

# From reluctant beginner to international medalist: Beheshti reflects on ISG breakthrough

## Sports Desk

Iranian girl Mahsa Beheshti's breakthrough moment came on the international stage in Riyadh. Competing in November's Islamic Solidarity Games, the 16-year-old weightlifter powered her way to a clean and jerk gold in the -86kg division and added two bronze medals in the snatch and total – an achievement that marked a turning point in a career that had not begun with absolute certainty. Beheshti says weightlifting was not a lifelong dream at the outset. "At first, I wasn't very determined to stay in the sport," she told IRNA. "But little by little, I became interested, and that interest turned into passion." Her journey into weightlifting began at the age of 13, encouraged by a sports-loving uncle. A cousin was already active in the discipline, competing in domestic leagues, and that family connection helped steer her toward the platform. What followed was a rapid rise fueled by persistence and an awareness of time. "In sport, the younger you are, the better your body recovers and the better records you can achieve," she said. "As you get older, it becomes harder."



Iranian weightlifter Mahsa Beheshti makes a lift during her -86kg campaign at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2025.

Before her medal-winning performance in Saudi Arabia, Beheshti's international experience was limited. Her first exposure to top-level competition came at the Asian Youth Games in October, where she competed in the +77 kg category

and captured a bronze medal in the snatch. It was a confidence-building result, but also a daunting one. "I had only competed in provincial and national championships before that," she said. "The level was much higher than what

I was used to, and I was very stressed." The pressure was intensified by the presence of physically imposing rivals and powerhouse teams such as China and South Korea. "Their body size and strength were intimidating," she recalled.

Support from the coaching staff proved decisive. Beheshti said her coaches repeatedly reassured her that she was capable of winning medals, helping her manage the pressure and focus on her lifts. The effort paid off, and her performances did not go

unnoticed. After her medal-winning showing, Sajjad Anoushiravani, the chairman of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation expressed his satisfaction with her results.

Beheshti also spoke highly of her coach, Elham Hosseini, describing her as a figure she looks up to both professionally and personally. "She is very strong scientifically and technically, and she understands athletes very well," Beheshti said. Alongside Hosseini, she credited Anoushiravani for providing critical support and facilities, naming them as her role models in women's and men's weightlifting respectively.

Though she hails from Ardabil, Beheshti said she has not had direct conversations with legendary weightlifter Hossein Rezazadeh, but remains inspired by watching footage of his iconic lifts from past competitions.

With her first major international medals now secured, Beheshti is already looking ahead. "With God's help and hard training, I will try to win medals of even better color in the future," she said – eyes firmly set on lifting heavier, higher, and further onto the global stage.

## Head coach Rangraz hails emerging Greco-Roman talents at National Ch'ships



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Iran head coach Hassan Rangraz expressed strong satisfaction with the recently concluded National Greco-Roman Wrestling Championships, praising both the high level of competition and the emergence of new talent at the competition in Ahvaz. Mohammad Hosseinvand Panahi (55kg), Pouya Nasserpour (60kg), former world champion Meisam Dalkhani (63kg), Mohammad Kamali (67kg), Mohammadjavad Rezaei (72kg), Ali Oskou (77kg), Mohammad-Amin Hosseini (82kg), Behrouz Hedayat (87kg), four-time Asian champion Nasser Alizadeh (97kg), and Morteza Alqousi (130kg) were crowned champions across 10 weight categories at the annual event, which served as the opening phase of Iran's selection process for next summer's World Championships in Manama. Speaking to the official website of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, Rangraz said the

country has now completed the fourth year of staging the national championships as the first stage of the national team selection process. "We witnessed very good competitions, with the presence of promising young wrestlers as well as established names and emerging talents," he said. He added that the transparent and fair selection system – through which wrestlers clearly understand the steps and evaluation filters required to earn a place on the national team – has helped create better conditions for building depth and long-term support in Greco-Roman wrestling. Commenting on the absence of some wrestlers from the championships, Rangraz noted that those who submit valid documentation approved by the federation's medical committee may be eligible for their cases to be reviewed. Looking ahead, Rangraz announced that the first national team training camp

in preparation for the Asian Championships will be held from December 22 to 30, with the participation of the champions. "During this camp, the athletes will go through a transition phase based on a program, and a series of tests and evaluations will be conducted," he explained. Rangraz further noted that a team of under-23 wrestlers will be sent to the prestigious Vehbi Emre Tournament in Turkey – starting January 8 in Antalya, Türkiye – as part of preparations for the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas next October. He added that first-place finishers will subsequently be sent to the Ranking Series event in Zagreb in February as part of the ongoing selection process. "God willing, they will be rewarded for their hard work," Rangraz said. Finally, he noted that participation in the Muhamet Malo Tournament in Tirana in late February is also on the agenda.

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Tehran will host two FIP Tour events in March, the Padel Association of Iran announced. The first of the two major global professional padel tournaments, the FIP Bronze, will take place at the city's Next Level Padel Club from April 20 to 26, followed by the week-long FIP Bronze II competition at the FGB venue, starting April 27. Both events will feature top-tier male players from around the world, giving Iranian athletes the opportunity to improve their positions at the FIP Rankings.

## Tehran to host FIP Tour events in April



## Iran sees drop in doping violations in 2025

Statistics from the past year indicate a decline in doping violations among Iranian athletes. According to Mehr News Agency, with just 10 days remaining in the 2025 calendar year, Iran's National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) has closed the cases of 12 athletes by issuing final and definitive sanctions. Wrestling accounted for the large-

est share with seven cases, followed by cycling with two, and athletics, basketball, and wushu with one each. Wrestling's seven confirmed doping violations make it the sport with the highest number of offenders in Iran this year. Distance runner Hossein Kayhani was the most prominent Iranian athlete to commit a doping vio-

lation. A 3,000m gold medalist at the 2018 Asian Games, the 35-year-old was banned for a second time in July and will serve an eight-year suspension after testing positive for erythropoietin (EPO) and stanozolol. This marks a shift from last year, when powerlifting was the most affected sport. In 2024, 21 Iranian athletes across nine disciplines were found guilty of doping, with powerlifting accounting for eight of those cases. According to the rulings issued so far, based on testing across various sports, both the number of athletes and the number of disciplines involved in doping have decreased. However, among the 12 athletes sanctioned this year, the identities of two minors have not been disclosed due to their age, raising a potential red flag for the future of Iranian sports. With the remaining time until the end of 2025, these figures could still change, and the number of sports and athletes involved in doping may rise.

