

Wrestling World Championships: Geraei grabs Greco-Roman gold, Dadmarz undone in final

Sports Desk

The second day of the Wrestling World Championships for the non-Olympic weight categories saw Mohammadali Geraei end his long wait for the coveted gold, while Pouria Dadmarz settled for a silver medal in the Greco-Roman competitions.

Eight years after making senior debut for the national team, Geraei, 30, walked away with the ultimate prize of the 82kg contests in emphatic fashion, storming to a 9-0 victory over a shell-shocked Hungarian Erik Szilvassy in the final.

"After eight years, I finally got to experience the world finals," Geraei said.

"I'm truly happy from the bottom of my heart because I could make my fans and family happy, especially my dear wife, who stood by me in tough times and understood me, as well as my parents and all my fans.

"I'm grateful to them; they have always been there for me and supported me, and I dedicate this medal to them," added the Iranian.

Geraei, normally a 77kg wrestler who was competing at the heaviest weight of his career, encountered no problems handling the extra bulk against Szilvassy, a winner of international tournaments this year in Zagreb and Budapest.

After a quick stepout, Geraei stopped an attempted throw by Szilvassy for a takedown, then transitioned immediately to a gut wrench. An unsuccessful challenge by the Hungarian side padded Geraei's lead to 6-0 just a minute into the match.

Geraei, who finished fifth at the Tokyo Olympics but missed out on a berth at the Paris Games,



Iranian Mohammadali Geraei (blue singlet) is seen in action during his last-eight victory over Georgian Gela Bolkvadze in the Greco-Roman 82kg contests at the Wrestling World Championships in Tirana, Albania, on Oct. 28, 2024.

● UWW

then completed a snap-down, go-behind takedown to finish the match in 1:35 and add the world gold to the bronze medals he won at 71kg in 2017 and at 77kg in 2019 and 2021.

"I thought this competition would be really tough. Thank God it ended up being easy," Geraei said.

The Iranian must fill lucky to have had a shot at a fourth world medal.

In November last year, the United World Wrestling banned Geraei for 12 months due to an incident in last year's World Championships, when he threw a bottle of mineral water on the mat during a 67kg quarterfinal,

presumably trying to buy his younger brother Mohammadreza some time to restore stamina in a bout against Japanese wrestler Kyotaro Sogabe, which the Iranian held on to win 11-10.

However, the international governing body of the sport went on to lift the ban in February, though Geraei still failed to make a late tilt at a place in the Summer Olympics.

"These past two or three years have been difficult for me, and due to certain circumstances, I couldn't participate in the Olympics. I hope with this medal I won, I can pave my way to the [next] Olympics and achieve the best medal and my dream."

Earlier on Tuesday, 2023 bronze medalist Dadmarz fell to a narrow loss to Azerbaijani sensation Eldaniz Azizli in the 55kg final.

It was a cagy affair in the Feti Borova Sports Hall as Azizli – victorious in all three previous meetings between the two – had a 1-1 win on last-point criteria to thank for his fourth gold after each received a passivity point.

"I have met the Iranian wrestler before and we know each other well. That is why it was close. I have beaten him four times but this time it was closer," said Azizli, who had beaten Dadmarz 6-1 in their most recent encounter at the Budapest Ranking Se-

ries in June.

It was an ironic defeat for Dadmarz, who had been on the winning end of the same scoreline in his two previous matches. Azizli's gold was the first of the three won by the Azerbaijani wrestlers in Tirana, with Nihat Mammadli (63kg) and Ulyu Gani-zade (72kg) also coming out victorious in the final showpiece of their respective weight classes.

Mohammadreza falls

The Greco-Roman event in Tirana will be one to forget for Mohammadreza Geraei, who, unlike his older brother, failed to meet the high expectations in a new weight class, suffering a

first-round 11-3 defeat against low-profile American Benji Peak in the 72kg contests.

The 28-year-old was once tipped to dominate the 67kg class for years following his back-to-back Olympic and world crowns in 2021, but his form diminished over the following two years, as he settled for the world silver in 2022 before laboring to the bronze in the 2023 edition.

He then missed the chance to defend his Olympic title after comprehensive defeats against Saied Esmaeili in the Iranian trials and when the young prodigy took the Games by storm to win the gold, Geraei, who had been clearly struggling with massive weight losses before every tournament, was convinced to move up to a the 72kg division.

His hopes of a fresh start in his career, however, ended in despair against low-profile American Benji Peak, who defeated Geraei 11-3 but his loss in the next round meant the Iranian would leave Tirana empty-handed.

Former world junior and under-23 champion, Iman Mohammadi was the Iranian contestant in the 63kg class but missed out on the podium after a controversial 2-2 defeat against Russian Sadyk Lalaev in the quarterfinals.

Azerbaijan won the team title with 85 points, followed by Iran, which tallied 51 points, and Armenia (35pts).

Youth World Boxing Championships: Malek-Katabi secures historic medal for Iran



● IBA

Sports Desk

Iran's Amirreza Malek-Khatabi secured a maiden medal for the country at the IBA Youth World Boxing Championships by reaching the 86-92kg semifinals in Budva, Montenegro.

An Asian youth bronze winner in May, the Iranian came out victorious (4:1) against Russian Oleg Kliuchagin in the

quarterfinals for the historic success. Malek-Khatabi had begun his campaign with a victory over Taha Turgut Tarhan – after the referee deemed the Turkish boxer unfit to continue.

Standing between the Iranian and a place in the final showpiece is Kyrgyzstan's Tynystan Alybaev, who defeated Zvonimir Zirdum in the last-eight round.

Ahmad-Abbasi retains Iran's futsal dominance in AFC Awards

AFC – Iran stalwart Saeid Ahmad-Abbasi was named the latest Asian Futsal Player of the Year at the AFC Annual Awards Seoul 2023 on Tuesday.

Abbasi continued a proud Iranian tradition in the award's history by becoming the sixth different player from his nation to win, following in the footsteps of record four-time recipient Ali-Asghar Hassan-zadeh, legendary Vahid Shamsaei, who picked up the award on three occasions, Mohammad Taheri, Mohammad Keshavarz, and Moslem Oladqobad.

Having been edged to the prize by Oladqobad in 2022, there was no denying Ahmad-Abbasi on his second nomination after his eye-catching tournament display at the Futsal Asian Cup in Thailand in April.

The 32-year-old scored in five of Team Melli's six matches, including the final showpiece, to finish with eight goals and one assist as Iran clinched a record-extending 13th triumph. The success was sweet redemption for the Central Asians, who had relinquished their crown in 2022, and Ahmad-Abbasi also took home the Most Valuable Player and Yili Top Scorer trophies. Born in Tonekabon, Abbasi first donned international colours in 2017 and the pivot recently returned to IR Iran by joining Giti Pasand in June after spending time abroad with Spain's Viña Albali Valdepeñas since November 2022.



● AFC