

## U23 Wrestling World Championships:

## Iran stands runner-up to US in freestyle, misses out on title double

## Sports Desk

Iran finished second to the United States in the freestyle contests of U23 Wrestling World Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, falling short of a second world team title double in 2025. After a clean sweep of senior world crowns last month, Iran lifted the Greco-Roman trophy earlier in Novi Sad, but ultimately settled for the runner-up spot in freestyle with 127 points – 10 adrift of Team USA. Japan finished third on 85 points.

The two wrestling powerhouses were tied on 102 points heading into the final day of competition, with the US needing a single victory to secure the title, while the Iranians had to win all of their three bouts.

The US sealed the title as soon as Jaxen Forrest defeated Omurbek Asan Uulu of Kyrgyzstan 17-14 in an epic 61kg final, bagging the fourth freestyle gold for his country. Meanwhile, Abolfazl Rahmani added a sixth medal to Iran's free-style haul by taking a consolation bronze in the 86kg class. The reigning senior Asian champion bounced back from a 2-1 semifinal loss to Moldova's Eugeniu Mihalcean to beat two-time world junior champion Rakhim Magamadov of France 7-5 and share the bronze podium



Members of the Iranian freestyle squad and the coaching staff pose with the runner-up trophy at the U23 Wrestling World Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, on October 27, 2025.

● IAWFIR

sian Takhir Khaniev – competing as a neutral athlete – 5-3 to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 92kg division, adding the under-23 crown to his 2023 world junior gold.

Former U17 world champion Sina Khalili had to settle for silver in the 70kg class – courtesy of a 9-4 defeat against Kanan Heybatov of Azerbaijan – while Milad Valizadeh (57kg) and Mahdi Yousefi (79kg) each claimed a bronze in their respective divisions.

The Iranian 10-man Greco-Roman squad had bagged six medals, including triple golds, to finish atop the standings with 143 points – 47 clear of second-placed Ukraine.

Iman Mohammadi (72kg), Gholamreza Farrokhi (87kg), and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) were the Iranian gold medalists, while Sajjad Abbaspour took the silver in 60kg.

Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (67kg) and Abolfazl Mohmadi (82kg) left Novi Sad with a bronze in their respective divisions.

with Azerbaijan's Ali Tcokaev – a second age-group medal for the Iranian in two months following his bronze at the U20 Worlds in August. Elsewhere, Abolfazl Babalou missed out on a podium finish in the 97kg event after a 7-1 setback against Rizabek Aitmukhan of Kazakhstan.

Former under-20 world champion Babalou recovered from a 13-2 quarterfinal defeat to Japanese-Iranian Arash Yoshida to overcome Hungary's Musza Arsunkaev 7-2 in repechage, but was the second best against 2023 senior world champion Aitmukhan in the bronze-medal contest.

Yoshida went on to round off his dominant campaign with a superiority victory (12-2) over Georgia's Merab Suleimanishvili in the final.

Mohammad-Mobin Azimi and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad were the Iranian freestyle gold medalists in Novi Sad.

An under-20 world silver med-

alist in August, Mohammadnejad was in a league of his own in the superheavyweight class, scoring a total of 25 points while conceding only two across three bouts before outclassing Azerbaijan's Khetag Karsanov by technical superiority (11-0) in the 125kg final.

Azimi, meanwhile, defeated Rus-

## Asian Youth Games:

## Iranian boys, girls march into volleyball finals

## Sports Desk

Iran will chase double volleyball golds at the Asian Youth Games today, after the country's boys' and girls' teams claimed last-four victories in Bahrain on Monday.

Iranian under-18 team came from behind to overcome the Philippines 3-1 (26-28, 25-18, 25-19, 25-18) in the girls' semifinals and secure a sixth consecutive victory in Isa Sports City.



● MOHAMMAD-HASSAN ZARIFMANESH/volleyball.ir

Standing between the Iranian girls and the ultimate prize in today's final is Indonesia, which overcame Thailand in straight sets (26-24, 27-25, 25-17) in the other semifinal.

"The players felt a lot of pressure against the Philippines, but they managed it extremely well," Iran head coach Lee Do-hee said after the game, adding: "The players' mindset varies at each stage of the tournament. We were very concerned that the pressure of this match would get the bet-

ter of them and that's what happened in the first set – they were clearly nervous – but they did a great job to overcome it as the game wore on." On the prospect of a historic continental gold medal for Iranian women's volleyball, Lee said: "This is the best opportunity for us, and we will give everything we have to deliver a great performance."

"We've already beaten Indonesia 3-0 in this tournament, but after watch-

ing them against Thailand I realized that they have improved since our previous encounter. We won't underestimate them," added the South Korean coach, who also led the Iranian senior team to a maiden international glory at the CAVA Women's Championship earlier in October. In the boys' competition, Iran eased past Thailand in three sets (25-10, 25-21, 25-14) to set a final date with Pakistan.

Pakistan rallied from behind to beat

Indonesia 3-1 (22-25, 25-13, 25-19, 26-24) later on Monday.

"I congratulate all the players and their families. However, I believe we haven't accomplished anything yet. The real task is the final," Iran coach Adel Gholami said.

"Pakistan is one of the strongest teams in this age group. They even lost to Poland [in the last 16] at the U19 World Championship due to a few marginal errors. Had they not lost that game, they would have definitely gone all the way to reach the final," added Gholami, who steered Iran to a fourth-place finish in the under-19 world event in August.

"It will be tough game against them. We should forget all about today's victory and get ready for the final," Gholami said.

## Swimming history

Elsewhere in the Games on Monday, Mohammad-Mahdi Gholami captured Iran's first-ever swimming gold at an international event. Gholami, 16, clocked 54.75 seconds in the final to beat Filipino swimmer Jamesray Ajido (55.11) and Hong Kong's Lau Kin Hei James (55.23) to the top prize in the boys' 100m butterfly event.

In the women's 3x3 basketball event, the Iranian girls suffered a 15-14 heartbreak against Chinese Taipei in the final and settled for silver.

The two sides were tied 13-13 at the end of regulation before Chinese Taipei prevailed in overtime.

In the women's futsal, however, Iran pulled off a shootout victory over Chinese Taipei to progress to the final.

Elnaz Hosseinpour gave Iran an early lead but Hou Yu-xuan and Ku Hsuan found the net in less than a minute to turn the game on its head in the first half.

Narges Amirmohseni found the equalizer with less than two minutes into the second half as it finished 2-2 before Iran won 3-1 on penalties.

## Brazilian Osmar replaces Hashemian as Persepolis head coach

## Sports Desk

Osmar Loss Viera was named the new head coach of Persepolis, taking charge of the Tehran Reds for a second spell, the Persian Gulf Pro League heavyweight announced on Monday.

The 50-year-old Brazilian takes over from Vahid Hashemian, who was relieved of his duties this week following a run of poor results and drab performances in the new Iranian top-flight season.

Hashemian was appointed to the Persepolis job for his senior managerial debut in July but his short stint ended after his team managed only two victories – conceding one defeat – in eight league games. Even the 2-0 home victory over Zob Ahan on Friday did little to save the Iranian's future on the Reds' bench.

When Osmar was given the Reds' role midway through the 2023/24 season, his appointment drew scrutiny from some Persepolis fans and former players, who believed the club should have hired a more prominent coach to continue the club's trophy-winning tradition. However, the Brazilian is set to receive a hero's welcome on his return to the club, having led Persepolis to its seventh top-flight title in eight years during his previous half-season spell, as the Reds will look to avoid a second successive season without the league title.

Osmar, who parted ways with Buri-ram United earlier in the month, steered the Thai League 1 outfit to a domestic treble and the ASEAN Club Championship trophy, as well as an impressive last-eight spot in the

● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

AFC Champions League Elite last season. Persepolis is seventh in the Iranian league table with 11 points – two points adrift of archrival Esteghlal on top – and will visit Tabriz to face defending champion Tractor on Thursday.

Osmar is unlikely to sit on the bench due to contract issues, with Karim Baqeri set to be in charge for the highly-anticipated fixture.

