be back in action against Team GB and Switzerland today before squaring off against Singapore on Sunday.

The top two of the group will progress to the semifinals.



● CANOEICF.COM

Nadal 'emotionally ready' for Davis Cup farewell



● REUTERS

BBC – Rafael Nadal says he feels emotionally prepared for ending his career at next month's Davis Cup Finals but the Spaniard will only contest the singles if he is "ready to win".

The 22-time Grand Slam champion announced last week that he will retire from tennis after representing Spain in Malaga, where the Davis Cup will be held from 19-24 November.

Nadal, 38, is currently competing at the Six Kings Slam exhibition event in Saudi Arabia and will face long-time rival Novak Djokovic for the final time on Saturday.

"Emotionally, I'm sure I'll be ready. Physically and in terms of tennis level, there remains a month left to prepare," Nadal said after losing to Carlos Alcaraz on Thursday.

"I will try to be in good shape to help the team to win. If I

don't feel ready for the singles, I'll be the first one to say.

"Be 100% sure, I will not be on court if I don't feel ready to win my match."

After losing his semi-final 6-3 6-3 to compatriot Alcaraz, whom he partnered in doubles at the Olympics and could do so again at the Davis Cup, Nadal will meet Djokovic in the third-place match.

Serb Djokovic, the only man to have won more Slams than Nadal with 24, was beaten 6-2 6-7 (0-7) 6-4 by world number one Jannik Sinner, who will face Alcaraz for the \$6m (£4.5m) prize money.

"To have Novak in front [of me], it's like a nostalgic thing," said Nadal, who has won 29 of his 60 meetings with Djokovic.

"We've played each other a lot, so it'll be fun to play each other again one more time in this match. Hopefully we can create

a good show and good level of entertainment."

On Alcaraz, who at 21 has already won four majors and looks set to battle 23-year-old Sinner for years to come, Nadal said: "He's going to do very well with what he's got. He's learning all the time.

"We can see he's developing in every way. But of course I'll be ready whenever he wants to call me."

Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in sport since 2021, when the country's Crown Prince made it a key part of his strategy to diversify the economy.

However, the kingdom has been criticised for its human rights violations and accused of that investment and the hosting of high-profile events to improve its international reputation – a process known as 'sportswashing'.