

Iranians collect 13 medals at WT President's Cup

Sports Desk

The 7th World Taekwondo President's Cup in the Asian Region saw Iranians bag 13 medals – including four golds – in Tai'an, China.

Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani, and Amir-Sina Bakhtiari walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective classes in the men's event.

In the women's draw, Saeideh Nasiri grabbed the -46kg gold, while Olympic bronze medalist Mobina Ne'matzadeh came out on top against South Korean Seo Yeo-won in the final showpiece of the -53kg event. Ne'matzadeh's biggest victory perhaps came in the quarterfinals, where she defeated fellow-Iranian Nahid Kiani – a silver medalist at the Paris Olympics – in straight rounds. This was a second victory for Ne'matzadeh over her compatriot – following last December's showdown in the Iranian Premier League – in what will likely be a domestic rivalry for a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. Elsewhere in Tai'an, Yazdani came out victorious against

Uzbekistan's Shujrat Salaev 2-0 in the men's -87kg event. Mehran Barkhordari – also a Paris Olympic silver winner – was the other Iranian representative in the weight class, but his campaign came to an end after a first-round setback against Nurlan Myrzabayev of Kazakhstan.

Bakhtiari, meanwhile, overcame Amirreza Sadeqian in an all-Iranian final to win the -74kg gold.

Saghar Moradi (-67kg), and Mahla Mo'menzadeh (-49kg) were the Iranian bronze medalists in the women's competitions, with Ali Ahmadi (-87kg), Said Fat'hi (+87kg), Abolfazl Zandi (-58kg), and Mohammad-Hassan Palangafkan (-68kg), plus Mahdi Razmian and Barbod Jabbari in the -54kg event, also settling for third-place finishes across different men's categories.



Iran's Mobina Ne'matzadeh (blue), pictured in last year's Paris Olympics, won the women's -53kg gold medal at the World Taekwondo President's Cup – Asian Region in in Tai'an, China.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO



Women's Team Melli set for new era under Ja'fari



● PAYAM SANI/IRNA

Sports Desk

Iranian women's national football team will embark on a new era under Marziyeh Ja'fari, who was appointed as the Team Melli head coach on Wednesday.

Ja'fari took over from Maryam Azmoun after a dreadful run of results saw Iran fail to win a single game in 12 outings across different competitions – suffering eight defeats, while finding the back of the net only twice in the process.

Ja'fari will be looking to build on a decorated career in the Iranian club football to turn the national team's fortune around.

The 42-year-old is the most decorated coach in the Iranian Women's Pro League with a remarkable 11 titles

on Bam Khatoun's bench. She also led her team to an impressive last-eight spot at the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League in March, before Khatoun suffered a 1-0 loss to South Korea's Incheon Red Angels in March.

A first major test for Ja'fari will come in the AFC Women's Asian Cup qualifiers – starting June 23 in Amman, Jordan – where Iran is drawn in Group A, alongside the host, Lebanon, Singapore, and Bhutan.

Iran will begin its qualification campaign against Singapore on June 26, before taking on Bhutan, Lebanon, and Jordan, respectively, until July 5.

Only one team from the group will progress to the 2026 finals in Australia.

Iranian Basketball Super League:

Naft beats Tabiat 82-70 to stay in last-four mix

Sports Desk

Palayesh Naft Abadan defeated Tabiat Eslamshahr 82-70 at home on Thursday in Game 3 of the Iranian Basketball Super League semifinals.

Hossein Makarian chipped in a game-high 22 points, plus four rebounds, and seven assists, while veteran center Hamed Haddadi contributed with seven points, 17 rebounds, and four assists – registering an efficiency of 21 – for the home side, as Naft cut the deficit to 2-1 in the best-of-

five series.

American point-guard Perry Petty top-scored for the visiting side with 16 points, with Arman Zanganeh finishing on 10 points and nine rebounds.

Tabiat had come out victorious by a 79-73 scoreline in Game 1 last Saturday, before winning Monday's encounter 80-78 in Tehran, and can still secure a place in the Finals when the two sides meet again in Abadan today.

Another win for Naft will force a decisive Game 5 in Tehran on Tuesday.



● IRNA

French star Ngapeth joins Foolad ahead of Asian Champions League

Sports Desk

French star Earvin Ngapeth joined Foolad Sirjan ahead of the Iranian champion's upcoming campaign at the AVC Men's Volleyball Champions League – starting May 11 in the Japanese cities of Hirakata and Kyoto.

Widely regarded as the best player in the sport in recent years, Ngapeth, 34, played an essential part in his country's Olympic gold-winning run on home soil last year, picking up the event's Most Valuable Player prize.

Ngapeth is Foolad's second marquee signing ahead of its bid for a third Asian title, after Shadab Yazd's Cuban middle-blocker signed for the club to fill in for injured Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi.

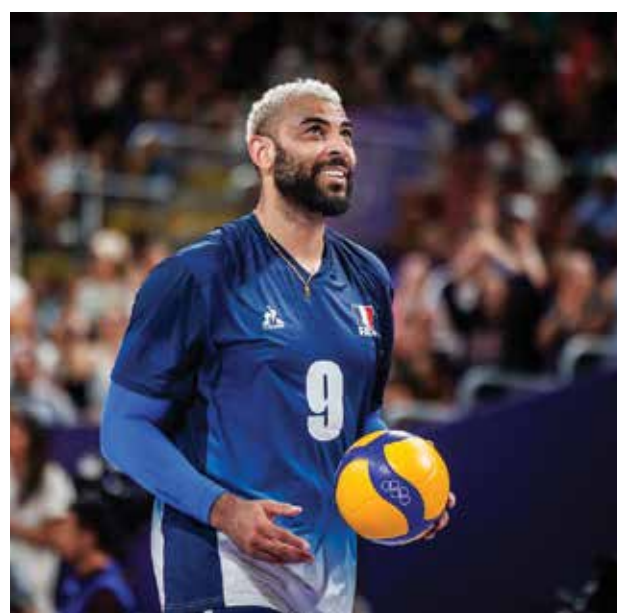
Frenchman Trévor Clévenot, who was named the joint best out-

side-hitter alongside Ngapeth at the Paris Olympics, is also set to sign for Foolad on a short-term contract in the coming days.

Fresh from a second successive crown at the Iranian Premier League, Foolad will fancy a comfortable run in Pool C of the Asian Champions League – also featuring Chinese Taipei's Taichung Bank and Nakhon Ratchasima QminC of Thailand.

Heading to Japan as the defending champion, Ataei's men will begin their campaign against the Thai club on the opening day of the competition, before taking on Taichung Bank two days later.

A top two finish in the pool will send Foolad into the quarterfinals, where a much tougher test against home-favorite Osaka Bluteon or Chinese club Shanghai Bright awaits the Iranian powerhouse.



● FIVB