

UWW U23 World Championships: Men's titles on the line as Iran aims to continue wrestling dominance

Sports Desk

Iran's freestyle and Greco-Roman squads are set to pursue another dominant run at the upcoming U23 Wrestling World Championships – starting Monday in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Iran will look to draw inspiration from its double-title triumph at September's Senior World Championships as it aims to complete a clean sweep of team titles at the under-23 level for the second year in a row.

Gholamreza Farrokhi (87kg) and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) will headline the Iranian Greco-Roman roster in Novi Sad, where both are the clear favorites to capture golds in their respective weight classes.

Farrokhi will head to the competition as the reigning senior world champion, while Hedayati – an Asian senior champion in March – will vie for a second successive gold at the under-23 superheavyweight event.

Joining the duo in the 10-man squad are Armin



Shamsipour, who will be looking to build on last year's gold-winning run at the U17 Worlds when taking part in the 55kg event. Sajjad Abbaspour will represent

the country in the 60kg class, while Mohammad-Javad Aboutalebi – an U20 world bronze winner in August – will be part of the 63kg draw.

Ahmadreza Mohsennejad had an under-23 campaign to forget last year in Tirana, but will still be among the favorites in the 67kg division, having won

Iranian freestyle wrestler Mahdi Yousefi (blue) is seen in a training session in Tehran, Iran, on October 11, 2025.

● FARSHAD BANDANI/IAWFIR

back-to-back U20 world titles in 2023 and 2024.

Former senior Asian champion Iman Mohammadi (72kg) will be back in the U23 Worlds for the first time since 2022, when he grabbed the gold in Pontevedra, Spain.

Alireza Abdevali, who had a decent campaign at the world event last month despite missing out on the podium, will also compete in the 77kg category as the two-time under-20 world gold medalist.

Abolfazl Mohmedi and reigning U20 world silver medalist Mohammad-Hadi Seydi will be among the hopefuls in the 82kg and 97kg classes respectively. In the freestyle competitions, Milad Valizadeh will step into the 57kg contests on the back of the senior Asian silver earlier in the year, with Reza Momeni and Yasin Rezaei chasing glory in the 61kg and 65kg divisions respectively.

Former cadet world champion Sina Khalili, who missed out on a place in September's World Championships, will among the

wrestlers to watch in the 70kg category, having won a bronze medal at the Senior Asian Championships. Mohammadreza Shakeri (74kg) will aim to add another world age-group title to his U20 gold in 2023, with reigning U20 world and Asian champion Mahdi Yousefi the wrestler to beat in the 79kg event.

Abolfazl Rahmani – also a senior Asian gold medalist – will be desperate to improve on his U20 world bronze in the 86kg category, as he looks to follow in the footsteps of Iranian wrestling greats Hassan Yazdani and Kamran Qasempour.

Mohammad-Mobin Azimi (92kg) and Abolfazl Babalou (97kg) boast five gold medals between them from various international U20 events and will look to add to their tally in Novi Sad. Meanwhile, teenage superheavyweight Abolfazl Mohammadnejad – the U20 world silver medalist – will step in for Iranian prodigy Amirreza Masoumi in the 125kg category.

Asian Table Tennis Team Championships:

Teenage sensation Faraji already showing signs of world-beater

SPORTSTAR – Seconds after forcing Lin Shidong – the world No. 2 from China – into an error that resulted in a win for Benjamin Faraji, the 15-year-old from Tehran appeared perplexed, before jumping over the arena and hugging Iran coach Jamil Lotfollah Nasabi.

Faraji, the teenage sensation who has become Iran's brightest table tennis prospect, stunned Shidong in Iran's Asian Table Tennis Team Championship quarterfinal against China. Even though the result went China's way, Faraji's 3-2 triumph over the Chinese star marked another defining step in his rapid rise.

It wasn't the first time Faraji had taken down a giant. At the last year's Asian

Championship, he had beaten world No. 1 Wang Chuqin in the team event and later stretched Shidong to five sets in singles. This time, he didn't just stretch him – he conquered him.

With his explosive forehand top spins, precise placement, and ability to read spin early, Faraji forced Shidong into rare errors. The youngster's balance of aggression and composure belied his age. "Benjamin played very well. It is incredible," Lotfollah Nasabi told Sportstar after the match.

So what is it that makes Faraji special? "He is very brave. He plays against the world number one and still wants to win the match," said Lotfollah. "This is a very good spirit from him. He is a hard

worker who practices morning, afternoon, and night. Table tennis is his love and his passion."

At 15, Faraji has already beaten top-two world-ranked paddlers. The scoreline may be temporary; the signal he has sent to world table tennis isn't. The Iranian prodigy inflicted further upset on another high-profile player on Tuesday, coming from behind to defeat South Korean world No. 13 An Jaehyun during a 5-8 position contest at the Asian showpiece.

Iran went on to suffer a 3-2 loss to South Korea, though a last-eight finish has already seen the country secure a place at next April's ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships in London.



Iran's Benjamin Faraji celebrates his victory over Chinese world number two Lin Shidong at the Asian Table Tennis Team Championship
● BISWARANJAN ROUT/AP

Sports Desk

Afsaneh Hesamifard made history by becoming the first Iranian female mountaineer to enter the sport's eight-thousanders club.

The historic feat came after Hesamifard complete the ascent of Cho Oyu, the 8,201-meter peak located 20 kilometers west of Mount Everest, Iran Mountaineering & Sport Climbing Federation announced on Tuesday. The eight-thousanders features 14 mountains recognized by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) with summits that exceed 8,000 meters in elevation above sea level and are sufficiently independent of neighboring peaks as measured by topographic prominence.

Hesamifard is only the second Iranian to achieve this milestone, following male mountaineer Azim Qeychisaz.

Iran's Hesamifard conquers Cho Oyu, enters eight-thousanders club



● IRNA

WKF Karate World Championships:

Four Iranians to chase qualification in Paris

Sports Desk

Four Iranian karatekas will pursue a spot at the upcoming WKF World Championships – starting November 27 in Cairo – when the maiden qualification tournament for the sport's flagship international event gets underway in Paris on Friday.

Four-time Asian bronze medalist Fatemeh Sadeqi will take part in the women's individual kata competition, looking to build on her gold-winning campaign at January's Karate 1 Series A event in Tbilisi, Georgia. In the kumite contests, Amirreza Borzouei will compete in the men's -67kg class, with two-time Asian silver winner Mobina Heidari and Hannaneh

Salehi – gold medalist in February's Karate 1 Youth League in Fujairah – chasing a world quota in the women's -68kg and +68kg categories, respectively.

The Paris qualification tournament has attracted over 500 athletes from 105 countries. The tournament will follow a round-robin format, a system designed to promote fairness and excitement. Competitors will be divided into groups, where each athlete faces every opponent in their pool. The winner of each group advances to the qualification phase, where head-to-head matches decide the final qualifiers. Victors at this stage will claim their spot at final phase in the Egyptian capital.



Iran's Fatemeh Sadeqi will compete in the women's individual kata event at the WKF World Championships Qualification Tournament in Paris.

● MAHDIEH SADEQI/IWSports.IR