

# Wrestling World Championships: Iran to chase elusive Greco-Roman crown in Zagreb

## Sports Desk

Iran will bid for its first team title in 11 years when the Greco-Roman portion of the Wrestling World Championships gets underway Thursday in Zagreb, Croatia.

With two reigning Olympic champions, as well as the defending world superheavyweight gold medalist on the 10-man roster, head coach Hassan Rnagraz will hope to see his team, having finished runner-up to Azerbaijan in the past two editions, go all the way to lift the trophy for only a second time in the history of the competition.

A gold medalist at the Paris Olympics, Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will headline the 97kg event, poised to walk away with the ultimate prize for a second time in his career following back-to-back bronze-winning campaigns.

Joining the top-seeded Iranian in the mix will be the Armenian sensation Artur Aleksanyan – a four-time world champion who was beaten by Saravi in the Paris final – defending gold medalist Gabriel Rosillo of Cuba, and Kyrgyzstan's Uzur Dzhuzup-

bekov, who won a joint-bronze alongside the Cuban in Paris. Saeid Esmaili will be the ultimate favorite to claim the 67kg title in the Croatian capital.

The 22-year-old Iranian stunned the wrestling world in his major senior debut by delivering thrilling performances on his way to the Olympic gold last year.

Esmaili will face competition from the 2023 finalists Luis Orta of Cuba and Azerbaijan's Hasrat Jafarov, who shared the third podium in the Olympics.

Reigning world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh will eye a third successive world final in the 130kg category.

Many believe the Iranian would have won the gold in Paris, had it not been for a quarterfinal loss to Cuban great Mijaín López, who went on to bag a remarkable fifth Olympic title.

With López calling time on his illustrious career after the Games, Mirzazadeh will again be the wrestler to beat in the superheavyweight class. However, Russian European champion Sergey Semenov, competing as a neutral athlete, second-seeded Turkish Hamza Bakir, and Ka-

zakhstan's Alimkhan Syzdykov will still fancy their chances of providing a stern test for the Iranian.

Former world junior champion Alireza Mohmadi will be among the top contenders in the 87kg event following an impressive run over the past two years, during which the young Iranian won the world 82kg silver in 2023 before finishing runner-up to Bulgarian Semen Novikov at the Olympics.

Olympic bronze medalist Dávid Losonczi of Hungary, who defeated Novikov to the European gold in May, Serbian Aleksandr Komarov and Denmark's Turpal Bisultanov, who also won an Olympic bronze last year, will join Mohmadi in vying for the 87kg glory.

Meanwhile, Gholamreza Farrokhi will look to build on his commanding victory over reigning world champion Mohammadali Geraei in the Iranian world trials when representing the country in the 82kg class, while Danial Sohrabi will step into the 72kg event fresh off his gold medal at the Asian Championships in March.

Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar



Olympic champion Saeid Esmaili performs a lift during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on September 7, 2025.  
● FARSHAD BANDANI/LAWFIR

(63kg) and Alireza Abdevali (77kg) know they need to significantly improve on their silver-winning performances at the Asian event if they are to leave Zagreb with a medal.

Eager to carry their age-group

momentum into their senior world breakthroughs, Payam Ahmadi and Ali Ahmadi Vafa could both emerge as surprise champions in their respective divisions.

Ahmadi will compete in the

55kg contest as the world and Asian under-20 champion, while Ahmadi Vafa will be part of the 60kg class, having won world junior and U23 titles in 2024, followed by a Ranking Series bronze in February.

## AFC Women's Champions League: Khatoon to play defending champion Wuhan Jiangda in group phase



## Sports Desk

Iranian club Bam Khatoon will face defending champion Wuhan Jiangda in Group B of the AFC Women's Champions League.

The draw for the second edition of the continent's flagship women's club competition took place the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thurs-

day, where 12 teams were divided into three groups – set to battle in a centralized league format between November 9 to 23.

Khatoon and Jiangda will be joined by East Bengal FC of India and Uzbekistan's PFC Nasaf in the same group, with the exact fixtures list yet to be confirmed by the Asian football governing body.

Wuhan Jiangda, which defeated Melbourne City in the shootout in May to lift the trophy at the inaugural edition, will host all games in Group B.

The top two teams in each group will be joined by two best third-place finishers in the last-eight round.

Group A will see top-seed Melbourne City square off against group host Ho Chi Minh City FC of Vietnam, Philippines' Stallion Laguna FC and Lion City Sailors FC of Singapore.

The Group C challenge will be between Suwon FC Women of South Korea, Japan's Tokyo Verdy Beleza, Naegohyang Women's FC of North Korea and Myanmar's ISPE WFC, which will host the group.

A 12-time Iranian top-flight champion, Khatoon, which has won the domestic league in the past four seasons, finished runner-up to Melbourne City in the group table to progress to the knockout phase last season, before suffering a 1-0 loss to South Korea's Incheon Red Angels in the quarterfinals.

## Iran U21 beats Japan to head into Asian canoe polo semis



## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's team defeated Japan 8-1 to progress to the last four at the under-21 contests of the Asia Canoe Polo Championships in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Amirreza Kiani scored three

times, with Aryan Nasiri and Mohieddin Karimi finding the net twice apiece, while Sepanta Mohseni was also on the scoresheet to lead Iran into today's semifinal against the host country.

Iranian boys began their campaign with an 8-4 vic-

tory over Hong Kong before suffering a last-gasp 5-4 setback against Chinese Taipei, but still managed to advance to the last eight as the runner-up thanks to a 6-0 win against in their third outing in the group stage.

## Iranian handball boys eyeing glory at inaugural Asian U-17 Ch'ship

## Sports Desk

Iran will be among the hopefuls at the inaugural Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship, starting Monday in Amman, Jordan.

Iran is in Group D of the competition alongside Asian handball powerhouse South Korea, Maldives, and Syria.

Iranian boys will get their underway against Maldives on the opening day of the event, and then take on Syria a day later, before facing South Korea on Wednesday.

The finalists of the 13-team event will qualify for the 1st IHF Men's U-17 Handball World Champi-

onship, scheduled to take place in Morocco from October 24 to November 1.

Group A features Bahrain, Kuwait, and Hong Kong, with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and China in Group B.

Jordan, Chinese Taipei, and India complete the lineup in Group C.

The championship was previously scheduled to be held from July 1-11, but was postponed due to the conflict between Iran and Israel.

The Iranian squad left Tehran for the Jordanian capital on Friday, having played to a win and a loss against Qatar in a couple of warmup games last week.

Iran suffered a 28-21 defeat in the first game before coming out on top by a commanding 39-24 scoreline in its second outing in Doha.

The following is the Iranian 18-man squad in Amman:

Mohammad-Hossein Kamali, Mahdi Ahmadi, Reza Khademi, Arshia Javidi, Mohammadreza Hemmati, Ali Ghayour, Amirhossein Nik-Eqbal, Mohsen Hadizadeh, Mehrshad Mansouri, Arian Khaleqi, Mohammad-Pouya Parouhan, Hassan Joudaki, Mohammad Keshavarz, Danial Mirhosseini, Shayan Sousani, Saleh Hesezhadeh, Mohammad-Ebrahim Khanlari, and Farshad Nowruzpour.

