

Iran to learn from freestyle setback in Wrestling Worlds, Dabir says

Sports Desk

The Iranian freestyle wrestling team will have to look back at the recent setback at the World Championships as a "pivotal point" for future success, said Alireza Dabir, the head of the country's Wrestling Federation. Pejman Dorostkar's four-man squad settled for a single bronze through Mohammad Nokhodi in the 79kg contests in Tirana, Albania.

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

Iranians had more to cheer about in last week's Greco-Roman competitions in Tirana as Mohammadali Geraei marched past Hungarian Erik Szilvassy (8-0) in the final to walk away with the 82kg gold, with Pouria Dalmaz finishing with a 55kg silver after a defeat against Azerbaijan's Eldaniz Azizli.

The seniors championships – featuring non-Olympic weight categories – came after Iran had bagged a total of 14 medals to make a clean sweep of team trophies in the under-23 event in the Albanian capital earlier in October.

"The Greco-Roman and freestyle teams won the under-23 titles in emphatic fashion, which is a massive achievement for Ira-



Iranian Mohammad Nokhodi (red) concedes a lace-lock roll against Georgian Avtandil Kentchadze in the freestyle 79kg semifinals at the Wrestling World Championships in Tirana, Albania, on Oct. 30, 2024. UWW

nian wrestling," Dabir told the official website of the Iranian federation, adding: "I think it's fair to say we had a decent Greco-Roman campaign in the seniors' contests with a gold and a bronze across four weight classes."

Iran stood runner-up to Azerbaijan, which won a remarkable three golds, in the Greco-Roman

team table, while finishing behind Georgia and Japan, which were tied for the first place, in the freestyle event.

Dabir, however, believes the two standings do not reflect Iran's true status in world wrestling. "I'm sure Japan and Georgia wouldn't have been the top two, if the competition had been held in all 10 weight classes.

Iran would have had a more successful campaign with a full squad, as is the case with Team USA, which took just a couple of bronzes, or wrestling powerhouse Russia, which won a single gold medal," Dabir added. "We still have to acknowledge the final outcome in the freestyle contests should have been much better, but one of our med-

al hopefuls Amirmohammad Yazdani missed the event with injury and was replaced with a young and inexperienced wrestler in Sina Khalili.

"Regarding the 79kg and 92kg classes, I must say we can either continue to mourn what happened to Nokhodi and Qasempour or, on the contrary, build on those defeats as a pivotal

point for future success," added the former world and Olympic champion.

Nokhodi, who defeated six-time champion Jordan Burroughs in the quarterfinals, surrendered a 6-0 lead against Georgian Avtandil Kentchadze with 45 seconds remaining to suffer a 14-8 loss in the semifinals.

Qasempour, meanwhile, looked to be on course for a third world final when he took a late 3-1 lead against Sadulaev, before the Russian sensation pulled off a four-point takedown with four seconds left on the clock.

"I had a long meeting with the Iranian freestyle coaching team after the event and told them they would have to come up with new training methods. The Japanese have been different from other teams in that regard, innovating their training approach, and their results [at major international competitions] have been evident," Dabir said.

"We learned about our shortcomings in those four weight classes and have to make sure they will not repeat in next year's World Championships."

Regarding Iran's freestyle rivalry with the United States and Russia, Dabir said: "Iran surpassed the Americans at the Olympics and the recent competitions, but we need to face the Russians more often and learn from possible defeats."

I was told it was now or never: Amorim on United move



PEDRO ROCHA/REUTERS

BBC – Ruben Amorim says he wanted to take the Manchester United job at the end of the season but accepted a mid-season appointment after being told it was "now or never".

Amorim, 39, was confirmed as Manchester United's new head coach on Friday and will complete his move to Old Trafford from Lisbon club Sporting on 11 November.

Speaking after Sporting's first match since that announcement – Friday's 5-1 league victory over Estrela

which maintained their perfect start after 10 games – Amorim explained his only request following United's approach was to see out the current campaign, which he had already informed the club's president would be his last.

But the Portuguese coach was told that would not be possible as the Premier League club sought an immediate replacement for Erik ten Hag, who was sacked on Monday.

"The season started, we started very

well, and then Manchester United came, they pay above the compensation clause and the president defends the club's interests," Amorim explained.

"I never discussed anything with the president. For three days I said I wanted to stay until the end of the season, but then I was told it was not possible.

"It was now or never, or Manchester would go for another option. So, I had three days to make my mind up, to make a decision that changes radically my life."

Amorim, who has agreed a contract until June 2027, is the sixth permanent manager United have appointed since Sir Alex Ferguson's illustrious 26-year reign ended with his retirement in 2013.

He has established a reputation as one of Europe's most promising managers, leading Sporting to two league titles – including the club's first in 19 years – but said he only wanted Manchester United as his next move.

"I've had other opportunities – the president and [director of football] Hugo Viana can confirm this. It's not the first or the second time that I have been requested by another team and I don't want another team," said Amorim.

"After Sporting I wanted that one, Manchester, and I want that context because that context allows me to do things my way and the club believes me that way."

Morais steps down as Sepahan head coach

Sports Desk

Jose Morais has left his job as Sepahan head coach, the Persian Gulf Pro League club announced on Saturday. Morais's number two and fellow-Portuguese Hugo Almeida will take the interim role on Sepahan bench "until further decisions are made by the club board," the Iranian top-flight side wrote in a statement.

The Portuguese's decision comes as a shock after his team overtook Tractor on top of the domestic league table thanks to a 1-0 home victory over Irzalco on Friday. No clear reasons have been mentioned behind Morais's resignation, who skipped the post-match press conference on Friday, though he is believed to have grown frustrated with sections of Sepahan fans following chants against him and his players at the Fooladshahr Stadium.

A former assistant to Jose Mourinho in Inter, Chelsea, and Real Madrid, Morais was appointed to the Sepahan role for the start of 2022/23 season and led his team to a runner-finish behind Persepolis in the league. Sepahan finished third in the league last campaign and then lifted the domestic cup trophy in June – a first piece of silverware for the club in nine years – while being knocked out by Saudi giant Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League last 16.

The Isfahan-based club, which had to part ways with several key players in Ramin Rezaeian, Shahriar Moghanlou, Farshad Ahmadzadeh, and Omid Nourafkan in the summer, got off to a disappointing start to new season, falling to a 4-1 home

defeat against the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli in the AFC Champions League Elite qualifying playoff.

The defeat sent Morais's side into the continent's second-tier club competition, AFC Champions League Two, where Sepahan is third in the Group C table with three points – trailing Sharjah and Al Wehdah by four – courtesy of two defeats in three outings.

Sepahan's first game under Almeida will come against Sharjah in Doha on Tuesday.



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