

Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals:

Foolad wins five-set thriller to force Game 3

Sports Desk

The Iranian Volleyball Premier League crown will be on the line when Foolad Sirjan and Shahdab Yazd square off in the decisive Game 3 of the Finals at Tehran's Federation Hall today. Defending champion Foolad edged out its familiar foe 3-2 to level the best-of-three series at 1-1 on Tuesday. Stepping on to the court on the back of a four-set defeat in Game 1, Foolad looked to be on its way to an easy victory when it took the first two sets 25-23 and 25-22. However, Shahdab fought back to win the third and fourth sets by a 25-20 scoreline and push the contest into a decider. In a nail-biting fifth set that saw the lead change hands multiple times,

Foolad emerged victorious 18-16. Prolific opposite Ali Hajipour contributed with a game-high 20 points for Foolad, with outside-hitters Amirhossein Esmafiar and Esmail Mosafar chipping in 18 and 13 points, respectively. Cuban Javier Concepción topped the scoring chart for Shahdab with 20 points, followed by fellow-middle blocker Masoud Gholami and opposite Mohsen Delavari, who had 14 points apiece. Veteran opposite Amir Ghafour, who stole the show for Shahdab in Game 1 with 29 points, was limited to just 10 on Tuesday. This is the fourth final showpiece featuring Foolad and Shahdab over the past 12 months, with the former coming

out on top in all three previous occasions. Foolad beat Shahdab to the Iranian Premier League crown last April, and then went on to come out victorious in the AVC Asian Club Championship showdown in September, before Behrouz Ataei's men lifted the Iranian Volleyball Cup trophy thanks to a straight-set triumph in February's final.



Foolad Sirjan middle-blocker Seyed Mohammad Mousavi (c) and his teammates celebrate a point during a Game 2 victory over Shahdab Yazd at the Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals in Tehran, Iran, on April 8, 2025. ● SEPIDEH ABDOLHAY/volleyball.ir



Iran's Mansourian, Taqavi grab golds at Sanda World Cup

Sports Desk

Iran's Shahrbanoo Mansourian and Moein Taqavi bagged a couple of golds on the final day of the Sanda World Cup in Jiangyin, China, on Wednesday. A six-time gold medalist at the World Championships, Mansourian, 39, came out

victorious against Tunisian Rimel Khalifi – a 2023 world champion – in the final to walk away with the ultimate prize in the women's 75kg weight class – a second World Cup gold for the Iranian after her triumph in 2016. Taqavi, meanwhile, out-muscled Saidiakram Rai-

mov of Kazakhstan for the men's 90kg crown. The final-day glory came after Sediqeh Dariaei had bagged a first gold medal for Iran on the preceding night, thanks to a victory over Australian Nicole Lowe-Tarbert – world bronze winner in 2023 – in the women's 65kg showdown.



Iran's Shahrbanoo Mansourian won the women's 75kg gold at the Sanda World Cup in Jiangyin, China. ● iranwushufed.ir

Wrestling World Championships:

Esmaeili, Saravi to spearhead Iran's Greco-Roman squad



Olympic champion Saeid Esmaeili, pictured in March's Asian Championships, will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman 67kg division at the Wrestling World Championships in September 2024. ● UWW

Sports Desk

Reigning Olympic champions Saeid Esmaeili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will headline the Iranian Greco-Roman squad in September's Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, the national governing body of the sport confirmed. Esmaeili and Saravi made a first international appearance since last summer's

Paris Games when they eased to the 67kg and 97kg titles, respectively, at the Asian Championships in Amman in late March. Joining the duo in Hassan Rangraz's 10-man team in the Croatian capital, will be world junior and under-23 champion Ali Ahmadi-Vafa (60kg), the Iranian federation announced, as well as Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar (63kg), who settled for a

silver medal at the Asian event. Below-par runs by Iman Mohammadi and former Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei in February's Ranking Series event meant Danial Sohrabi will be the Iranian 72kg contestant at the World Championships, after he won the Asian gold in Amman. An Asian silver medal was also enough for Alireza Ab-

devali – a world under-20 gold medalist last year – to secure the Iranian 77kg spot at the UWW Worlds, while Alireza Mohammadi will be looking to build on his Olympic silver when representing the country in the 87kg contests.

Meanwhile, three spots in the Iranian team remain up for grabs, which will be decided through domestic trials or upcoming international events ahead of the World Championships. World silver medalist Pouya Dadmarz and world U17 champion Armin Shamsipour will vie for the 55kg spot when taking part at the Ulaanbaatar Open in May. Mohammad-Ali Geraei will have to see off domestic rivalry from Asian champion Mohammad Naqousi and Gholamreza Farrokhi to have a shot at a second successive world 82kg title. However, all eyes will be on the superheavyweight trials, where a three-way clash will see reigning world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh, world under-23 champion Fardin Hedayati, who also won the Asian gold in Amman, and Ali-Akbar Yousefi – a world gold medalist in 2021 – battle it out for a 130kg spot in Zagreb.

AFC U17 Asian Cup:

Iran coach Chamanian rues late collapse in Oman defeat

Sports Desk

Head coach Abbas Chamanian lamented the lapse of concentration in the closing stages after his side suffered a 3-2 defeat against Oman in Group D of the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mahan Beheshti's left-footed free-kick gave Iran a 39th-minute lead,

before Walid Al Rashdi drew Oman level eight minutes after the break. Iran restored the lead almost from the restart through Ehsan Kheradpisheh, who finished Mahan Alipour's cutback into the top corner. However, Ahmed Al Amrani turned the game on its head inside 15 minutes, bagging a second equalizer for Oman in

the 74th minute, before his last-gasp spot-kick secured all points for the two-time champion. "We didn't focus during the last 15 minutes," Chamanian said. "I told the players that leading by one goal was not enough, and if they didn't score more it would be difficult for us. There were many chances in the first half that we

did not take. Oman, however, made good use of theirs in the second." The result left Chamanian's boys bottom of the table with a single point, courtesy of a first-day 1-1 draw against Oman. North Korea defeated Tajikistan 3-0 earlier in the day to overtake the Central Asian side on top of the standings with four points.

Tajikistan, which defeated Oman 2-1 in their first outing, is second – on course for a last-eight spot heading into the final round of the group phase. Champion in 2008, Iran will have to beat Tajikistan on Friday and hope the result in the simultaneous fixture go its way to progress to the quarterfinals.



Iran's Omid Qarechomaqlou (9) is seen in action during a 3-2 loss to Oman at the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 8, 2025. ● AFC