

Wrestling U20 World Championships:

Setback in Samokov as Iran falls short of gold in four divisions



Iranian Abolfazl Mohammadnejad (blue) concedes a two-point turn against Kazakhstan Yedige Kassimbek in the freestyle 125kg final at the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria, on August 18, 2025.

● AMIRREZA ALIASGARI/UWW

Sports Desk

Iran got off to an under-par start at the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Samokov, Bulgaria, as the country failed to win a freestyle gold medal across four weight classes on Monday.

There was, however, some consolation for the Iranian squad – three-time freestyle champion over the past four editions – after Abolfazl Mohammadnejad settled for a silver medal in the 125kg contests, while Ebrahim Elahi finished with a bronze in the 70kg category.

Mohammadnejad enjoyed an impressive start to his superheavyweight campaign, outmuscling Ukrainian Ivan Myroshnychenko (7-0) and French wrestler Levan Lagvilava (11-4), before edging Azerbaijan's Yusif Dursunov on criteria (1-1) to set a final date with Yedige Kassimbek of Kazakhstan.

Having suffered three losses in as many previous meetings with the Kazakh wrestler, Mohammadnejad thought he may have a chance to change that record when he went up 1-0 in the final after Kassimbek

failed to score on the activity clock. The second period, however, was all about Kassimbek as he got a take-down and then turned the Iranian, wrapping Mohammadnejad's legs around his head, for two points to win 4-1.

Elahi, meanwhile, bounced back from a last-four criteria defeat (2-2) against American Peter John Duke to beat France's Abdoullah Nakaev 6-4 and share the third podium with Nurlan Aghazada of Azerbaijan, while Duke went on to defeat Moldovan Alexandr Gaidarli 7-5 in the final.

Elsewhere, Erfan Alizadeh – an Asian U20 champion in July – crashed out in the round of 16 following a 7-5 loss to Nikolaos Karavanos of Greece in the 97kg class.

Mohammad-Mahdi Mamivand also finished his 74kg empty-handed – courtesy of a 9-8 setback against Italian Raul Caso in the last 16.

The freestyle competitions will be followed by the women's wrestling event in Samokov, before the Iranian Greco-Roman squad begins its bid for a fourth successive team title at the U20 Worlds on Friday.

Insipid Persepolis held by Fajr in Iranian top-flight opener

Sports Desk

Head coach Vahid Hashemian received a reality check in his debut on the Persepolis bench after the Tehran Reds labored to a 1-1 home stalemate against Fajr Sepasi in their Persian Gulf Pro League opener at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Monday. Star striker Ali Alipour found the bottom corner with a side-footed effort from outside the box deep into stoppage time to cancel out Hossein Shahabi's 13th-minute strike for the newly-promoted visitors. Persepolis, which was without three summer signings in goalkeeper Payam Niazmand, Ivorian fullback Serge Aurier, and Congolese winger Thievy Bifouma for different reasons, dominated the possession throughout the game but still struggled with creating clear-cut chances and even felt lucky not to be pun-

ished on a couple of counter-attacks before Alipour's last-gasp equalizer. Hashemian will be desperate to see the new additions available and his team improves on Monday's drab performance when the Reds travel to Isfahan to take on Sepahan in the 'Iranian Clasic' next week. Elsewhere on Monday, Iran under-20 international Kasra Taheri scored a bizarre goal in the 20th minute – when Zob Ahan goalkeeper Parsa Jafari's pass ricocheted off his foot and found the back of net – as Paykan celebrated a 1-0 away victory in Isfahan on its return to the Iranian top flight. Paykan will host Esteghlal Khuzestan next, with Zob Ahan visiting Esteghlal. Golgozar Sirjan also got off to a winning start in the new season, beating Iralco 1-0 at home, thanks to Majid Eidi's sublime volley from the edge

of the box 15 minutes into the game. Next for Golgozar is an away game at Fajr Sepasi, with Iralco facing Kheybar Khorramabad in Arak. Kheybar pulled off a sensational fightback to beat Mes Rafsanjan 3-2 at home on Monday. Alireza Naqizadeh and a Hossein Pourhamidi's own goal gave Mes a two-goal lead inside 18 minutes, but Ehsan Hosseini pulled one back for the home side from close range midway through the first half, before Esmaei Babaei drew Kheybar level right before the break. Former Mes midfielder Ali Shojaei headed home eight minutes after the break against his former club to secure maximum points for head coach Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati in his first game in charge of Kheybar. Next for Mes is a massive home game against defending champion Tractor on Tuesday.



Persepolis midfielder Marko Bakić (88) goes up for a header against Fajr Sepasi striker Shervin Bozorg during a 1-1 draw at the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on August 18, 2025.

● FATEMEH SHAMS/FFIRI

Asian Shooting Championships:

Iran wins air pistol team gold in men's youth contests

Sports Desk

Iranian boys Mohammadreza Ahmadi, Amirhossein Gohari, and Mohammad-Mahdi Choo-bin teamed up for a youth team gold medal at the Asian Shooting Championships in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

The Iranian trio scored 1721 points to beat India (1716pts) and South Korea (1699) to the ultimate prize in the men's 10m air pistol contests. There was further joy for Ahmadi, who bagged the individual bronze in the same class thanks to a 217-point performance in the final, with Indian duo Girish Gupta (241.3) and Dev Pratap (238.6) grabbing the gold and silver medals respectively.

On Tuesday, Iranian girls Pari-mah Amiri, Donya Arshadnia, and Tara Abbaszadeh won a



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youth silver medal in Shymkent, scoring 1676 points for a runner-up finish behind India (1701) in the women's 10m air pistol event, with the host team taking the bronze with

1658 points. Iran had won a couple of bronzes in the men's 10m air pistol team event earlier in the competitions. Amir Joharikhou, Vahid

Golkhandan, and former Olympic champion Javad Forouqi scored 1733 points for a third-place finish in the team final, while Joharikhou also bagged a bronze in the individual competitions. Three-time world bronze medalist Hanieh Rostamian, meanwhile, missed out on the podium in the women's 10m air pistol final on Tuesday. The Iranian scored 199.9 points to finish fourth, standing behind Chinese gold medalist Ma Qianke (243.2pts), South Korean Olympic champion Yang Ji-in (241.6), and Indian shooter Manu Bhaker (219.7), who won double bronze medals at the Paris Olympics last year.

The 16th edition of the Asian Championships will continue across three age classes at the Shymkent Shooting Plaza until August 30.

Alcaraz wins Cincinnati Open after ailing Sinner retires in final

REUTERS – Carlos Alcaraz won the Cincinnati Open after top seed Jannik Sinner retired as he was feeling unwell on Monday, raising concerns about the Italian's fitness just days before he is due to begin the defence of his U.S. Open title.

The Spanish second seed snapped the world number one's 26-match winning streak on hardcourts when his ailing rival signalled he could no longer continue while trailing 5-0 in the first set of the final. Sinner had been bidding to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2015 to win back-to-back Cincinnati titles but he looked uncomfortable early on in the

sweltering conditions. He called it quits after 23 minutes of play. Monday's clash had been expected to be a dress-rehearsal ahead of a potential final showdown between the world's two best players at the US Open, with the duo having faced off in the title match at the last two majors.

Alcaraz came from two sets down and saved three championship points to triumph at Roland Garros, while Sinner emerged victorious at Wimbledon.

Monday's result extended Alcaraz's head-to-head record over Sinner to 9-5, including a 6-2 edge on hardcourts.



Jannik Sinner (1) is consoled by Carlos Alcaraz after retiring from the Cincinnati Open final in Cincinnati, OH, US, on Aug. 18, 2025.

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