

# Mo'menimoqaddam grateful after Iran beats odds to retain world title

## Sports Desk

Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam said he was grateful to see his team retain the crown at the FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, despite significant adversity they faced prior to the event.

In rematch of the 2023 final, Iran came from behind to defeat Italy 3-1 (15-25, 25-18, 25-22, 25-14) on Sunday and secure the third world under-21 trophy for the country in four editions.

"No one in the country really expected this team to succeed at the World Championship, but thank God this group of players fought relentlessly to win the title for the third time," Iranian head coach told Mehr News Agency.

"Defending a title is much harder than winning it in the first place, and I'm truly grateful we accomplished it. We had an entirely new generation of players, yet we were still able to repeat our success as we felt a duty to deliver our best performance in the competition."

Iranian team's preparations for the competition were severely disrupted by the country's 12-day conflict with Israel in June, but Mo'menimoqaddam was delighted to see the team's hard work pay off despite the difficult circumstances.

"Our players had to train without proper sleep or rest through the missile attacks in Tehran. However, all these hardships were compensated by the players' joy and satisfaction at the



Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam is thrown up by his players after the final victory over Italy at the FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, on August 31, 2025.  
● AMIRHOSSEIN KHAIRKHAH/VOLLEYBALL.IR

end of the championship.

"The team entered the tournament without any proper friendly matches and faced formidable opponents in Italy, Poland, the United States, and Argentina. We had to leave for China 10 days before the tournament got underway. We still managed to beat France and Brazil in a couple of warmup games in Ji-

angmen, which truly boosted the players' confidence for the competition."

Sunday's triumph extended Iran's winning streak in this age group to a remarkable 29 games over four years under Mo'menimoqaddam – during which the country also claimed successive Asian under-20 titles either side of the world U21 trophy in Ma-

nama.

"It was a true blessing for me and my coaching that this team rounded off a 1,110-day unbeaten run with this trophy. Honestly speaking, I never once thought about the record; our main focus was always on our performance and getting results. This victory is not limited to my efforts alone; all my colleagues

worked hard over these four years to make this honor a reality for our country's volleyball."

"We remained undefeated throughout all official tournaments and even the friendly matches, both in Iran and abroad. The current squad has undergone some changes over this period, but through hard work and precise planning, it has

continued the path of success. This demonstrates the immense power and talent within Iranian volleyball."

"We succeeded in integrating a new generation of players into the national team framework. Approximately 50 percent of the team was changed. Players like Pouya Ariakhah, Shayan Meharabi, Ariyan Mahmoudinejad, Ali Mombeini, and Emad Kakaavand, who previously had no previous international experience, with the youth team, made the roster and delivered an extraordinary performance. This just demonstrates how the talent development process in Iranian volleyball has been highly effective."

Beyond the under-21 glory, Mo'menimoqaddam believes his players have much more to offer in the national team, once they make their senior international breakthrough in the coming years. "Our main task now is to ensure these young players continue their path to the senior national team. It is up to the federation and the Sports Ministry to preserve this golden generation."

"These players are mature enough to play at the senior level. Any player who has competed in a World Championship and faced top-tier teams has gained sufficient experience, though it is crucial for them to make good choices for their future. The federation must also support these players so they can play for decent clubs, get called up to national training camps, and remain integrated into the national team selection process."

## Iranian weightlifter Mo'eini eyeing new heights at World Championships

### Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Alireza Mo'eini said he will be looking to improve on last year's silver-winning campaign when competing at the upcoming IWF World Championships – starting October 2 in Forde, Norway. Mo'eini will be part of the Iranian 10-man squad at the world event, representing the country in the 96kg contests – alongside Ali A'alipour.

The Iranian duo will step onto the platform on the back of an impressive run at the major events over the past nine months.

While Mo'eini settled for a world snatch silver, A'alipour collected the clean & jerk and total bronzes in

Manama last December, before the two went on to bag five medals between them – including triple golds – at the Asian Championships in May.

Mo'eini said he has set his sights on the ultimate prize in the snatch competition this time around, though high-profile Bulgarian Karlos Nasar remains the favorite for glory in Forde. An Olympic 89kg champion in Paris last summer, Nasar completed a clean sweep of three world golds in the same weight class in Manama, but will compete in the 96kg division – where he holds the world snatch record with 188kg – in October's showpiece.

Asked if Iranian fans can expect him to break the

Bulgarian's record, Mo'eini said: "Definitely. It will be a close contest between me and Nasar in the snatch. I'll also give my best effort in the clean & jerk to win a total medal, but my top priority is to beat Nasar for the snatch gold."

"Nasar is a great athlete, but if we already count the gold medal as his – and everyone seems to think this way – it will be a setback for us ahead of the tournament. The numbers that Ali and I are hitting in training are at a level that could put us in contention for the gold medal."

Mo'eini, however, acknowledged that he would need to deliver a much-improved performance in clean & jerk, compared to

last year's campaign, where he finished 10th with a best lift of 202kg.

"I've posted some good lifts in training sessions and improved on my numbers from last year. However, due to a shoulder injury, the split jerk is a bit difficult for me right now. I'm working on it in training so I can successfully complete the lifts I'm pulling from the floor."

"With Olympic champions such as Nasar, [Qatar's] Fares El-Bakh, and [Iranian] Kianoush Rostami [who will represent Kosovo], among other title winners all in the mix, the competition will be fierce. Ali and I are relatively young weightlifters, but our intention is to stand on the global podium."



● AWF



● MNA

## Iranian swimmer Izadyar aiming for fitting farewell in Aichi-Nagoya 2026

### Sports Desk

Iranian para swimming sensation Shahin Izadyar said he will be aiming to add more glory to his decorated medal haul at next year's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games before calling time on his glorious career.

Izadyar stole all the headlines at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta, by collecting six golds and a silver medal, be-

fore he bagged two more silvers and triple bronze medals at the multi-sport event five years later in Hangzhou, China.

"I have managed to win a total of 24 medals across four appearances at the Asian Para Games, and I will strive to increase my medal count in my fifth and final participation at the event before retiring," Izadyar, 31, told ISNA.

The Iranian said he would still

need to improve in certain disciplines before next year's Games.

"I am intensively training for three events – the 100m breaststroke, as well as the 50m and 100m freestyle categories – with the goal of achieving success in Nagoya. I just want to retire from professional swimming on a high note by winning more medals there," added the Iranian.

"I suffered a severe groin injury at the Paris Paralympics last year, which prevented me from achieving the result I had hoped for. This injury has weakened the muscles in my leg and has not yet fully healed. Nevertheless, I am continuing to swim under these circumstances, and my focus is on achieving the best possible result in my farewell at next year's Games."