

Emam-Ali Habibi, Iranian wrestling legend, dies at 94

Sports Desk

Legendary Iranian wrestler Emam-Ali Habibi, a former world and Olympic champion, passed away at the age of 94 on Sunday. Nicknamed 'The Tiger of Mazandaran', Habibi was a figurehead of the Iranian wrestling's glory years in the 1950s and 60s – alongside Gholamreza Takhti and Abdollah Movahed – and became the first athlete to win a gold medal for the country at the Olympic Games, when he claimed the ultimate prize in the freestyle 67kg contests at the 1956 Melbourne Games. Habibi bagged the first of his world gold medals in Tehran in 1959, and then repeated the success two years later as Iran lifted a

maiden freestyle team trophy in Yokohama, Japan.

Habibi was also a 78kg gold medalist at the 1962 World Championships in Toledo, the United States, and walked away with an Asian Games title in Tokyo 1958.

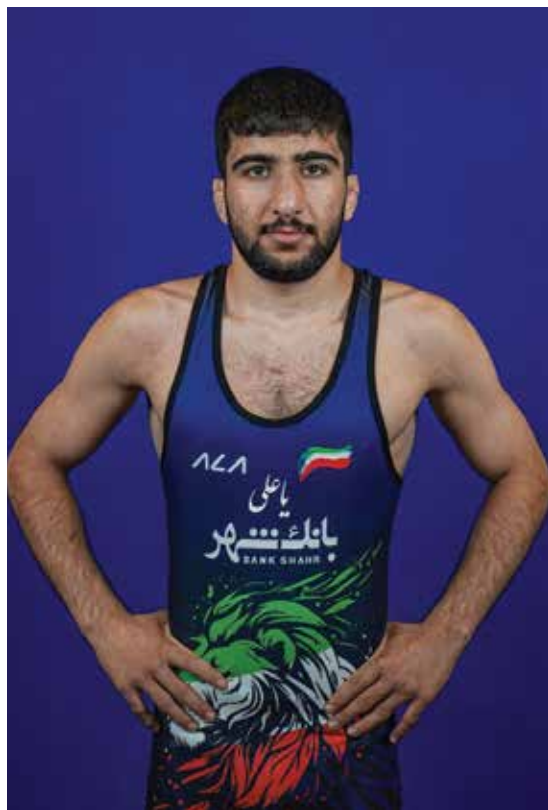
The Iranian great will be best remembered for his exceptional pace, vigor, and stamina in the era of 12-minute bouts. His enduring legacy, however, lies in the signature moves he introduced to the sport.

Habibi is one of the six Iranian wrestlers – along with Takhti, Movahed, Ebrahim Javadi, Mansour Mahdizadeh, and Rasoul Khadem – to have been inducted into the United World Wrestling Hall of Fame, receiving the honor in 2007.



U20 Wrestling World Championships:

Ahmadi grabs Greco-Roman gold, Seydi settles for silver



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers Payam Ahmadi (L) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi won a gold and a silver medal, respectively, at the U20 World Championships. ● IAWFIR

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Iranian wrestlers won a gold and a silver medal across four Greco-Roman weight classes on the seventh day of the U20 World Championships in Samokov, Bulgaria.

In a battle between two 2023 world under-17 champions, Payam Ahmadi defeated Azerbaijan's Turan Dashdamirov 5-3 to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 55kg contests.

Ahmadi began his campaign with a 9-4 victory over Omur Yntymak Uulu of Kyrgyzstan and then beat Russian Ivan Solomin, who competed as a neutral athlete, 6-4, before claiming a 3-0 win against Kazakhstan's Arsen Zhuma to set a final date with Dashdamirov. Later on Saturday, Mohammad-Hadi Seydi settled for a silver medal in the 97kg event after a 5-3 loss to Ukrainian Yehor Yakushenko.

Two-time Asian junior champion Seydi got off to a flying start in Samokov, notching up superior-

ity victories over Bosnian Affan Smajić (10-1) and Croatian Andrej Rodin (9-0), before coming out victorious over Russian Ilia Komarov (5-3) for a place in the final showpiece.

Elsewhere, Gholamreza Abdevali recovered from a 5-3 setback against Kyrgyzstan's Zhanotor Mirzaliev to overcome Swiss wrestler Saya Brunner (8-0) but eventually missed out on the 67kg podium after being undone by Uzbekistan's Fayozbek Eshmirzaev (5-1) in the third-place bout.

Ahmadreza Ahmadian, meanwhile, suffered a first-round exit in the 72kg contests, courtesy of a 3-1 loss to Greek wrestler Arionas Kolitsopoulos, who was later beaten in the semifinals. Saturday's results came after Iran's Mohammad-Amin Abdevali and Reza Azarshab had finished empty-handed in the 60kg and 82kg contests respectively.

Abdevali fell to a 3-2 defeat against Turkish Ömer Altaş in the round of 16, while Azarshab was beaten 7-3 by Armenian Martik

Petrosyan in the quarterfinals. Iran had to settle for a third-place finish in the freestyle competitions earlier in the Bulgarian city – a lowest spot for the country, which had lifted three team trophies over the previous four editions, since 2019.

Mahdi Yousefi was the sole Iranian freestyle gold medalist, thanks to a thrilling 8-6 win against American William Henckel in the 79kg final, while Ahoura Khateri (61kg) and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad (125kg) added a couple of silvers to the country's medal haul. Ebrahim Elahi (70kg) and Abolfazl Rahmani (86kg) bagged a consolation bronze in their respective events, as Iran collected 111 points.

The United States bagged 185 points to win the freestyle title for a second year in a row, dominating with seven medals, including a remarkable five golds, with Kazakhstan scooping one gold, one silver, and double bronzes to beat Iran to the runner-up spot by a single point.

Asian Shooting Championships:

Iranian duo wins mixed team bronze in youth event

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Nazaninzahra Abodollahi and Mohammad-Mahdi Tahmasbi won a bronze medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team contests at the Asian Shooting Championships, adding an 11th medal to Iran's haul in Shymkent, Kazakhstan.

Representing the country in the youth division, the Iranian duo came out on top (16-4) against Uzbekistan's Milena Khakimova and Muhammadjon Anvarov to share the third podium with the Kyrgyz Republic's Zhibek Bektashova and Abdurazzak Muratov – a second youth medal for Abdollahi in Shymkent following her silver-winning campaign in the women's 10m air rifle event.

Indian pair of Ansh Dabas and Ameerah Arshad beat South Korea's Kim Minseo and Shin Sungwoo 16-12 in the final showpiece. This was Iran's eighth medal at the youth contests.

A sole youth gold medal for the country came in the men's 10m air pistol event,

where Mohammadreza Ahmadi, Hossein Gohari, and Mohammad-Mahdi Choobin teamed up to score 1721 points and beat India (1716pts) and South Korea (1699pts) to the top spot.

Meanwhile, Iranian girls Parimah Amiri, Donya Arshadnia, and Tara Abbaszadeh won a youth silver medal, scoring 1676 points for a runner-up finish behind India (1701) in the women's 10m air pistol event. Amiri also claimed the individual bronze of the category with 214.1 points.

Iranian shooters have also collected three bronze medals in the senior competitions. Vahid Golkhandan, Amir Joharikhov, and former Olympic champion Javad Forouqi scored 1733 points for a third-place finish in the men's 10m air pistol team event, while Joharikhov bagged a bronze in the individual competitions.

Golkhandan then went on to team up with Hanieh Rostamian for a bronze medal in the 10m air pistol mixed contest.

The 16th edition of the Asian Championships will continue at the Shymkent Shooting Plaza until Saturday.



● IRNA

Lammens misses Antwerp game as United move draws near

THE GUARDIAN – Senne Lammens was stood down from Royal Antwerp's squad for Sunday's Belgian Pro League fixture against Mechelen due to his €20m (£17m) proposed transfer to Manchester United.

Ruben Amorim wants to sign the 23-year-old goalkeeper as competition to André Onana, who has been United's No 1 but has come under scrutiny.

The 29-year-old Cameroonian was left out of the squad for the opening-day loss to Arsenal

last weekend. His replacement, Altay Bayindir, made an error that directly led to Riccardo Calafiori's winning goal at Old Trafford.

Lammens is a Belgium Under-21 international who made his senior debut for Club Brugge in July 2021 before moving to Antwerp two years later.

Onana is also likely to miss part of the season because of his involvement in Cameroon's Africa Cup of Nations campaign in Morocco.