

Pace of the punches: Iranian boxer Imani on shattering Guinness records



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INTERVIEW

Iranian boxer Yousef Imani has written his name into the Guinness Book of Records for most full-extension punches in one and three minutes, with the two milestones achieved on the Kish Island, southern Iran, on January 11 earlier this year.

The 32-year-old knockout artist from Khorramabad, Lorestan Province, realized his potential in the ring and decided to throw in the towel on his hometown, deeming it a tough corner to turn his career around, and moved to the Iranian capital, looking to take his boxing career to the next level.

Yousef has now been living in Tehran for the past five or six years, chasing his dreams. Life in a big city can be a real slugfest for a small-town kid, but he's managed to roll with the punches, earning a living by teaching boxing while still pursuing his own athletic goals. And it's paid off – he's racked up several boxing records at both the national and international levels.

"I've been boxing for over 18 years, and from the very start, my punching speed caught the attention of the people around me. Everyone encouraged me to take on the challenge of setting records, and for the past five years, I've fully dedicated my time to that aspect of the game, establishing multiple national and international records," Imani told Iran Daily, after the unveiling of his Guinness certification plaques at a ceremony held by the Iranian Sport for All Federation in Tehran on Tuesday.

"I've had a successful streak in breaking records in various catego-



ries at the national level, including most full-extension punches in one minute with 497 hits, most full-extension punches while holding 1kg dumbbells in one minute with 356 hits, as well as most uppercuts in one minute with 493 hits."

The Iranian then took his skills to the global stage, where "the competition is fierce and the rules are strict."

"In 2021, I set a new Guinness World Record for most full-extension punches in one minute with 403 hits, surpassing the previous record of 334 hits set by a Slovakian athlete just a year before.

"My record, however, was short-lived as an Egyptian boxer threw 411 punches in one minute a year later, and then an American boxer took the title with 412."

Imani also set his sights on another Guinness World Record: Most full-extension punches thrown in three minutes.

"A Slovakian boxer had initially set the record with 919 punches, but

it was later broken by a Dutchman with 929 punches. An Egyptian boxer then raised the bar with 1085 punches.

The new milestones only fueled the Iranian's determination to push the boundaries even further.

"I successfully broke both records on the Kish Island in January, with officials from the Iran Records Committee and sports authorities of the island watching. I threw 1,155 punches in three minutes and 449 punches in one minute, securing my place in the record books once again," added Imani, who participated in several age-group competitions in the country, and was called up for a juniors' national team training camp, before embarking on a new chapter in his career.

On the challenges he faces, Imani said: "Setting records, especially at the international level, comes with a price tag. From nutrition and training expenses to travel costs and record registration fees, the expenses can add up quickly. Since Guinness officials rarely send representatives to Iran, I had to document my record attempt and submit it to them for ver-

ification. As a boxing instructor in Tehran, my main source of income is from teaching, and I've covered all the costs of record registration out of my own pocket, without any sponsorship.

"For now, my name is in the Guinness record books as the fastest boxer in world, but to be honest, I'm not keen on setting new records under the Iranian flag anymore, because I've received zero financial support for

my record attempts, and it seems like no one really cares about my achievements unless I'm making headlines. I've shelled out a hefty sum of money for documentation and other expenses to get my records verified by Guinness. And that's just for submitting my documents – if I had to

travel abroad to set a record, the costs would skyrocket. On top of that, I've been dealing with a nagging injury that's left me in agony, and I've been pushing through the pain to set my records. For now, I need to focus on nursing my injury and see what the future holds."



IRAN DAILY

Economic implications of introducing modern sports in Iran



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PERSPECTIVE

Iran, with its rich history in traditional sports, stands at the threshold of expanding its sports culture by embracing modern sports, which encompass a broad range of new sporting categories, such as: Action sports (such as skateboarding and BMX racing), extreme sports (such as parkour and freestyle skiing), hybrid sports (like Spikeball), e-sports, and urban sports.

These are the kinds of sports that may please younger, more dynamic populations; hence, they have the ability to generate new job opportunities, boost tourism, and fix local infrastructure, which is very important to Iranian economic development. Wherever modern sports will come into place in Iran, creation of jobs will happen in the following activities:

1. Coaches and trainers: Most of the modern sports require specialized coaches, and with increased interest, there will be a proportional increase in the need for such employment.

2. Event management: Regional economic development is furthered by the events them-

selves, which require suitable organizers, referees, and hospitality staff for tournaments and leagues.

3. Retail and equipment supply: Increased participation in modern sports would bring with it a corresponding increase in demand for specialized sports

equipment and attire that will stimulate demand in retail and manufacturing sectors.

4. Sports clubs and fitness centers: Due to the modern importance of sports, new sports clubs and gyms will open, leading to jobs in the fitness industry.

Boost in Tourism

This shows that sports tourism offers a number of economic and financial benefits. Iran will update most of the traditional sports competitions by organizing skateboarding championships or spikeball tournaments. Events like these will

also draw international athletes and tourists to generate foreign exchange earnings through transportation and hotel industries, among other business activities. More foreign visitors will increase Iran's visibility internationally and would thus create more interest for hosting international events in the country in the near future.

Modern sports require designing new sport facilities and thus create a job opportunity in construction and engineering besides encouraging renovation of public spaces for the benefit of the locals. Renewing local neighborhoods and improving public space makes cities more livable and encourages further investment into the region. The establishment of such facilities may spur businesses within the same area since people visiting parks and sports centers are more likely to boost the local economic activities.

The modern sport event encourages physical activities that have long-term economic gains as far as public health is concerned. A fitter population has a tendency to cut costs as far as health expenditure is concerned because such physical activities help people avoid such lifestyle

diseases as obesity and heart ailments. Healthier workers will become more productive with lesser medical claims, which in turn saves money for the country in the long term.

It is in this regard that modern sports have been uniquely positioned to encourage social inclusion and cohesion. These are sports that can be played by everyone, irrespective of background or ability, and as such often act as a bridge between cultural divides. By fostering teamwork, fair play, and respect, modern sports can contribute to developing a stronger social fabric and help with positive behavior in society.

Consequently, the establishment of modern sports in Iran has great economic importance. The avenues they provide include those pertaining to employment, construction, tourism, and health among members of the public. Through modern sport, Iran is in a position to diversify its economy and gain more foreign investment aimed at improving standards of living among the people. In this way, it is not only that Iran will have established a culture of sport, but also one stronger internationally.



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