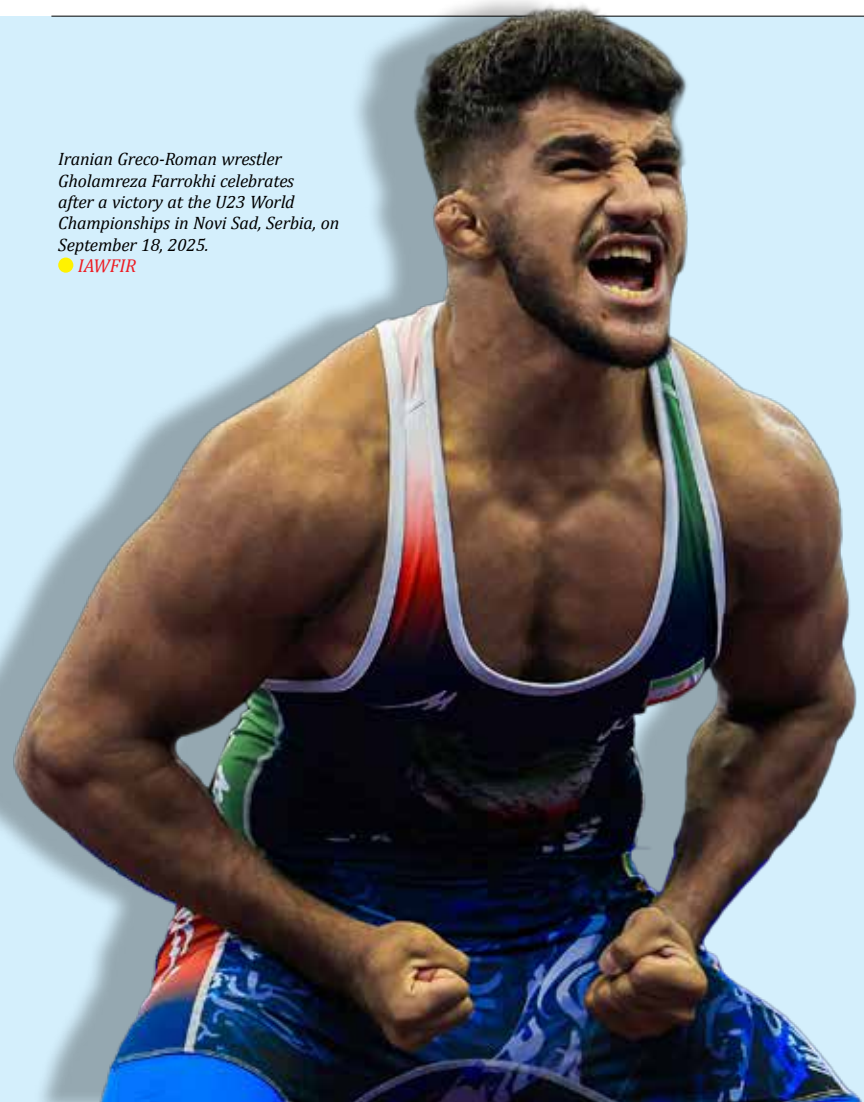


Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Gholamreza Farrokhi celebrates after a victory at the U23 World Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, on September 18, 2025.

● IAWFIR



# Iran's Farrokhi named Greco-Roman Breakout Performer of the Year

## Sports Desk

United World Wrestling named Iran's Gholamreza Farrokhi the Greco-Roman Breakout Performer of the Year. Farrokhi enjoyed an emphatic international season in 2025 by capturing four gold medals at major tournaments, including the top prize on his Senior World Championships debut in September. "When opportunity knocked, Farrokhi wasn't just there to answer it, he was there to kick the door off its hinges. The 23-year-old wrecking ball stepped into Iran's senior lineup for the first time in his career and tore through anyone in front of him," the UWW wrote on Instagram of the young sensation, who racked up a perfect 17-0 record, including 11 technical superiority wins, across his international appearances. Farrokhi made his senior international breakthrough at February's Ranking Series event in Zagreb, where he claimed

three commanding victories before defeating 2024 world silver medalist Erik Szilvássy of Hungary, 6-2, in the 82kg final.

The Iranian picked up where he had left off on his return to the Croatian capital in September, accumulating a total of 37 points across four bouts while conceding only one en route to the world title. Moving up to the 87kg category for the U23 Worlds in October, Farrokhi was in a league of his own in Novi Sad, Serbia, sweeping aside all five of his opponents by technical superiority – including Ukraine's Ivan Chmyr in the final – to claim the ultimate prize.

The Iranian capped off the season with yet another gold-winning campaign at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November, defeating Kazakhstan's Islam Yevloyev, 6-0, in the final.

Farrokhi could receive further recognition from the sport's international governing body, as he has been named

to the five-man shortlist for the Most Dominant Wrestler of 2025. He faces stiff competition from fellow Iranian world champions Saeid Esmaeili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, as well as Armenia's Malkhas Amoyan and Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov.

His prize was the latest testament to a memorable international season for Iran, which was named Top Greco-Roman Team of 2025 after completing a clean sweep of four world team titles across every age group.

A prolific 12 months saw Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers medal in 29 of the 40 possible weight categories, collecting 10 golds, six silvers, and 13 bronzes.

The pinnacle of Iran's run came at the Senior Worlds, where a remarkable haul of four gold medals, along with two silvers and two bronzes, led the country to only its second team title – and first since 2014 – in the history of the competition.

## Asian Youth Para Games:

# Iran collects 262 medals, finishes runner-up to Uzbekistan

## Sports Desk

Iran bagged 262 medals, including 76 golds, to finish runner-up in the overall standings at the Asian Youth Para Games in Dubai, UAE. Represented by 194 athletes across 11 disciplines, the Iranian delegation – dubbed 'The Children of Iran, Ambassadors of Victory' – also collected 96 silvers and 88 bronzes, marking its highest-ever medal haul across five editions of the multi-sport event. Uzbekistan topped the table with 99 gold, 57 silver, and 88 bronze medals, while Ja-

pan, Thailand, and Indonesia rounded out the top five. Amir-Mohammad Haqiqatshenas brought the curtain down on a prolific campaign for Iran on Saturday, defeating his Thai opponent in the final to claim gold in the men's -70kg taekwondo category.

The Iranian women's team also finished on a high note in goalball, prevailing 6-2 over Thailand to secure gold, while the country settled for bronze in the men's competition. Meanwhile, Ali Rasti and Arsham Ramezani teamed up to win gold in the boys' doubles table tennis event, bringing

Iran's tally in the sport to three golds and six bronzes. The Iranian duo produced a sensational comeback, rallying from two games down, to defeat Chinese Taipei in the final.

Para swimming and para athletics proved Iran's most successful disciplines in Dubai, yielding 104 and 82 medals, respectively.

Iran had also finished runner-up in the first three editions of the Asian Youth Para Games – Tokyo 2009, Kuala Lumpur 2013, and Dubai 2017 – before claiming the top spot in Manama 2021 with 144 medals.

## FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers:

# Iran to play home double-header at neutral venues

## Sports Desk

Iranian national basketball team will have to play its next two home games at the 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers at neutral venues, the Iranian Basketball Federation announced.

Iran will face Jordan on February 27, before taking on Syria on March 2 in first-round Group C of the qualifiers.

"Despite all efforts by the Iranian Basketball Federation and continuous international follow-ups, Iran's hosting rights for its home games in the second window of the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualifiers have ultimately been moved to a third country," the IIRBF said in a statement on Saturday, citing an official FIBA announcement.

"The Central Board of the sport's international governing body, at its latest meeting, endorsed the decision by the FIBA Executive Committee to hold Iran's home games outside the country until further notice. FIBA stated that the safety and security situation in Iran and Israel remains under review, adding that it is prepared to return hosting rights to their respective territories once suitable circumstances are met," the statement added.

The venue for the two matches has yet to be determined by the Iranian federation.

Iran got off to a flying start in its qualification campaign, defeating Iraq in back-to-back games in Zouk



● FIBA

Mikael, Lebanon, in late November. Iranian players drained a remarkable 19 three-pointers – the third-highest tally ever recorded by a team in a single game in the history of the Asian qualifiers – to secure a 94-68 victory in their group opener. Sotirios Manolopoulos's side then prevailed 86-71 in the second outing to sit second behind Jordan in the table, level on four points.

The top three teams from each of

the four groups will advance to the second round of the qualifiers. The 12 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.



The Iranian delegation is pictured at the opening ceremony of the 5th Asian Youth Para Games in Dubai, UAE, on December 10, 2025.

● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

# Iranian basketball great Haddadi joins Esteghlal

## Sports Desk

Former Iranian international center Hamed Haddadi has joined Esteghlal in the Iranian Basketball Premier League. The 40-year-old's contract will run until the end of the ongoing top-flight season. Esteghlal dominated the first half of the season, completing

a clean sweep of 10 victories – including an 80-70 away win against second-placed Tabiat in their most recent outing – to sit atop the table with 20 points. Widely regarded as the greatest Iranian basketball player of all time, Haddadi – a former NBA player with the Memphis Grizzlies and Phoenix Suns – returned to the Iranian league with

Palayesh Naft Abadan in January 2024 after four years with China's Sichuan Blue Whales. A three-time FIBA Asia Cup champion with Iran and a four-time MVP in the competition, the 7-foot-2 center retired from international duty following the country's final outing at the previous FIBA World Cup against Lebanon in September 2023.



● IRNA