

Wrestling World Championships:

Zare' retains superheavyweight dominance as Iran bags triple medals

Sports Desk

It was business as usual for Amirhossein Zare' at the Wrestling World Championships as the Iranian defended his superheavyweight title in Zagreb on Sunday. Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan and Kamran Qasempour added further medals to Iran's freestyle haul on the second day of the competition, finishing with a silver and bronze respectively. Zare' rounded off his emphatic run in the 125kg class with a 5-0 victory over European champion and Olympic bronze medalist Giorgi Meshvildishvili of Azerbaijan in the final showpiece. The Iranian was awarded the first point through a passivity caution for his opponent and then scored on a takedown, followed by a gut wrench, with seconds left in the first period before controlling the proceedings in the second to secure his third gold medal in four editions of the Wrestling Worlds. "I'm grateful that this [winning

the title] has happened for the third time," said the Iranian, who has now won six major medals, including a 2022 world bronze, since his making his seniors breakthrough in 2021. "I just hope to keep winning gold medals for as long as I wrestle. This third one feels just as good as the others, and I dedicate it to the people of Iran," Zare', who also has Olympic silver and bronze medals under his belt, added. Sunday's triumph came as a bit of relief for the Iranian after last year's heartbreak against his familiar Georgian foe Geno Petrashvili in a thrilling superheavyweight final at the Paris Olympics. "That tough experience at the Olympics was really painful, and I'll never forget it," said Zare'. "I made mistakes myself. For the last 13 months, I've only been focused on training – so that my next medal would be gold and to make up for those mistakes." The latest triumph reaffirmed Zare's spot among



Freestyle wrestler Amirhossein Zare' celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the 125kg title at the World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 14, 2025. ● IAWFIR

the top 100 most decorated wrestlers of all time, placing him alongside fellow Iranians Abdollah Movahed, Gholamreza Takhti, Rasoul Khadem, Hamid Sourian, and Hassan Yazdani. At 24, Zare' still has years of glory ahead of him, with his

sights already set on the elusive Olympic crown in Los Angeles in three years. "I'll keep grinding, keep pushing, until I get better and finally win that Olympic gold," Zare' said. Elsewhere, former under-23 and junior world bronze

medalist Javan marked his senior debut at the World Championships with a silver medal in the 61kg division. An Asian bronze medalist in March, Javan, 21, enjoyed an impressive run to the final showpiece – including a last-gasp 3-2 win against North

Korean Kim Kum-hyok in the semifinals – but was always the second best in Sunday's showdown against Russian former Olympic champion Zaur Uguev, competing as a neutral athlete, who secured a superiority win (11-2) to clinch his third world gold. Qasempour, meanwhile, recovered from a last-four 7-0 setback against American Zahid Valencia on the preceding night to make quick work of Indian Mukul Dahiya by superiority (10-0) and finish his 86kg campaign with a consolation bronze. "Thank God I'm not going to return to Iran empty-handed, I just hope this medal brings joy to my people," Qasempour, a two-time world 92kg champion, said after the bout. Citing an illness in the days leading to the competition, Qasempour added: "I don't want to come up with excuses but God knows how I've been feeling recently. I just hope to make up for missing the gold in the future." The morning session of Day

2 in Zagreb was one to forget for Iranian wrestling, as none of the country's four contestants in action managed to reach to the final in their respective events. Representing the country in the 57kg class, Ali Mo'meni suffered a second-round exit after a shock fall defeat against Mexican Roman Bravo-Young. Younes Emami, meanwhile, suffered a comprehensive 11-4 loss to Kota Takahashi of Japan in the 74kg quarterfinals but remained on course for a third bronze medal of his career after the Japanese progressed to the final. Four-time world medalist Mohammad Nokhodi fell to an 8-3 setback against Georgios Kougioumtsidis of Greece in the 79kg last four, while reigning Asian champion Amirhossein Firouzpour failed to reach the final on his World Championships debut following a semifinal defeat (11-6) against Russian Amanula Gadzhimagomedov in the 92kg category.

AFC Champions League Elite:

Tractor to open campaign against Shabab Al Ahli

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Tractor will get its AFC Champions League Elite campaign underway today against Emirati champion Shabab Al Ahli at Dubai's Rashid Stadium. Tractor got off to a slow start to its domestic title defense, suffering a 1-0 home loss to Esteghlal before sharing the spoil with Mes Rafsanjan in a goalless stalemate before the international break, but head coach Dragan Skocic will hope to see his team build on Friday's 4-1 victory over Iralco, during which Croatian striker Domagoj Drozddek bagged a first-half hat-trick. Friday's win, however, proved costly for Tractor and the Croatian coach as integral winger Mahdi Torabi was forced out with an injury at halftime and missed the Dubai visit. The good news for Skocic is that Iran international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is available for selection for the first time this season after his four-month ban – handed by the Iranian Football Federation – was suspended by the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Saturday. Meanwhile, Shabab Al Ahli –



● tractor-club.com

sitting atop the UAE Pro League table with seven points in three games – will step onto the pitch fresh off a hard-fought 1-0 win against 10-man Baniyas on Thursday. Prolific striker Sardar Azmoun, who played a pivotal part in the title-winning run last season, is yet to feature for the club in the new campaign due to an injury and will likely miss today's game, but his Iran international teammate Saeid Ezzatollahi is contention for a start after returning from an injury setback against Baniyas. The two clubs were part of the AFC Champions League Two

last season, with both crashing out in the quarterfinals. The sides have history in the Asian elite clubs' competition, having met twice in the 2015 group stage with both winning one apiece, before Shabab Al Ahli went on to finish as the runner-up. The Dubai-based side will head into the match on a nine-game unbeaten run against teams from Iran, while Tractor, which won its maiden domestic top-flight last season, also has a streak to protect – having not suffered defeat in its last five encounters against teams from the UAE.

FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship: 'Wounded' Iran desperate to bounce back against Tunisia

Sports Desk

Iran will be eager to recover from a first-day defeat against Egypt at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship when taking on another African test in Tunisia in Pasay City, Philippines, today. Widely regarded as the favorite win Pool A – also featuring the host country – ahead of the tournament, Roberto Piazza's men were given a reality check in their opening game, suffering a 3-1 loss (17-25, 25-16, 23-25, 20-25) to the reigning African champion on Sunday. "We didn't expect the result to turn out this way. We need to realize where we are; this tournament is the second-most important volleyball event in the world after the Olympics," Iran captain Morteza Sharifi, who had a quiet day at the SM Mall of Asia Arena with eight points, said after the game. "We all need to wake up and understand what must be done from now on. I can only apologize to the dear people of Iran," added the star outside hitter. Italian coach Piazza, meanwhile, warned his men of the enormous task in the today's must-win game. "Iran's team must recover its energy and the players have to find self-belief. At the moment, the team is like a wounded, bleeding



Iranian setter Arshia Behnejad serves the ball during a 3-1 loss to Egypt at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship in Pasay City, Philippines, on September 14, 2025. ● MOJTABA ZAKIZADEH/VOLLEYBALL.IR

animal that must be healed as soon as possible," said the Italian ahead of a training session on Sunday. "The team needs to regain its harmony and the players need to support one another, because the next game against Tunisia is a crucial one. We know perfectly well that we're in for a tough, difficult match, and in my opinion, it will be even harder than the game against Egypt," added the Italian. "We know how we need to play tomorrow, and the players are fully aware of the mindset we must have for this game. "Our only focus tomorrow must

be on the next ball, not the final result or anything else. Japan was defeated by Canada today – a result nobody would have believed possible at the World Championship. That just shows how unpredictable this tournament can be." Iran will be hoping to be in the top two of the group after Thursday's game against the Philippines to progress to the round of 16. Tunisia got off to a flying start in the Philippines, beating the host in straight sets (25-13, 25-17, 25-23) in the tournament's curtain riser on Saturday.

Asian Men's U-17

Handball Championship: Iran demolishes Maldives in opener

Sports Desk

Iranian boys got off to an emphatic start at the inaugural Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship, hammering Maldives 65-4 in the Group D opener in Amman, Jordan, on Monday. Ali Ghayour Mohammad Kes-

havarz chipped in a joint game-high eight goals, with the former receiving the Man of the Match prize after the game. Saleh Hesezhadeh and Danial Mirhosseini contributed with seven goals apiece. Iranian boys will take on Syria in their second outing today,

before facing Asian handball powerhouse South Korea on Wednesday. The two finalists of the 13-team event will qualify for the 1st IHF Men's U-17 Handball World Championship, scheduled to take place in Morocco from October 24 to November 1.



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