

## Wrestling World Championships:

## Qasempour eager to excel in new weight class

## Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Kamran Qasempour will aim for yet another successful campaign at the World Championships as he embarks on a new chapter in his career at September's showcase event in Zagreb.

Qasempour once dominated the 92kg category by claiming back-to-back world titles in 2021 and 2022, before injury setbacks and division switches hindered the Iranian in recent years.

A groin problem prevented the Iranian from defending his title at the 2023 Wrestling Worlds. Upon his return to action, Qasempour took a shot at the country's 97kg slot for last summer's Paris Olympics but ultimately finished behind compatriot Amir-Ali Azarpira in the pecking order and missed the trip to the French capital.

He returned to his favorite 92kg class for last year's World Championships – dedicated to four



Iranian freestyle wrestler Kamran Qasempour (L) is seen in action in a training session in Tehran on July 26, 2025.

● IAWF

non-Olympic weight categories – but the event in Tirana turned out to be one

to forget for the Iranian. Qasempour marched to the semifinals without con-

ceding a single point, and looked set for a place in the final showpiece when he

took a 3-1 lead against Russian sensation Abdulrashid Sadulaev.

However, with five seconds remaining, the two-time Olympic champion snapped the Iranian down, spun behind, and then managed to fling him to the mat for a four-point takedown to pull off a 5-3 comeback victory.

Qasempour barely recovered from the last-four heartbreak and suffered a 6-2 loss to American David Taylor – a familiar figure for Iranian fans due to his long-standing rivalry with Hassan Yazdani – leaving Tirana empty-handed.

On his return to the Albanian capital in March, Qasempour grabbed the 92kg gold in emphatic fashion to find some consolation, though it was his last piece of action in his favorite territory.

With three-time Olympic medalist Yazdani set to compete in the 97kg class once he fully recovers from a shoulder injury, the national team coaching staff convinced Qasempour to move to the 86kg category in what will likely be the 28-year-old's last genuine

tilt at Olympic glory in Los Angeles 2028.

Qasempour was ruled out of May's International Takhti Cup in Isfahan – serving as part of the Iranian world trials – due to an untimely COVID-19 infection on the eve of the competition. However, he was given a second chance by the national governing body of the sport to earn a place in Zagreb in a domestic head-to-head showdown against teenage prodigy Abolfazl Rahmani – which Qasempour won 3-1 to punch his ticket for the Croatian capital.

Looking impressive and in fine form at the national team training camp in recent weeks, Qasempour is keen to secure a third world gold in September, with Iranian fans eager to see him in a likely encounter against Olympic champion Magomed Ramazanov – after the Russian-born Bulgarian capitalized on Yazdani's injury to beat the Iranian great in the final in Paris.

## Indian ambassador welcomes Iranians' presence in Pro Kabaddi League

## Sports Desk

Rudra Gaurav Shresth, the Indian ambassador to Tehran, praised the increasing number of Iranian players in Pro Kabaddi League in his home country.

"The collaboration between Iran and India in kabaddi has been highly successful on the global stage in recent years. The sport is the second most popular one in my country after cricket and boasts a huge fan base. In this context, the presence of Iranian players is a significant development for the Indian league," the Indian ambassador said in meet-

ing with 20 Iranian players in Tehran before they head to India for the new league season.

"The number of Iranian players in Indian league has grown significantly in recent years, rising from just two to 20 today," added the Indian diplomat.

"The Iranians have earned widespread praise for their performances, with Mohammadreza Shadlou becoming the most expensive kabaddi player in the world, while Fazel Atrachali has consistently ranked among the league's top players in recent seasons.

"I've been collaborating with the Iranian Sports Ministry across

multiple sporting disciplines. Currently, we are working to introduce Zorkhaneh (a traditional Persian sport) in India. We've also expanded bilateral exchanges in chess, and rowing,

"The successful partnership we've built in kabaddi could serve as a model for cooperation in other traditional sports. There's also great potential for collaboration in football and cricket; I know cricket is particularly popular in southern Iran. Indian football has been making strides, and we've benefited from the expertise of top Iranian coaches," added the Indian envoy.



Rudra Gaurav Shresth (2nd R - first row), the Indian ambassador to Tehran, poses for a photo with the Iranian players of Indian Pro Kabaddi League during a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on August 6, 2025.

● IRAN DAILY

## Esteghlal closing in on ex-Real keeper Adán

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal is on the verge of signing former Real Madrid goalkeeper Antonio Adán.

The 38-year-old Spaniard arrived in Tehran on Tuesday ahead of the medical tests and signing the contract with the Capital Blues, which will make him the eighth summer recruitment for the club. Adán has been without a team since parting ways with Sporting CP at the end of the 2023/24 season – after keeping 68 clean sheets in 156 games for the Portuguese giant, lifting the Primeira Liga twice.

An academy product at Real Madrid, Adán made



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his senior debut for Los Blancos in 2009, though his contribution was limited to 18 appearances across all competitions before he left for Serie A club Cagliari midway through 2013/14 season.

On his return to Spanish football, Adán joined Real Betis, registering 54 clean

sheets in 165 outings for Andalusian club, before spending two seasons at Atlético Madrid as a second-choice keeper.

A new number one has been a top priority for Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sa Pinto since he returned to the Esteghlal bench last month, af-

ter long-serving skipper Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini failed to agree a new deal with the Blues and left for fellow top-flight club Sepahan.

A dreadful campaign saw Esteghlal finish ninth in the 16-team table of the Iranian top division last season, though it still managed to win the Hazfi Cup trophy in May and secure a place in the upcoming AFC Champions League Two campaign.

Esteghlal has already signed Esmaeil Qolizadeh, Amirmohammad Razaqinia, Hossein Goudarzi, Aref Aqasi, Uzbek center-back Rustamjon Ashurmatov, Albanian winger Jasir Asani, as well as former Malavan goalkeeper Habib Farabbasi.

## Porto great Jorge Costa dies aged 53 after cardiac arrest

**REUTERS** – Former Porto captain Jorge Costa died on Tuesday at the age of 53 after suffering a cardiac arrest at the club's training centre, the Portuguese side said. The former defender, who was serving as Porto's Director of Professional Football in his second season in the role, was rushed to hospital but could not be saved. "Throughout his life, both on and off the pitch, Jorge Costa embodied the values that define FC Porto: dedication, leader-

ship, passion and an unshakeable spirit of conquest," the club said in a statement. "He left his mark on generations of fans and became a symbol of Portismo."

Over his career, Costa played 530 games in all competitions - 383 for Porto and 50 for Portugal's national team.

Costa earned the nickname "Bicho" (Animal) from teammate Fernando Couto during their partnership in central defence. As captain, he led Porto to UEFA Cup glory in 2003 and a Champions League triumph in 2004 under manager Jose Mourinho.

The defender was one of six players to win five consecutive Portuguese league championships with Porto, alongside Aloisio, Drulovic, Paulinho Santos, Rui Barros and Folha.

Costa returned to the club in April 2024 as director under new president Andre Villas-Boas.

"Jorge Costa's legacy will always remain alive in the memory of all Porto fans. You will never be forgotten, Captain," the club added.



● REUTERS