

UWW Ranking Series:

Ma'soumi, Firouzpour win golds as Iran bags eight FS medals at Zagreb Open

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers bagged four golds and silvers apiece as the country finished runner-up to the United States in the freestyle contests of the Zagreb Open.

Iran tallied 182 points in the first World Ranking Series event of the international season – eight points adrift of Team USA – with Azerbaijan standing third with 125 points.

Reigning world junior and under-23 champion Amirreza Ma'soumi cruised to the 125kg title to bring the curtain down on a decent run for the young Iranian squad on Thursday.

Having eased to the final showpiece without conceding a single point, the 20-year-old prodigy rounded off his campaign in emphatic fashion, making a quick work of former world bronze medalist Mason Parris of the US by a superiority win inside the first period.

Beaten by fellow-Iranian Amirhossein Zare' – world champion and silver medalist in Paris Olympics – in last year's final in the Croatian capital, Ma'soumi said he will be looking to return to Arena Zagreb for September's World Championships and win the superheavyweight title.

"Zare' and I are two of the top heavyweights in Iran," Ma'soumi said, adding: "We're scheduled to wrestle each other [at the National Championships] in two months. I hope that the winner of the bout gets the chance to represent the country at the world event. I'll be eager to claim the world title in this arena."

Earlier in the day, Amirhossein Firouzpour defeated three-time world medalist Osman Nurmagomedov 11-4 in a thrilling 92kg final, making up

for the last-four loss to the Azerbaijani wrestler in the 2021 U23 World Championships.

Firouzpour took an 8-2 lead after launching a gut wrench and, despite a few strokes of brilliance from Nurmagomedov, the Iranian managed to keep the Azerbaijani wrestler at bay to win his second Ranking Series gold. Abalfazl Babalou, a world under-20 champion in 2023, enjoyed an impressive run to reach the 97kg show-down, but was the second best against American great Kyle Snyder, suffering a 12-1 hammering by the former Olympic gold medalist and three-time world champion.

World under-23 gold medalist Mahdi Yousefi also had to settle for a silver in Zagreb, following a 5-3 defeat against Russian-born Zelimkhan Khadjiev, who was representing France, in the 79kg final.

Thursday's results came after Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan had outmuscled Ebrahim Khari by superiority in an all-Iranian 61kg final on the preceding night.

Abbas Ebrahimzadeh, a borne medalist in last year's U23 Worlds, won a second gold medal for the country thanks to an 8-6 victory over American Joseph McKenna in the 65kg weight class.

Meanwhile, a 12-1 rout against Azerbaijan's Kanan Heybatov saw Iranian Sina Khalili finish on the second podium in the 70kg event.

Iranian freestyle wrestler Amirreza Ma'soumi, who went on to win the 125kg gold medal, is seen in action against Ukrainian Murazi Mchedlidze in the quarterfinals at the Zagreb Open on Feb. 6, 2025.

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AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup:

Iran to begin title defense against Philippines



Sports Desk

Iran will kick off the quest for a third successive crown at the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup against the Philippines on May 7 when the competition resumes after a seven-year hiatus in China. The draw for the 12-team event was held in the host city of Hohhot on Thursday, where Iran was also pitted against Vietnam and Hong Kong in Group B. The top three teams of the tournament will punch their tickets for the inaugural FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup – starting November 21 in the Philippines. Iranian girls will take on

Hong Kong on May 9, before squaring off against Vietnam at the Hohhot Sports Center two days later.

The top two of the three groups will be joined by the two best third-place teams in the quarterfinals.

In other groups, the host country was drawn against Uzbekistan, the Chinese Taipei, and Australia in Group A, with Japan, two-time bronze winner Thailand, Indonesia, and Bahrain completing the lineup of Group C.

Iran defeated Japan 1-0 for the title in the inaugural event in Malaysia in 2015 and repeated the success three years later in Thailand, thanks to a 5-2 victory over

the same opponent in the final.

The 2020 edition in Kuwait was canceled by the continental governing body of the sport due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the preparation for the Asian Cup, Iranian women will take part at the 2025 CAFA Futsal Championship in Dushanbe, Tajikistan – starting with a game against Uzbekistan on Sunday.

Featuring five Central Asian teams, the tournament will also see Iran play the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan in a round-robin format until February 16.

Real Madrid have 'lost their head' over referee attack, La Liga chief says

BBC – La Liga president Javier Tebas says Real Madrid have "lost their head" after the Spanish club launched an unprecedented attack on the league's referees.

Real Madrid sent a formal letter of complaint, external to the Spanish FA (RFEF) and Spain's High Council for Sports after

suffering a 1-0 defeat at Espanyol on Saturday.

The only goal of the game was scored by Espanyol defender Carlos Romero, who Real felt should have been sent off for an earlier challenge on Kylian Mbappe.

In the letter they claimed that officials – including video as-

sistant referees (VAR) – are biased against them, "rigged", and "completely discredited".

The letter said: "Decisions against Real Madrid have reached a level of manipulation and adulteration of the competition that can no longer be ignored."

Speaking at a meeting with La Liga clubs, RFEF and representa-

tives of Spain's refereeing committee (CTA) on Thursday – which Real Madrid did not attend – Tebas said: "Real Madrid wants to harm the competition, not just the refereeing group."

"They have built a story of victimhood and I think the cherry on top was the letter they published the other day.

"The issue has been blown out of proportion, they have lost their head. Football doesn't revolve around Real Madrid."

Meanwhile, earlier on Thursday, RFEF chief Rafael Louzan had his seven-year ban from holding public office overturned by Spain's Supreme Court.

In 2022 a provincial court ruled

against Louzan for misconduct during his tenure as president of Pontevedra Provincial Council. He was elected RFEF president in December after the Supreme Court allowed him to run.

"Let this be the beginning of a new, different era, we have the opportunity to create it together," said Louzan.