

Iranian wrestlers miss Ivan Yarygin Cup over Russian visa denial



Iranian freestyle wrestlers are pictured during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on January 24, 2026.

● IAWFIR

Sports Desk

Iran's freestyle wrestling team has been forced to withdraw from the Ivan Yarygin Cup, which begins today in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, after being denied the entry visa by the host country.

Iran was to dispatch 13 wrestlers to the international tournament – named after late Soviet wrestling great, who won two Olympic gold medals and a world title during his illustrious career in the 1970s. The visa denial deals another blow to Iranian wrestling as the country's freestyle and Greco-Roman squads also face uncertainty for the opening Ranking Series event of the season, the Zagreb Open, which starts on February 4. Croatia has yet to issue visas for the Iranian delegation, reportedly due to an internet shutdown within Iran.

The Iranian government restricted

internet services on January 8 for security reasons amid recent domestic unrest.

While the United World Wrestling (UWW) unveiled an entry list for the Zagreb Open on Monday that did not include Iranian names, Saeid Yousefi, head of international public relations for the Iranian Wrestling Federation, remains optimistic the issue can be resolved before the tournament begins.

Yousefi explained that the omission from the list was a precautionary financial step. "If our wrestlers' names were entered into the UWW registration system, we would have had to pay approximately €220 per wrestler per day for hotel costs," he said.

He noted that upon the system's closure, names are automatically forwarded for hotel reservations. If the team were then unable to travel, the federation would be liable for signif-

icant, non-refundable expenses.

"To prevent this, in coordination with United World Wrestling, it was decided that the names would be registered only when the conditions for our wrestlers' participation are finalized. There is no problem in this regard," Yousefi added.

The national wrestling federation stated on Monday that, through relevant authorities including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Iranian Embassy in Croatia, and UWW, it is actively pursuing the visa issuance process.

Both the Russian and Croatian tournaments were slated to be key stages in the selection process for Iran's national teams ahead of major upcoming events, including April's Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as well as the World Championships in Manama and the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September.

World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals:

Iranian teams learn opponents in milestone event in London

Sports Desk

Iranian men's and women's teams learned their group opponents at the ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals, which will kick off in London on April 28.

The draw for the prestigious tournament took place on Monday at The Shard in London, setting the stage for a historic celebration of 100 years of World Championships.

The Iranian men's team was drawn alongside Austria, Malaysia, and Togo in Group 13 of the B1 stage, while the women's squad was given Thailand, Serbia, and Benin tests in B1 Group 8. The 2026 edition marks an unprecedented milestone as the Word Championships returns to its birthplace. The Championships will feature 64 men's

and 64 women's teams competing across 13 days at two iconic London venues. Competition will unfold across three stages: Stage 1B features group stages determining qualification pathways, followed by Stage 1A seeding matches for the top-ranked teams, before Stage 2 delivers knockout rounds showcasing the world's finest teams in pursuit of global supremacy. "From London to London, we have come full circle," ITTF President Petra Sörling said during Monday's draw ceremony. "England has hosted the World Championships on seven occasions, but returning to where it all began makes this centenary edition truly special. This event is already historic, but I am confident it will also be unforgettable." In the men's competition, reigning champion China was drawn alongside

host nation England, five-time winner Sweden, and Korea Republic in Group 1. Winner of the last 11 editions, China will face stiff competition in what promises to be a highly competitive group.

France, silver medalist at the last edition, will face Japan, Germany and Chinese Taipei in Group 2 as it bids to lift the Swaythling Cup for the first time. In the women's draw, England was pitted against Japan, Germany and France in Group 2. China, a 23-time Corbillon Cup winner, headlines Group 1 where it will meet Korea Republic, Chinese Taipei and five-time champion Romania. The top eight seeds in each competition will contest Stage 1A at OVO Arena Wembley on May 2-3, with all teams progressing to Stage 2. Their group performances will determine their



Neda Shahsavari will headline the Iranian women's team at the ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London.

● ERFAN KHOSHOU/ISNA

seedings for the knockout rounds. Stage 1B takes place at the Copper Box Arena from April 28 to May 1, where 56

teams in each competition will battle for the remaining 24 places in the main draw.

Ahmadkohani called up for national camp as doping ban nears end



● volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Iranian gymnast Mahdi Ahmadkohani has been called up to the national team training camp as his two-year suspension for an anti-doping whereabouts violation nears its conclusion.

The 28-year-old, a two-time rings silver medalist in the 2023 FIG World Cup series, received a 24-month ban from the International Testing Agency (ITA). The sanction, which expires on February 21, was imposed after he accrued three whereabouts failures within a 12-month period. Considered a key prospect for an Olympic quota in Paris 2024, Ahmadkohani had

earned a place in the rings final at the World Cup event in Cottbus, Germany, in February 2024 before being withdrawn due to the FIG anti-doping rules. Reflecting on the incident at the time, Ahmadkohani stated, "Unfortunately, I had not entered the necessary information on the anti-doping website regarding my residence and training location, which led to my suspension." His return to the national camp renews hopes among Iranian fans for an Olympic berth at Los Angeles 2028. Mahdi Olfati secured Iran's first-ever Olympic quota in artistic gymnastics for the Paris Games and finished seventh in the men's vault final.

Sepahan to represent Iran at CAVA Women's Champions League

Sports Desk

The Iranian Volleyball Federation announced on Tuesday that Sepahan will represent the country at the upcoming CAVA Women's Champions League, which kicks off next Wednesday in Malé, Maldives. The tournament winner, featuring clubs from the Central Asian

Volleyball Association (CAVA), will secure a berth in the AVC Women's Champions League in Goyang, South Korea, in late April.

In a statement, the national governing body explained the decision: "In light of the importance of the CAVA Women's Champions League and in line with the strategic goals for developing Iranian



women's volleyball – culminating in participation in the Women's Volleyball Nations League by 2028 – the federation has acted to ensure Iran's representation."

The move followed the withdrawal of the reigning Iranian league champion, Saipa. "Consequently, the federation issued an official invitation to clubs, calling for declarations of interest. Following necessary evaluations and negotiations, it was decided that Foolad Mubarak Sepahan will represent Iran," the statement continued.

"This selection aligns with the strategic objective of providing increased, targeted support and investment for the nation's women's volleyball program. The Sepahan team will feature a roster of young, national team-caliber players, and their participation is intended as a crucial developmental step to gain invaluable experience for upcoming major events."

On the domestic front, Sepahan secured a straight-set victory over Mehregan Shiraz in the Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League on Saturday. The result placed them second in Group B, tied on seven wins and 21 points with group leader Shahr Arka, and clinched a playoff berth.