

UWW Ranking Series:

Ahmadi, Hedayati to spearhead Iran's Greco-Roman squad in Tirana

Sports Desk

Payam Ahmadi and Fardin Hedayati will headline Iran's Greco-Roman campaign when the upcoming Muhamet Malo tournament gets underway in Tirana, Albania, on February 25.

Iran head coach Hassan Rangraz has named a 13-man roster for the second Ranking Series event of the international season. The tournament will also form part of Iran's selection process for major events in 2026, including the World Championships in Manama and the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games later in the summer.

Ahmadi is set to compete in the 55kg division on the back of a standout season last year, which saw the 20-year-old prodigy claim the world junior title before securing a silver medal on his Senior World Championships debut in September, underlining his rapid rise through the ranks.



Hedayati, meanwhile, will take to the mat in the 130kg class following a gold-laden 2025 campaign. The heavyweight topped the podium at the

Asian Championships, the Islamic Solidarity Games and, most notably, the U23 World Championships. He will be looking to lay down a marker in his pursuit of a

superheavyweight berth in Manama, where reigning world champion Amin Mirzazadeh remains the man to beat. Elsewhere, two-time world

U20 champion Alireza Abdevali and Islamic Solidarity Games silver medalist Amir Abdi are among the leading contenders in the 77kg category.



Fardin Hedayati (L), pictured in training session in Tehran, will compete in the Greco-Roman 130kg class at the upcoming Muhamet Malo tournament in Tirana, Albania.

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Former world junior and cadet gold medalist Amirreza Dehbozorgi will compete in the 60kg class alongside compatriot Mohammad Ashiri, while Ali Hajivand is set to feature at 63kg.

Seyyed Mostafa Rezaei will line up in the 67kg bracket. In the 72kg division, Hojjat Rezaei and Mohammad Rezaei will represent Iran.

The Greco-Roman squad is completed by Mohammad-Amin Hosseini (82kg), Jamal Esmaeili (87kg) and Amirreza Moradian (97kg). Unlike the Greco-Roman lineup, Iran has opted for a streamlined freestyle team, with four wrestlers set to compete in Tirana.

Two-time world bronze medalist Younes Emami

will enter the 74kg division as he bids for a third world podium finish in Manama. Emami narrowly missed out on a medal at last year's World Championships in Zagreb, losing to Slovakia's Tajmuraz Salkazanov in the bronze-medal bout.

He will be joined by Mohammad Nokhodi, a five-time world medalist, including two silvers. Nokhodi is set to compete at 79kg in his first international outing since claiming bronze in Zagreb last September.

In the 92kg division, Amirhossein Firouzpour will look to build on a strong 2025 season. The two-time U23 world champion captured Asian gold in Amman before earning bronze on his senior world championship debut. He is expected to face stiff opposition from reigning world silver medalist Amanula Gadzhimagedov, who is entered as a neutral athlete and is widely regarded as one of the favorites for the title.

2026 Karate One-Youth League:

Iranians win three cadet medals on Day 2

Sports Desk

Iranian athletes claimed three cadet medals on the second day of the 2026 Karate One-Youth League event in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, highlighted by a gold medal performance from Abolfazl Arab Yaqoubi in the kumite competition.

Competing in the male -63kg category, Arab Yaqoubi edged Spain's Rodrigo Garcia de Blas 3-2 in one of Saturday's closest finals. With the lead changing hands during the bout, the Iranian secured victory with a decisive late

attack to seal the title.

In the girls' -54kg division, Setayesh Qaneifard rebounded from a narrow 1-0 defeat to Uzbekistan's Sarvinoz Lapasova to earn a consolation bronze. She capped her campaign in emphatic fashion, defeating France's Amina Delorme 9-0.

Iran's second bronze in cadet kumite came in the -52kg class through Mohsen Keikhaeikia. After suffering a 4-0 loss to Kazakhstan's Nurassyl Nurseit in the second round, Keikhaeikia mounted a strong comeback in the repechage. He recorded wins over

opponents from Greece, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, before sealing a 5-0 victory against Belgium's Adam Ghazouani to secure third place.

Saturday's success followed an impressive run for Iran in the junior ranks, where the team collected one gold and two bronze medals.

Ghazal Fat'hi Cheshmeh led the charge on Friday, capturing gold in the female kumite -48kg division with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Egypt's Noor Abdelaziz in the final.

Arash Razani secured bronze after bouncing back from a third-round 2-0 loss to Uz-

bekistan's Asilbek Kobilov. Razani advanced through the repechage with victories over opponents from Armenia and Türkiye, before defeating Italy's Nicola Esposito 4-0 in the bronze-medal bout.

In the men's individual kata, Arash Alhaki progressed with wins against competitors from Egypt, Italy, Hong Kong, Portugal and Saudi Arabia before falling 4-1 to Japan's Takamasa Yatoji. He concluded his campaign with a 3-2 victory over Germany's Haruaki Kuniyasu to clinch bronze.



Iran's Abolfazl Arab Yaqoubi (2nd L) poses with his gold medal on the podium in the cadet -63kg category at the Karate One-Youth League event in Fujairah, UAE, on February 14, 2026.

● IWKF

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Golgohar beats Persepolis to go top, adds to Reds misery

Sports Desk

Golgohar Sirjan climbed to the top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table with a commanding 3-1 home victory over Persepolis, piling further pressure on Reds head coach Osmar Loss Vieira.

All four goals came from long range in an entertaining contest in Sirjan. Pouya Pourali and Pouria Latififar struck superb volleys from outside the box to hand the hosts a two-goal advantage. Persepolis responded deep into first-half stoppage time when Uzbek international Igor Sergeev unleashed a powerful effort to reduce the deficit.

Latififar restored Golgohar's two-goal cushion seven minutes after the restart, netting his second of the afternoon to seal a significant win. The result lifts Golgohar to 36 points, one clear of nearest challengers Tractor, Esteghlal and Sepahan, whose fixtures were postponed due to commitments in Asian competitions. For Persepolis, it marked a

fourth defeat in six matches, leaving the Tehran side fifth on 34 points and under mounting scrutiny as the title race intensifies.

Elsewhere, a 90th-minute strike from Aref Qazal secured a 1-0 home victory for Khaybar Khorramabad against Malavan. The win moved head coach Mahdi Rahmati's side up to ninth on 26 points, two adrift of seventh-placed Malavan.

At the foot of the table, Mes Rafsanjan boosted its survival hopes with a 2-0 away win over 10-man Paykan in Tehran.

Reza Jabireh opened the scoring just two minutes into the match, before Paykan winger Farid Amiri was shown a red card four minutes later. Saman Nariman-Jahan doubled the lead six minutes after the interval against his former club, helping Mes - still bottom with 15 points - claim only its third win in 21 league outings. Paykan remains 13th on 22 points, three clear of the relegation zone.

Iranian judoka Hakimi bags silver in Cadet African Cup

Sports Desk

Iranian judoka Sobhan Hakimi claimed a silver medal at the Cadet African Cup in Tunis, delivering a strong performance in the men's -81kg division.

Hakimi received a first-round bye before defeating home favorite Mohamed

Amin Abidi to book his place in the final. He ultimately fell short against world No. 3 Aly Elramly of Egypt, settling for second place on the podium.

The result followed a productive outing for Iran at the Junior African Cup in the Tunisian capital on Friday, where the team

secured one gold and one silver medal.

Mohammadpouria Banaeian clinched the men's +100kg title with a victory over Egypt's Abdalla Abdalla in the final. Banaeian opened his campaign with a win against Serbia's Petar Novakovic and then overcame Tunisia's Adem Kouki in the semifinals to advance to the gold-medal bout.

Compatriot Ali Nikseresht finished runner-up in the men's -100kg category after losing to Belarus' Yauheni Morau in the final. After receiving a bye in the opening round, Nikseresht defeated Tunisia's Adem Landolsi to top Pool A and move into the semifinals, where he beat American Caedmon Haddad before eventually taking silver.



● IRIJF



Golgohar players are pictured after a 3-1 victory over Persepolis in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Sirjan, Iran, on February 14, 2026.

● FPIRI