

## International Freestyle Wrestling Takhti Cup:

Domestic rivalry settled  
as Zare' gets a shot at redemption in Zagreb

## Sports Desk

Amirhossein Zare' came out victorious against Amirreza Ma'soumi in the eagerly-awaited 125kg final at the International Freestyle Wrestling Takhti Cup on Friday to secure a spot in the Iranian squad for September's Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb.

All eyes were on the super-heavyweight showdown in Isfahan, where two of the division's finest international stars had their own reasons to go all out for a statement victory.

Ma'soumi, 20, was eager to build on his six world age-group titles in pursuit of the senior crown in September, though Thursday's result now gives Zare' a chance to redeem himself after last year's final setback at the Paris Olympics by adding a third world gold to his medal haul.

There was little to separate the two wrestlers in the first period, with Zare' taking a 1-0 lead at the break – after his opponent was cautioned for passivity – but the reigning world champion went on to clinch an impressive 8-2 victory, thanks to double takedowns and a gut-wrench.

"Amirreza is a top wrestler and a winner of several world golds in different age classes. I knew all about wrestling him as it was our fourth encounter in recent years. Thank God I prevailed in decisive moments of the contest to win the bout. I will just have to work hard and learn from my past mistakes to succeed at the World Championships," said Zare', who suffered a 10-9 loss to Georgian Geno Petriashvili in a



Amirhossein Zare' is pictured during a victory over Amirreza Ma'soumi in the 125kg final at the International Freestyle Wrestling Takhti Cup in Isfahan, Iran, on May 9, 2025.

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Two-time world silver medalist Amir-Mohammad Yazdani put a lid on a dreadful run of late by claiming a 7-4 win against fellow-Iranian Younes Emami – a winner of two world bronzes – in the 74kg final.

The two will have to meet again in the coming months to decide who will represent the country at the World Championships.

Fariborz Babaei pulled off a stunning 5-3 victory over Asian champion Mahdi Yousefi in the 79kg final, though he will still have to see off four-time world medalist Mohammad Nokhodi for a place in the UWW Worlds. Abolfazl Rahmani made the most of Kamran Qasempour's absence – who was ruled out of the event with a positive Covid test result – and beat Amirhossein Kavousi 7-1 for the 86kg gold.

Mohammad-Mobin Azimi beat Behnam Sarabi 5-2 in the 92kg final, while Ahmad Bazri came out victorious (3-1) against Abolfazl Babalou in the 97kg showdown. Bazri will still face a tough task to secure a world spot as he will have to succeed in a Ranking Series event in May or July to get a head-to-head with Amir-Ali Azarpira, who has been sidelined with a knee injury since winning an Olympic bronze last summer, for the Zagreb ticket.

thrilling Olympic final in Paris. Meanwhile, Ali Mo'meni – a gold medalist in February's Ranking Series event in Zagreb – is guaranteed a return to the Croatian capital after a 9-4 victory over Milad Valizadeh in the 57kg final.

Joining Mo'meni and Zare' in the Iranian 10-man squad are Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Ja-

van, Rahman Amouzad, and Amirhossein Firouzpour. Mohammadnejad-Javan will be the Iranian 61kg wrestler at the world event, thanks to a gold-winning run at the Zagreb Open and an Asian bronze in March.

Amouzad, an Olympic silver medalist last year, has been given a shot at a second world 65kg

gold after domestic rivals Yassin Rezaei and Ali Khorramdel had below-par runs at the Ranking Series season-opener in February.

Firouzpour's impressive run of results in recent months, which has seen him win the Asian and Zagreb Open titles, convinced the Iranian coaching staff to pick him for the world 92kg contests.

Elsewhere in Isfahan, Reza Mo'meni settled for a 61kg silver following a 4-3 loss to Bekzat Almaz Uulu of Kyrgyzstan, while Yassin Rezaei suffered a criteria defeat (11-11) to Indian Jaskaran Singh in the 65kg final.

Russian Dalgat Abdulkadyrov came out on top against Iranian Mohammadali Amouzad by fall for the 70kg title.

## Asian Men's Beach Handball Championship:

Iran rallies past Jordan  
to advance to knockouts

## Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to beat Jordan 2-1 on Friday and maintain its perfect start to the Asian Men's Beach Handball Championship in Muscat, Oman, securing a place in the quarterfinals.

Having claimed back-to-back 2-0 wins against Pakistan and India, Iranian men fell to a 14-12 loss in the first period but bounced back to win the second 20-12, before coming out victorious (7-6) in the shootout.

Alireza Pirzadeh contributed

with a game-high 14 points for Iran, with Amin Kazemi and Ali Heidarian chipping in 10 and six points, respectively.

The victory left Iran on top of the five-team Group B table with six points – two clear of Jordan.

Iran will take on the Philippines – fourth on two points – in its final group game, before Jordan and India square off later today at the at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. A 2022 Asian champion on home soil, Iran settled for a third-place finish in the previous edition on the Bali Island in Indonesia two

years ago, courtesy of a 2-0 victory over Vietnam.

Elsewhere in Muscat, Saudi Arabia defeated Maldives 2-0 on Friday to move level on four points with Oman in Group A, though the host country remained top the table on goal difference.

The top spot of the group will be on the line when Oman – runner-up in 2023 – and Saudi Arabia go head-to-head today.

The two finalists at this year's competition will qualify for the 2026 IHF Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Championships.



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## Azmoun on Al Ain radar for FIFA Club World Cup: Report

## Sports Desk

Shabab Al Ahli striker Sardar Azmoun could join fellow-Emirati club Al Ain on loan for the upcoming FIFA Club World Cup, according to media reports in the Persian Gulf country.

Asian champion in the 2023/24 season, Al Ain will be one of the four clubs, along with Saudi giant Al Hilal, Ulsan HD of South Korea, and Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds, to represent the continent at the

revamped 32-team competition – starting June 11 in the United States.

Al Ain will begin its campaign against Serie A heavyweight Juventus in Group G – also featuring Manchester City and Moroccan club Wydad AC – at the Audi Field, Washington, D.C., on June 18.

Having joined Shabab Al Ahli from Bundesliga club Bayer Leverkusen on a €5m contract last July, Azmoun have enjoyed a prolific debut season in the Asian club

football, bagging 26 goals and 10 assists in 37 appearances across all competitions.

"I would be honored to be part of the Al Ain squad at the Club World Cup, but I am currently under contract with Shabab Al Ahli, and the club will have the final say on the matter," Azmoun said, after his team came from behind to beat Sharjah 2-1 – courtesy of a Yuri Cesar's double – at the UAE President's Cup final in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

This was Shabab Al Ahli's fourth trophy of the season.

Azmoun and co. defeated Al Wasl in the shootout to lift the UAE Super Cup trophy last December, and then beat Al Rayyan 3-1 for the Qatar-UAE Challenge Shield in January.

Shabab Al Ahli clinched a second UAE Pro League crown in three seasons last week, with Azmoun making a massive contribution to the achievement with 11 goals and six assists in 19 top-flight outings.



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