Wrestling World Championships:

Mixed draws as Iranians learn freestyle fate

Sports Desk

L-R: Kamran Qassempour (92kg), Reza Mo'meni (61kg), Sina Khalili (70kg), and Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg) are the four Iranians in the freestyle contests of the Wrestling World Championships in Tirana, Albania.
IAWF

Iranian wrestlers will face a mix of fortunes when getting their freestyle campaigns underway at the Seniors World Championships – featuring non-Olympic weight categories – in Tirana, Albania, today.

Kamran Qassempour, who stood behind Amir-Ali Azarpira in the pecking order for the Iranian 97kg slot at the Paris Olympics, will be looking to notch up a third world gold medal on return to his familiar territory of the 92kg class, starting with a bout against low-profile Japanese Takashi Ishiguro.

A victory will see the Iranian take on Turkey's Feyzullah Aktürk – a three-time European champion and world bronze medalist last year – in the round of 16.

However, all eyes at will be on the first-round battle between two of the sport's sensations in recent years in Russian Abdulrashid Sadulaev and American David Taylor, who have won a remarkable 11 world and Olympic gold medals between them in the 97kg and 86kg weight classes.

Qassempour, Sadulaev, and Taylor are in the same half of the draw, meaning wrestling fans could anticipate a last-four thriller featuring the Iranian and one of the two greats.

Elsewhere in the Feti Borova Sports Hall, Mohammad Nokhodi, chasing a fourth successive world medal, will go head-to-head with Austrian Alans Amirovs in the 79kg event, with the winner facing Hungary's Murad Kuramagomedov or Chinese Cao Nan in the last 16.

Legendary American Jordan Burroughs will begin his quest for a seventh world gold against Russian-born Zelimkhan Khadjiev of France or Romanian Zurab Kapraev.

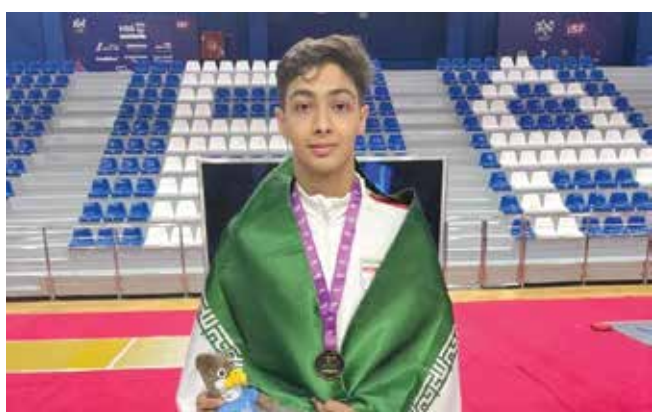
Beaten by Burroughs in his previous two final appearances in 2021 and 2022, Nokhodi will have to raise his level against the American if he wants to progress to the semifinals as the two are likely to cross paths in the last-eight round.

A world under-17 champion last year, Sina Khalili was only given the Iranian 70kg berth last week – after Amirmohammad Yazdani failed to fully recover from a broken hand – and the teenage prodigy will be eager to make the most of the opportunity in his senior debut.

Khalili will meet Belarusian Niurgun Skriabin, who participates as a neutral athlete, with the winner facing former world bronze winner Alibek Osmonov of Kyrgyzstan in the last 16.

Reza Mo'meni is the Iranian wrestler in the 61kg contests, starting his campaign against Besir Alili of North Macedonia.

Should Mo'meni overcome the North Macedonian, he will have to square off against the host's Endrio Avdyli or Swiss wrestler Nino Leutert in the round of 16.



IRNA

Iranian fencer Hosseini wins Gymnasiade gold

Sports Desk

Iranian fencer Seyyed Sadra Hosseini finished his campaign at the 2024 Gymnasiade – International School Sports Games – on a high note by winning a gold medal in Bahrain.

Hosseini defeated an Omani opponent in Monday's final to walk away with the ultimate prize in the boys' foil contests.

There was further glory for the Iranians on Day 4 of the Games in other sports as Arman Elahi (48kg), Reza Shamsipour (65kg), Arsham Vahabian (71kg), Reza Afshar (80kg), Amirhossein Naqdalipour (110kg) all won the gold medals of their respective weight classes in freestyle wrestling.

Sam Sayyar settled for the 60kg silver after a final loss to an Azerbaijani wrestler, while Benyamin Ashofteh took a consolation bronze in the 45kg contests.

In taekwondo, Aida Najandnia and Rojan Goudarzi grabbed two gold medals in the girls' competitions, with Parnian Moradi and Sheida Mohammadi winning a couple of bronzes.

Amirreza Roueintan and Amirreza Rahmanizadeh claimed the titles in the taekwondo boys' event.

Iran is represented by 120 contestants in eight sporting events across the 10 days of action the Persian Gulf kingdom.

Participated by athletes from 71 countries, the 19th edition of the International School Sport Federation's flagship event features 26 sports, including four para sports.

Vinicius believes fighting racism led to Ballon d'Or defeat

REUTERS – Brazil and Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr said that he will keep on fighting racism even if his activism is what led to him not winning the Ballon d'Or, sources close to the player told Reuters.

Vinicius took to social media after finishing second in the prestigious award voting behind Spain and Manchester City midfielder Rodri.

"I will do it 10 times if I have to. They're not ready," Vinicius posted on X after his LaLiga side Real Madrid cancelled their plans to attend the ceremony in Paris, boycotting it in anticipation of the Brazilian not winning the men's award.

Asked what Vinicius meant with his post, his management staff told Reuters that he was referring to his fight against racism and that they believe it was what led to him not winning the award, saying that "the football world is not ready to accept a player who fights against the system."

The 24-year-old Brazil international has been subjected to racial abuse on several occasions in Spain, leading to at least two convictions for racist insults in pioneer cases in the country.

Real also won the men's club of the year award, and their manager Carlo Ancelotti was named men's coach of the year after winning the European and Spanish league double in a near perfect campaign last season.

France Football, which organises the Ballon d'Or awards, was not immediately available for comment.

The awards are based on voting by a panel of journalists from the top 100 FIFA-ranked countries.

GETTY IMAGES

"FOOTBALL POLITICS X. My brother, you are the best player in the world and no award can say otherwise. Love you my bro," Real's Eduardo Camavinga posted on X, while several other teammates shared messages with photos of Vinicius saying "You are the best".

"I waited all year for Vini Jr to be deservedly recognised as the best player in the world and now they come to tell me that the Ballon d'Or is not for him?" Brazilian women's great Marta said in a video on Instagram.

Vinicius was instrumental in Real's Champions League-LaLiga double along with 21-year-old Jude Bellingham, who scored 19 goals in a sparkling debut campaign and helped England reach the Euro 2024 final, and came third in the Ballon d'Or ranking

Man United in Amorim talks as Ten Hag successor sought

BBC – Manchester United are in talks about appointing Sporting manager Ruben Amorim as Erik ten Hag's replacement.

Dutchman Ten Hag was sacked on Monday following the side's poor start to the season.

Amorim, 39, is a highly regarded coach who has won two Portuguese league titles with Sporting – including their first in 19 years – since joining in 2020.

The extent of the talks over Amorim are not known.

It is also not clear whether other alternatives remain in the frame to take the Old Trafford job.

However, Amorim is now becoming the leading candidate.

Speaking at a news conference on Monday, Portuguese Amorim said he was expecting a question about the Manchester United job but was not prepared to talk about it.

United have appointed Ten Hag's assistant Ruud van Nistelrooy as interim manager but have so far refused to clarify how long the Dutchman will remain in charge, or whether he will definitely be in post for today's Carabao Cup tie with Leicester at Old Trafford.

GETTY IMAGES

The club has already ruled out Van Nistelrooy conducting a pre-match media conference on Tuesday. Ten Hag spoke about the EFL Cup game after Sunday's defeat by West Ham.

Although United have spoken about the financial impact of paying compensation to Ten Hag and an incoming coach, others with a knowledge of United's finances have suggested this will not be an insurmountable issue.

Sunday's 2-1 defeat at West Ham left Manchester United 14th in the Premier League with three wins from their opening nine matches.

They are also 21st of 36 teams in the Europa League table, having drawn their three opening fixtures.