



## World Karate Championships: Golshadnejad makes history as Iran collects three medals

### Sports Desk

Atousa Golshadnejad etched her name into the history books of Iranian sport by claiming the country's first-ever women's gold at the WKF World Karate Championships on Sunday.

Golshadnejad's gold in Cairo headlined a three-medal haul in Cairo for Iran, which finished as joint runner-up in the team standings alongside Türkiye, Japan, and Italy.

Saleh Abazari earned a silver in the men's competition, while Sara Bahmanyar won the second world bronze of her career in the women's -50kg event.

Golshadnejad pulled off one of the biggest upsets on the final day, defeating defending champion Li Gong of China 4-2 in the women's kumite -61kg showdown.

The victory capped off a glorious international season for the 22-year-old Iranian, who had already captured a second Asian gold medal and a Karate 1-Premier League title earlier this year, before winning the ultimate prize at the Islamic Solidarity Games in mid-November.

Golshadnejad began her glorious campaign with back-to-

back victories over Cameroon's Dzeu Nelly (8-0) and Uzbekistan's Sevinch Otaboyeva (2-1) before sharing the spoils with Latvian Beata Girvica (0-0) to top Pool 6 table and advance to the round of 16, where prevailed over Chile's Bárbara Huaiquiman by hantei.

The Iranian then saw off Belarussian Maryia Azarava, competing as a neutral contestant, 5-0 in the quarterfinals, before a 4-1 win against Tunisia's Wafa Mahjoub – in a rematch of the ISG final in Riyadh – sent Golshadnejad into the championship bout.

Iranian women had managed a silver and a three bronze medals over the previous 26th editions of the World Championships, with Hamideh Abbasali taking credit for a silver (2014) and a bronze (2016). Bahmanyar and the kata trio of Mahsa Afsaneh, Najmeh Qazizadeh, and Elnaz Taqipour won the other two medals in 2018 and 2014, respectively.

Elsewhere, Abazari came from behind to level the score at 2-2 in the final second against Matteo Avanzini in the men's kumite +84 kg final, only to see the Italian earn a hantei victory and walk away with gold on his World Championships debut.

This was Abazari's second silver medal in November, though the Iranian – a

world team kumite gold medalist in 2018 – had already made amends for his final setback in Riyadh by defeating Saudi karateka Sanad Sufyani in the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, Bahmanyar – also a gold medalist in Riyadh – bounced back from a 4-1 semifinal defeat against Malaysian Shahmalarani Chandran to beat Ecuador's Lili Alvarado 3-0 and win a joint-bronze alongside Venezuela's Yorgelis Salazar.

Uzbekistan's Gulshan Alimardanova, who was beaten by Bahmanyar in the ISG final, defeated Chandran 6-1 to claim the gold medal.

Bahmanyar will still have every reason to be proud of her 2025 season, having also secured prestigious gold medals at the Chengdu World Games in August and the Karate 1-Premier League event in Paris last January.

Fatemeh Sadeqi, Mobina Heidari, and Fatemeh Sa'adati were the other Iranian female competitors in Cairo but finished without medals in their respective events. Ali Meskini, Amirreza Borzouei, Mahdi Khodabakhshi, and Morteza Ne'mati also missed the podium in the men's competition.

Egypt claimed the team title on home soil, courtesy of three golds and one bronze medal.

## Iran stunned by India to miss out on U17 Asian Cup finals

### Sports Desk

Iran failed to secure a place in the 2026 AFC U17 Asian Cup after a 2-1 defeat to India on the final day of the qualifiers in Ahmedabad, India.

Sunday's result saw India leapfrog Iran to the top of the Group D standings on goal difference, with both sides finishing on seven points, and book its place among the 12 teams heading to next May's finals in Saudi Arabia.

Needing only a draw to qualify, Iran broke the deadlock in the 19th minute when Amirreza Valipour controlled a through ball with a deft touch before slotting into the bottom-right corner.

The host clawed its way back after being awarded a penalty for a foul on Heeranganba Seram, with Dallalmuon Gangte making no mistake from the spot as he sent Iranian goalkeeper Bardiya Dorri the wrong way.

India then went ahead in the 52nd minute after Amirmahan Afrouziani failed to clear a cross, allowing Gunleiba Wangkheirakpam to drill a low

shot that slipped past Dorri into the bottom-right corner.

Iran pushed bodies forward but could not mount a comeback as India held on for the win, leaving the 2008 champion to miss out on the finals for the first time since the 2002 edition.



● AFC

Iran had begun its qualification campaign with a commanding 5-0 win over Chinese Taipei, followed by a 1-1 draw against Lebanon, before coming from behind to beat Palestine 3-1 on Friday to stay in pole position prior to the final match.

## FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers:

## Iran maintains perfect start with second win over Iraq

### Sports Desk

Iran defeated Iraq for the second time in four days, prevailing 86-71 in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, on Sunday to maintain its perfect start in Group C of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Asian qualifiers.

Young shooting guard Piter Girgoorian contributed a game-high 21 points – including 12 from behind the arc – for Iran, which rested Asia Cup 2025 All-Star Five point guard Sina Vahedi for the game.

Behnam Yakhchali (14 points), Mobin Sheikhi (12), and Matin Aqajanzpour (11) also scored in double figures, while another emerging talent, Seyyed Mahdi Jafari, impressed with nine points and nine assists.

Ramon Galloway led Iraq with 19 points, followed by Ihab Al-Zuhairi with 18.

Having enjoyed a record shooting spree (19 three-pointers) in Thursday's 94-68 win, Iran may have anticipated another lopsided encounter. Iraq, however, had other ideas, showing tremendous fighting spirit in the first half.

Late in the opening quarter, Iraq nosed ahead 19-18 thanks to an Abdullah Alibraheemi breakaway dunk, suggesting a tight contest was in store. But seconds later, during another transition play, Alibraheemi suffered an injury and did not return.



Iran's Navid Rezaeifar (top) goes up for a basket during a victory over Iraq in the FIBA Basketball World Cup Asian qualifiers in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, on November 30, 2025.

● FIBA

Iraq continued battling through Galloway and Al-Zuhairi, even leading briefly midway through the second quarter. But Iran gradually began to pull away, taking a 61-50 lead into the final frame.

Later in the day, Jordan routed Syria 100-48 at home to leapfrog Iran at the top of the group table. Iran will host Jordan when the Asian qualifiers resume in February.

Elsewhere on Sunday, Saudi Arabia defeated India 81-57 in Group D to move to 2-0 in the opening window of the qualifiers.

Qatar, meanwhile, pulled off a massive upset with an 86-

83 away victory over West Asian powerhouse Lebanon to sit second behind Saudi Arabia in the group.

The top three teams from each of the four groups will advance to the second round of the qualifiers. The twelve qualified teams will be split into two groups and will face the three teams advancing from the corresponding group twice – Group A will be paired with Group C, and Group B with Group D.

The top three teams from each second-round group, along with the best fourth-placed team, will qualify for the 2027 World Cup in Qatar.

## IFBB World Bodybuilding Championships:

## Iran finishes runner-up in men's amateur, semi-pro events

### Sports Desk

Iran settled for runner-up finishes in the men's amateur and semi-pro categories at the IFBB World Bodybuilding Championships in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia.

This marked the end of Iran's decade-long dominance in the competition.

Iranian contestants collected 11 med-

als – including five golds and five silvers – across bodybuilding, physique, classic physique, and muscular physique categories in the semi-pro event on the final day of the competition. The first two day of the event had seen Iranians secure 22 medals across various disciplines – including fitness challenge, body classic, couple's physique, fit model, and physique – earning second place in the amateur seniors' event.



● IRNA