

# Wrestling World Championships: Amouzad avenges Paris setback, Iran ends 12-year wait for freestyle crown

## Sports Desk

Iran collected seven medals across 10 weight classes to claim a first freestyle team trophy in 12 years at the Wrestling World Championships.

A medal haul of two golds, two silvers, and three bronzes, saw Iran finish atop the team standings in Zagreb with 145 points – 11 ahead of the United States, with Japan in third place on 111 points.

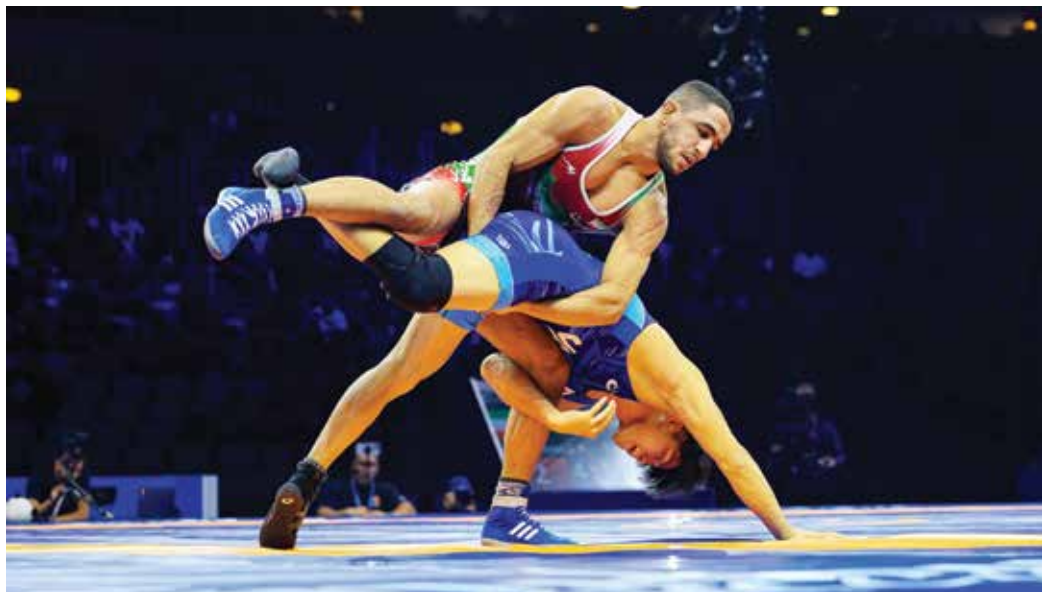
## Leader hails world champions

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised the national freestyle wrestling team after their triumph in Zagreb.

In a message following the victory, he congratulated the athletes for their "astonishing effort and then admirable conduct," saying the blend of strength and spirituality had created "sublime values." "Bravo to you!" the statement added.

This was Iran's sixth freestyle title in the history of the Wrestling Worlds.

Living up to his nickname, "The Ruthless", Rahman Amouzad capped off a dominant campaign in the 65kg division by outclassing Japan's Kotaro Kiyooka in the final, while Amirali Azarpira had to settle for a silver medal after a



Iran's Rahman Amouzad (red) is seen in action against Kotaro Kiyooka of Japan in the freestyle 65kg final at the Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 16, 2025.

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loss to American Kyle Snyder in the 97kg showdown.

Amouzad not only avenged his final loss to Kiyooka in last year's Paris Olympics, he did it in overwhelming fashion, blitzing his way to a 10-0 victory at the Arena Zagreb.

"I worked really hard and had been waiting for this moment for almost a year, and I'm happy this championship is mine," Amouzad said after grabbing his second world gold in three years. "I put in

a lot of effort physically, mentally, and with analysis."

It was just over a year ago that Kiyooka came seemingly out of nowhere and snatched the 65kg gold in Paris with an inspired 10-3 victory over Amouzad.

But on Tuesday, the outcome could not have been more different.

The Iranian deftly countered a single-leg attack from Kiyooka with a back lift for two, then

added a two-point exposure. And he wasn't finished with the sequence, transitioning to a cradle at the edge and wedging Kiyooka over for two more and a 6-0 lead.

Amouzad kept the pressure on a shell-shocked Kiyooka, scoring a stepout that had a fleeing point tacked on. A final takedown and the match was over with eight seconds to spare in the first period.

"I have more plans and bigger

goals ahead," Amouzad said. "This is just the beginning for me, and my work isn't finished yet. In two months, I'll compete in the Islamic Solidarity Games and I'll participate in any tournament the coaching staff believe I should."

The 97kg final was a much closer but no less dramatic affair, as Snyder picked up his eighth medal in eight trips to the World Championships to go along with an Olympic gold from Rio 2016 and a silver at Tokyo 2021.

The 29-year-old Snyder received an activity point in a tenuous first period, but Azarpira broke the logjam by getting behind for a takedown early in the second. A penalty point against Azarpira for finger-grabbing tied the score at 2-2, but with the Iranian holding the criteria advantage.

With the atmosphere growing intense, Snyder put the pressure on and scored a stepout with 8.5 seconds left, then held on as the match ended with him defending against a single-leg attack. Iran made a futile challenge at the end, as it finished 4-2.

It was a massive heartbreak for the 23-year-old Iranian, who had beaten reigning world and Olympic champion Akhmed Tazhudinov in the semifinals and was the favorite to grab the gold, having defeated the American in the previous two meetings – including

the bronze-medal contest at the Paris Olympics.

Tuesday's medal came after Amirhossein Zare' had come out victorious by a 5-0 scoreline against Giorgi Meshvildishvili of Azerbaijan on Sunday to defend his 125kg world title, walking away with his third superheavyweight gold medal since 2021.

Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan finished with an impressive silver medal on his debut at the World Championships following a superiority loss to Russian Zaur Uguev in the 61kg final, while Kamran Qasempour eased to a 10-0 win against Indian Mukul Dahiya to win a consolation bronze in the 86kg division.

Mohammad Nokhodi and Amirhossein Firouzpour added a couple of bronzes to Iran's medal count on Monday.

Nokhodi recovered from a last-four setback against Greece's Georgios Kougioumstidis to beat Azerbaijan's Dzhabrail Gadzhiev 4-2 and win a joint-bronze in the 79kg event.

Firouzpour managed to finish with something to cheer about on his debut at the Senior World Championships, as he made quick work of Kazakhstan's Kamil Kurugliyev, securing a fall victory in less than two minutes in the third-place bout of the 92kg event.

## AFC Champions League Elite:

# Skocic pleased as 10-man Tractor holds on for a point at Shabab Al Ahli

## Sports Desk

Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic praised his team's resilience after the Iranian top-flight champion played secured a 1-1 draw against Shabab Al Ahli in Dubai despite playing with 10 men for the best part of the second half in their AFC Champions League Elite opener on Tuesday.

Croatian striker Tomislav Strkalj gave Tractor the lead when his spectacular 25-yard strike went past rooted goalkeeper Hamad Almqbaali with 14 minutes into the game.

Tractor went down to 10 men six minutes after the break as a VAR decision saw Domagoj Drozdek's yellow card upgraded to red for a reckless challenge on the home side's Iranian midfielder Saeid Ez-zatolahi.

Shabab Al Ahli capitalized on the one-man advantage 14 minutes later.

Back between the posts after his four-month ban was suspended by the Court of Arbitration for Sport last week, Alireza Beiran-

vand kept out a Yuri Cesar's effort from outside the box, only to see Guilherme Bala slot home on the rebound for the equalizer.

The home side desperately pushed for a second goal in the closing stages, with Cesar hitting the bar in the 79th minute before Iranian substitute Reza Ghandipour saw his two attempts saved by Beiranvand soon after.

"I congratulate my players for their good performance against a strong opponent. The weather conditions were very difficult. This caused the players to have problems during the match. Playing in such weather conditions is not easy and the red card made it even harder," Skocic said the game "In the first half we controlled the game and created good chances on the counter-attacks but we didn't take them. After that, we received a red card which made it more difficult. However, my players fought and made me proud," added the Croatian.

Meanwhile, Skocic's opposite number Paulo Sousa had mixed feelings about the final outcome

at the Al Rashid Stadium.

"We faced difficulties in the first half due to the weather conditions, but overall, we controlled much of the game. We corrected ourselves at halftime and created several opportunities in the second half. I congratulate my players for a strong performance," said Sousa.

"However, we are not satisfied and share the disappointment with our fans. We deserved a better result, without a doubt. The players made the right decisions on the pitch and created many chances. They are the same players who achieved great success last season, and they remain highly motivated. We just need to work harder to turn our opportunities into goals," added the Portuguese.

Tractor will be back in Asian action in two weeks, taking on another Emirati test in Al Wahda at Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium.

## Sepahan woes continues

Meanwhile, Sepahan's winless start to the new season contin-



Tractor striker Domagoj Drozdek is shown a red card during a 1-1 draw against Shabab Al Ahli at the AFC Champions League Elite in Dubai, UAE, on September 16, 2025.

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ued on Tuesday, as the Persian Gulf Pro League outfit suffered a 1-0 loss to Jordan's Al Hussein in their Group C opener in the AFC Champions League Two at the Amman International Stadium.

A clever piece of play saw Al Hus-

sein break the deadlock in the 28th minute, as Aref Haitham's reverse pass sent Mahmoud Khrouba through on goal before Jordanian striker's effort went in through goalkeeper Mohammadreza Akhbari's legs.

This was yet another setback

for Sepahan head coach Moharram Navidkia and his team, which fell to a defeat to Al Dhail in the Asian elite clubs competition's qualifying play-offs and sits 12th in the Iranian top-flight table with two points from three games.



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## Speed World Championships 2025:

# Iranian skater Yahaqqi wins historic bronze

## Sports Desk

Young skater Amirmahdi Yahaqqi won a historic bronze medal at the Speed World Championships in Beidaihe, China, on Wednesday, marking Iran's first medal in the history of the competition.

Representing Iran in the men's

junior 100m lane event, the Iranian clocked 10.102 seconds to settle for a third-place finish in the final race, collecting 34 team points for the country. Italian Cristian Scassellati crossed the finish line in 10.042 seconds to walk away with the ultimate prize, with Belgian Stan Beelen taking the silver

on 10.079 seconds.

The Iranian had registered an impressive time of 10.012 seconds to beat skaters from Colombia and the Chinese Taipei in the semifinals earlier in the day. Mohammad-Amin Samimifar was the other Iranian in action in the junior event, but his campaign came to an end in the

quarterfinals.

Elsewhere, Iranian duo Milad Salehi and Soroushmehr competed in the men's senior 100m contest, with the former finishing seventh after a last four exit.

Soroushmehr crashed out in the quarterfinals to settle for a 13th-place finish.