

Wrestling World Championships: Iran finds little consolation in Nokhodi's bronze after late heartbreaks

Sports Desk

The freestyle event of the Wrestling World Championships in Tirana, Albania, was one to forget for Iran after the country had to settle for a single bronze through Mohammad Nokhodi across four weight classes.

While young Iranians Reza Mo'meni and Sina Khalili suffered last-eight exits in the 61kg and 70kg contests respectively, two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour missed out on the 92kg podium on his return to competitions following back-to-back defeats against two of the sport's greats in Russian Abdurashid Sadulaev and American David Taylor.

Nokhodi, a winner of double world silvers and a bronze, seemed to be on his way to a coveted 79kg gold when he finally pulled off an upset against legendary American Jordan Burroughs, who had denied the Iranian in the 2021 and 2022 finals, defeating the seven-time world and Olympic champion 6-4.

Standing between Nokhodi and a place in the final was Georgian Avtandil Kentchadze and the Iranian looked to be cruising to victory when he built up a 6-0 lead in the second period.

However, Kentchadze secured a takedown with 45 seconds remaining and wrapped up Nokhodi's legs and then ripped off three lace-lock rolls.

Nokhodi halted the flow for a moment for a two-point exposure, but he also appeared to injure his knee during the exchange and the Georgian was able to easily add a pair of late takedowns to secure a 14-8 victory.

Nokhodi still managed to pull



Iran's Mohammad Nokhodi (blue) goes for a gut wrench during his victory over Japanese Kota Takahashi in the freestyle 79kg third-place bout at the Wrestling World Championships in Tirana, Albania, on October 31, 2024.

● UWW

ing with a takedown while on the activity clock to lead 2-0 at the break before Taylor bounced back in the second period to score three takedowns, the last coming with two seconds left, to sign off with a world bronze.

Sadulaev, meanwhile, walked away with the ultimate prize, thanks to a 6-0 win against Georgia's Miriani Maisuradze. Elsewhere in the Feti Borova Sports Hall, Japan's Masanosuke Ono ran riot against Ahmet Duman, defeating the Turkish wrestler by technical superiority to grab the 61kg gold, while Nurkozha Kaipanova of Kazakhstan beat Japanese Yoshinosuke Aoyagi 5-3 in the 70kg final. Georgia and Japan shared the top spot in the team ranking with 55 points, with Iran in third on 41 points.

Iranians had more to cheer about in the Greco-Roman competitions earlier in Tirana as Mohammadali Geraei marched past Hungarian Erik Szilvássy (8-0) in the final to add the 82kg gold to his previous three world bronzes.

Pouria Dadmarz won a second successive world medal, a 55kg silver after a final defeat against Azerbaijan's Eldaniz Azizli, as Iran collected 51 points to finish runner-up to Azerbaijan, which dominated with 85 points, courtesy of three golds across four weight categories.

himself back together and, despite struggling with the knee problem, make a quick work of Japanese Kota Takahashi in the bronze-medal contest, delivering a masterclass of takedowns and gut wrenches for a superiority win (10-0) with 2:11 minutes to spare.

Nokhodi shared the third podium with Slovakia's Achsarbek Gulajev, while Kentchadze went on to defeat Russian Magomed Magomaev, participating as a neutral athlete, 13-4 in the final.

In the 92kg contests, Qasempour, who stood behind Amir-Ali Azarpira in the pecking order for the Iranian 97kg slot at the Paris Olympics, looked to be back to top form in his familiar territory when he eased past opponents from Japan, Turkey, and Moldova to reach the quarterfinals.

Awaiting Qasempour in the last-eight round was two-time Olympic champion Sadulaev, who was chasing his sixth world gold and stepped onto the mat fresh from a first-round 7-0

hammering of Taylor. Sadulaev went ahead 1-1 on criteria after each received an activity point before Qasempour found a way through and scored a double-leg takedown with 30 seconds left.

Qasempour looked to have done enough for a famous victory but the Russian sensation had other ideas as he snapped the Iranian down, spun behind, then managed to fling him to the mat for a four-point takedown with four seconds left on the clock.

The setback sent Qasempour into what was arguably the most important world bronze bout in the history of the Iranian wrestling against Taylor.

Iranian fans were eager to see Qasempour come out on top against the American, who holds a 3-1 head-to-head record against Qasempour's compatriot Hassan Yazdani in four major 86kg finals and had announced that the tournament in Tirana would be his swan song. Qasempour opened the scor-

Youth World Boxing Championships:

Malek-Khatabi into historic final; Kazemi, Esmaeili win bronze

Sports Desk

Amirreza Malek-Khatabi continued his history-making campaign at the IBA Youth World Boxing Championships by reaching the final showpiece of the men's -92kg contests in Budva, Montenegro.

Stepping into the ring on the back of a 4:1 victory over Russian Oleg Kliuchagin, Malek-Khatabi came out victorious against Tynystan Alybaev – after the referee deemed the Kyrgyz boxer unfit to continue – to become the first Iranian to reach a world final across any age class.

An Asian youth bronze winner in May, the Iranian boxer will take on Khalimjon Mamasoliev of Uzbekistan, who defeated Kazakhstan's Rassul Assankhanov (5:0) for the gold medal.

Elsewhere, Mahdi Kazemi and Amir Esmaeili secured maiden medals for Iran in the competition despite last-four



setback in their respective events.

Representing the country in the -51kg contests, Kazemi fell to a 5:0 loss to Kazakhstan's Bexultan Boranbek, while reigning Asian champion Esmaeili came short against Irish opponent Adam Olaniyan in the +92kg last four.



Iranian Amirreza Malek-Khatabi celebrates his last-four victory at the IBA Youth World Boxing Championships in Budva, Montenegro, on October 31, 2024.

● IBA

Wembanyama hits rare 5x5 as Spurs see off Jazz

BBC – Victor Wembanyama further enhanced his reputation by sealing a rare 5x5 to help the San Antonio Spurs defeat the Utah Jazz 106-88.

Wembanyama scored 25 points with nine rebounds, seven assists, five blocks and five steals.

It is the second time he has accomplished the 5x5 – five in each category – and he joined Hakeem Olajuwon and Andrei Kirilenko as the only players to achieve that feat more than once.

“It tells me I need to get my standards up when I don't get 5x5s because I am able to help my team in all those areas. It should be a consistent thing,” Wembanyama said.

The Spurs, who had lost their previous two fixtures, are 12th in the Western Conference, while the Jazz are bottom after losing all five games.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Ja Morant starred as the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Milwaukee Bucks 122-99.

Morant recorded the 12th triple-double of his career by scoring 26 points with 14 assists and 10 rebounds. Giannis Antetokounmpo's game-high 37 points was not enough for the Bucks as they slumped to a fourth successive defeat.

“I thought we played with the right spirit,” Bucks coach Doc Rivers said.

“We didn't make shots and you're going to have nights like that. But on those nights we have to find a way to get stops.”

Meanwhile, the Phoenix Suns benefitted from a stunning Devin Booker performance to overturn a 21-point deficit and beat the Los Angeles Clippers 125-119. Booker registered a season-high 40 points in Inglewood, California and he was aided by 21 points from



● REGINALD THOMAS II/SAN ANTONIO SPURS

Royce O'Neale and a further 18 from Kevin Durant. Rookie Ryan Dunn, making just his second career start, also chipped in with 16 points.

The Suns' second win in the space of two weeks at the Clippers' new Intuit Dome venue has them sitting third in the Western Conference.