

World Taekwondo Championships: Zandi grabs gold, ends Iran's decade-long drought

Sports Desk

Abolfazl Zandi ended Iran's 10-year wait for a gold medal at the World Taekwondo Championships, capturing the top prize in the men's -58kg weight class in Wuxi, China, on Wednesday. A world junior champion in 2022, Zandi defeated 2023 silver medalist Georgii Gurtsiev of Belarus, who competed as a neutral athlete, in straight rounds (7-3, 12-8) to add a second medal to Iran's haul in Wuxi. Mahdi Hajimousaei had settled for silver in the men's -63kg category after a punch to his neck forced him to withdraw midway through the final against Tunisia's Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi on Saturday. Farzan Ashourzadeh, Masoud Haji-Zavvareh, and Mahdi Khodabakhshi had been the last Iranians to strike gold in the world showpiece, when Iran claimed the men's team title in 2015. The final victory rounded off an emphatic run for Zandi, who did not concede a single round

across five bouts en route to the final. The young Iranian began his campaign with a dominant 12-0, 14-2 victory over Morocco's Achraf El Mbarki before pulling off an upset (4-2, 5-5) against former world and Olympic champion Vito Dell'Aquila to reach the round of 16. Zandi then overpowered Spain's Jesús Fraile (14-1, 7-2) and followed it with a dominant last-eight win (15-2, 14-1) against Ukraine's Maksym Manenkov. He then secured his place in the final with a hard-fought 6-5, 12-9 victory over the host nation's Huang Kefen. Elsewhere on the penultimate day of the competition, Kowsar Asaseh became the sixth Iranian female contestant to finish empty-handed in Wuxi. Asaseh came out on top in back-to-back rounds (12-0, 8-2) against Cypriot Antreana Achilleos but suffered a 2-1 setback (2-0, 5-7, 5-5) against China's Chen Ximin in the -62kg event. It has been a disappointing campaign for Iranian women at the World Championships, as former

world medalist Mahla Momenzadeh (-49kg) also had her campaign after two bouts, while Saeideh Nasiri (-46kg), Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani (-57kg), Melika Mirhosseini (-73kg) all failed to go beyond last 16 in their respective classes. Nastaran Valizadeh, meanwhile, fell to a first-round exit in the -67kg division.

Mobina to rescue?

Olympic bronze medalist Mobina Nematzadeh will look to end Iranian women's dreadful run when she gets her -53kg campaign underway today. Given a bye in the first round, the 20-year-old sensation will make her debut at the event against Dominican Republic's Nahomy Victor or Lebanon's Mariella Bou Habib, with the winner likely to face Turkey's Merve Dinçel – a -49kg gold medalist in 2023 – in the round of 16. Amir-Sina Bakhtiari will be the other Iranian in action on the final day, facing Colombia's Damián Gil in his opening bout in the men's -74kg contests.



Iran's Abolfazl Zandi (blue) is seen in action against Italian Vito Dell'Aquila in the men's -58kg event at the World Taekwondo Championships in Wuxi, China, on October 29, 2025.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Asian Youth Games:

'Envisioned for years': Iranian girls win historic handball gold



Iranian girls' handball team and coaching staff pose for a photo after securing the gold medal at the Asian Youth Games in Manama, Bahrain, on October 28, 2025.
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against Satoya Kobayashi of Japan. Arman Elahi suffered a final loss on criteria (4-4) to Uzbekistan's Ulugbek Rashidov and settled for the 51kg silver, with Seyyed Taha Hashemi bagging a consolation bronze in the 60kg class – courtesy of a 9-3 win against Yokub Ibronov of Tajikistan. There were more medals for Iran in the girls' competitions on Tuesday as weightlifter Hasti Seddiqi took the clean & jerk bronze in the 63kg category, while Fatemeh Rastegar clinched a first-ever women's boxing medal for the country despite a last-four setback in the +80kg division. Meanwhile, the Iran demolished Uzbekistan 14-2 to cruise to the boys' futsal final. Sadra Choopani and Mohammad-Javad Norouzi each scored a hat-trick with Hosseinreza Yousefi finding the net twice. Amirhossein Mostasharnejad, Abolfazl Zamani, Saeid Fakhrani, Mohammadhossein Gharibi, Mohammad Karami, and Amirhossein Dahipour were also on the scoresheet for the Iranian under-17 side. Standing between Iran and the gold medal in today's final showpiece is Afghanistan, which defeated Thailand 9-1 in the other semifinal.

stand on the podium as the champions of Asia," added the head coach. The Iranian team began its campaign with an impressive 30-25 win against China and went on to beat Uzbekistan 27-24. The team then came out victorious against another Asian powerhouse in Kazakhstan (27-23) before the emphatic 32-16 victory over Thailand.

Wrestling glory

Elsewhere in the Games on Tuesday, it was business as usual for Iranian wrestling as the country collected four medals, including double golds, on the first day of the boys' freestyle event. Parsa Tahmasbi defeated Adilet Tolobekovich Mukanbetov 6-2 in the final to capture the gold medal in the 45kg weight class, while Amirmohammad Zarrinkam walked away with the ultimate prize in the 71kg event, thanks to an 11-0 superiority win

Sports Desk

Iranian girls made history on Tuesday by securing the handball gold at the 3rd Asian Youth Games in Bahrain. A commanding 43-26 win against India saw Khadijeh Qane's team clinch the top spot in the seven-team round-robin tournament with one game to spare, sealing a maiden continental gold for Iranian women's handball across all age groups. The Iranian young guns opened a 23-13 lead by halftime and never looked back, celebrating a fifth successive victory at Umm Al-Hassam Hall to sit atop the table with 10 points ahead of today's dead rubber against Hong Kong. Aseman Badvi spearheaded the victory with a game-high 12 goals. Hasti Arianfar posted a perfect shot conversion for her seven goals, while Reihaneh Hos-

seini contributed with six. Sana Fotouhi, Sarina Rostami, Parisan Ahmadi Khosravi, Zahra Afshari, Fatemeh Olfatnia, Hasti Sheikhalizadeh, Fatemeh Behzadi Moqaddam, Melika Safikhani, Tina Khoshnejad, Arezou Talei, Negar Babasafari, Dina Derakhshanmehr, and Dina Rezaei were the other members of the Iranian history-making squad in the Games. "Thank God for this magnificent achievement. Congratulations to all the Iranian people and the sports community, especially the entire handball family," Qane' said after the game. "We had little time to prepare for the tournament, but the players' enthusiasm made this happen. I am incredibly happy for the Iranian handball girls. This is a success I have envisioned for years. I was always confident that these girls would one day

Al Bataeh's poor run leaves Majidi on the brink: Report

Sports Desk

Al Bataeh head coach Farhad Majidi could be the next manager to be shown the exit door by his club in the UAE Pro League after a disappointing start to the new season, according to a report from Dubai-based newspaper Al Bayan. The 49-year-old Iranian took charge of struggling Al Bataeh midway through last season and guided the club to safety in the Emirati top flight, recording five wins and four draws from 14 games to finish 11 points clear of the relegation zone. However, Majidi's side has endured a woeful run of results this season and currently sits third from bottom in the 14-team table on three points, just two above the relegation zone. Al Bataeh was also knocked out by Shabab Al Ahli in the shootout in the UAE President's Cup last 16 on Saturday. "The wave of coach dismissals in the league continues," headlined the Al Bayan report. "Three head coaches have already been axed by their clubs. The first dismissal involved Hussein Ammouta, the Moroccan head coach of Al Jazira. The second was Ivaylo Petev, the Bulgarian boss of bottom club Baniyas, and now, a third head coach has been shown the exit door: None other than Bruno Pereira, the Portuguese coach of Dibba SCC," wrote the newspaper. "The number is expected to grow even further. Sharjah's Serbian coach Milos Milojevic is likely to be the fourth, with the shadow of dismissal looming over his head following his team's 5-0 home defeat against Iran's Tractor last time out in the AFC Champions League Elite. "Farhad Majidi, the head coach of Al Bataeh, is the fifth manager to come under pressure due to poor results. Al Bataeh currently sits in 12th place in the league table with just one win from its first six matches, with the only victory coming in the second round of matches against Khor Fakkan," Al Bayan wrote of the Iranian coach, whose team is on a five-game losing run. Next up for Majidi and his team is an away game against six-placed Al Jazira in the league on Saturday.



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