

Iran's Bahmanyar aiming to build on Riyadh success at World Championships



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INTERVIEW

Iranian karateka Sara Bahmanyar is riding a wave of success this year. After shining at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh and claiming the women's -50kg gold medal, she now hopes to cap her impressive run with another title at the upcoming WKF World Championships, which kick off in Cairo, Egypt, on Thursday. A world bronze medalist in 2018, Bahmanyar has already added valuable medals to her collection this year, including golds at the Karate 1 Premier League event in Paris in January and the World Games in Chengdu in August. Now, she faces an even bigger challenge: competing against 32 quota-holding karatekas at the World Championships in Egypt – an event where, for her, every single bout will feel like a final. She also has her sights set on success at next year's Asian Games to further complete her resume.

In her latest outing in Riyadh, Sara not only won gold but also defeated one of her familiar foes, Uzbekistan's Gulshan Alimardanova – who had beaten her at the Asian Championships – in a thrilling comeback in the final showdown. The following is what Bahmanyar told Iran Daily about her recent victory in Riyadh and her ambitions for the Cairo event.

IRAN DAILY: Ms. Bahmanyar, first tell us about the competition in Riyadh and how you won the ultimate prize.

SARA BAHMANYAR: My most important opponent at these Games was the Uzbek karateka I faced in the final. That match meant a lot to me because I had lost to her in our previous encounter at the Asian Championships. Of course, that event was held in her home country, so naturally she had more motivation and the home advantage worked in her favor. I also believe there were some issues with timing and scoring. So this final had a special intensity for me. I was determined both to avenge my previous loss and to secure the top spot on the podium to demonstrate my ability to my rival. Fortunately, that's ex-

actly what happened. Although I fell behind by four points early on, I managed to turn the match around and win the gold medal.

Given that the Games were limited to Islamic countries, how would you assess the level of competition?

Some of my usual rivals from Islamic countries weren't present. The reason is that we have the World Championships in Egypt ahead of us, which is a major priority for all competitors. I think some preferred to rest and focus on that event instead. Nevertheless, there were strong athletes in Riyadh, especially my Uzbek rival.

You mentioned the World Championships in Egypt. This must be a particularly im-

portant event for you as well. Absolutely. The World Championships are just around the corner. This edition is different from previous ones because karatekas had to earn quota spots to participate. That means all competitors qualified either through their world rankings or by winning medals in earlier competitions. Only 32 top athletes will be competing. Not everyone was able to secure a quota, which means the level of competition will be extremely high. The matches will be very intense, and for me, every bout from the first round will feel like a final because all the competitors are strong. There's no opponent you could consider a "warm-up."

Let's talk about the competi-

tors. Who are your strongest rivals, and from which countries?

My most important rival is the Croatian athlete. The karatekas from Venezuela, Algeria, and of course my Uzbek rival are also very strong. I have another rival from Kazakhstan who earned a quota but is not competing this time. Altogether, the world's top eight athletes in my weight class will be there. I am currently ranked fifth among them. After my strong performances this year, I want to truly showcase my capabilities at these championships.

What result do you think you can achieve at the World Championships in Egypt?

As I said, I've achieved very good results this year, and I

think I might be the most decorated athlete in my weight class so far, having won major medals across different tournaments. Two or three months ago, I won gold at the World Games in Chengdu. That event was very important because the top eight in the rankings were all there, and fortunately, I managed to win. Before that, I also won gold at the Karate 1 Premier League event. The gold from the Islamic Solidarity Games has almost completed my collection for this year, and I hope to finish my trophy cabinet for the season by winning gold at the World Championships. Another major goal for me is next year's Asian Games. I want to win gold there to add that title to my sporting resume as well.

How do you assess the performance of Iran's women's karate team in international competitions this year?

Fortunately, our female karatekas have achieved excellent results this year. In fact, in every competition they entered, they managed to win top titles. In my opinion, our women actually performed better than the men internationally this year. Both I and Atousa Golshadnejad achieved the best possible results in all our tournaments. Fatemeh Saadati and Mobina Heidari also earned strong results in their events. Overall, our female karatekas have collected gold, silver, and bronze medals across multiple competitions. It's safe to say that our women are now one of the powerhouses of Asia – and even the world – in karate.



Iran's Sara Bahmanyar (R) is seen in action against Uzbekistan's Gulshan Alimardanova in the women's kumite -50kg final at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2025.

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Iranian athletes conclude Deaflympics with 37 Medals

Sports Desk

Iran's sports delegation concluded its participation in the 25th Summer Deaflympics, securing a total of 37 medals. On Tuesday, November 25, during the 11th day of competition in Tokyo, Iran's men's and women's national kumite teams won bronze and gold medals, respectively. With these final events and medal wins, Iran's athletes closed their campaign at this edition of the Deaflympics.

In the men's team kumite classification match, Iran faced Algeria and secured a 16-13 victory, earning the bronze medal. The team consisted of Hossein Farahani, Alireza Kishani, Milad Sadeghzadeh, Kamran Rezaeinejad, and Ebrahim Pourkashani. After a bye in the first round, Iran faced Ukraine in the second round, losing the match 3-0, which led them to compete in the bronze medal match. In the women's team kumite event, Iran faced Ukraine in the

final match. The Iranian team emerged victorious with a 9-8 win, securing the gold medal. The team consisted of Nahal Zakizadeh, Zeynab Hassanpour, Sara Adriya, and Bitia Javaheri. This gold medal is Iran's eighth at the 2025 Deaflympics. The 25th Deaflympics officially began on November 15 in Tokyo with the opening ceremony, featuring 3,081 athletes — 2,014 men and 1,067 women — from 81 countries. Iran participated with a 160-member

delegation across 12 sports under the banner "Lovers of Iran." Iran's first medal at the 2025 Deaflympics came on the opening day of official competition, when Ali Salahshoor won bronze in judo. The women's kumite team was Iran's last medalist in Tokyo. Overall, Iran's medal-winning sports at the Deaflympics included karate (12 medals), taekwondo (8), Greco-Roman wrestling (6), freestyle wrestling (5), judo (4), and shooting (2).

Iran women's futsal team set to face Panama in World Cup group stage

Sports Desk

Iran's women's national futsal team is gearing up to face Panama in their second match of the group stage of the Women's Futsal World Cup, scheduled for midday today (Wednesday). While Iran's team is newly established and does not yet have a long history, their other group opponent, Italy — currently ranked seventh in the world — could be a formidable challenge later in the tournament.

In their opening match, Iran's women's futsal squad impressed with a strong performance against Brazil. It was a challenging encounter for the Selecao, facing a team that was once champion of Asia, according to IRNA.

Iran's second opponent, Panama is a newly formed team. Following FIFA's announcement of the inaugural Women's Futsal World Cup in the Philip-

pinas, Panama registered for the 2025 CONCACAF qualifiers. In April 2025, Panama played its first international matches in the qualifiers, defeating Cuba, Guatemala, Las Canaleras, Mexico, and Costa Rica to reach the final. They ultimately finished as runners-up after losing to Canada, earning a place in the World Cup. Although Panama is a young team, the Iranian players are aware that in a World Cup, no opponent should be underestimated. Iran's third and final group stage opponent is Italy, whom they will face on November 29. Italy secured its place in the World Cup by defeating Lithuania, Croatia, and Serbia in the qualifiers. The team could present a strong challenge for Iran. However, considering Iran's solid performance in the opening match and the team's established futsal pedigree, the Iranian squad is confident in its ability to advance past this opponent.

Tractor triumphs over Nasaf Qarshi despite poor pitch conditions

Sports Desk

Tractor of Iran delivered a disciplined and well-organized performance to defeat Uzbekistan's Nasaf Qarshi, on a night when even the poor pitch conditions failed to favor the home side. The victory lifted the Iranian team to 11 points, strengthening their hopes of advancing to the knockout stage of the AFC Elite League. In Matchday 5 of the group stage, Tractor traveled to Qarshi for a crucial encounter for both sides. The Tabriz-based team ultimately secured a vital 1-0 win, returning home with three precious points, varzesh3.

com wrote. Rezi Lushkja, Tractor's Albanian winger, scored the only goal of the match in the 17th minute. His decisive performance earned him the AFC Man of the Match award. The win not only added a valuable three points to Tractor's tally but also moved the team into second place with 11 points, significantly boosting their qualification chances. Despite playing on Qarshi Stadium's damaged and uneven surface, Dragan Skocic's men showed clear determination to leave with a positive result. The Croatian head coach once again deployed his preferred 4-3-3



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formation and, in the absence of Mehdi Torabi, relied on foreign players Lushkja

and Drozddek to maintain the team's attacking structure.