

UWW Ranking Series:

Triumphant trio completes gold sweep in Tirana

Sports Desk

The second UWW Ranking Series event of the season saw all three Iranian freestyle wrestlers claim gold medals in their respective weight classes at the Muhamet Malo tournament in Tirana, Albania.

Amirhossein Firouzpour capped off the gold sweep for the Iranian trio on Thursday with an emphatic 11-1 victory over former world silver medalist Miriani Maisuradze of Georgia in the 92kg final.

A bronze medalist at last year's World Championships, Firouzpour began the day with a 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov – a three-time Asian champion and two-time world bronze medalist – before defeating India's Kumar Punit by technical superiority (12-1) to progress to the semifinals.

Another superiority victory (10-0), against Kamil Kurugliyev of Kazakhstan, sent Firouzpour into the final showpiece.

Earlier on Thursday, Mohammad Nokhodi, who had struggled with a knee injury last season,



Iran's Mohammad Nokhodi (red) has his hand raised as the winner against American Dean Hamiti in the freestyle 79kg final at the Muhamet Malo tournament in Tirana, Albania, on February 26, 2026.
● KOSTADIN ANDONOV/UWW

appeared to have regained full fitness as he cruised to a 10-0 victory over American Dean

Hamiti in the 79kg final. The two-time world silver medalist executed three different

takedowns and turned Hamiti twice to rack up his points in the gold-medal bout.

Nokhodi also enjoyed a commanding run in Tirana, opening with a 12-2 win over Georgia's Tariel Gaphrindashvili before defeating former world cadet and junior champion Dzhabrail Gadzhiev of Azerbaijan (7-2) and India's Sagar Jaglan (10-0) to reach the final.

Younes Emami had opened Iran's account on Wednesday by claiming gold in the 74kg class with a 5-0 victory over Kyrgyzstan's Orozbek Toktomambetov in the final.

After securing the first point via the activity clock, the two-time world bronze medalist scored a takedown and a turn to build a 5-0 lead in the first period, then controlled the second to seal the win.

The day began with a 7-2 victory over American William Lewan. Emami followed that with a 7-5 win against Russian former world bronze medalist Inalbek Sheriev to advance to the semifinals.

He was awarded a semifinal victory over Magomedrasul Asluev after the Bahraini wrestler withdrew due to injury while leading 2-1.

With the tournament serving as another stage of Iran's selection process for major wrestling events in 2026, the three wrestlers strengthened their claims for places in the national squad for October's World Championships in Manama, Bahrain.

Elsewhere in Tirana, Russian great Abdurashid Sadulaev marked his return to the international stage with a gold-medal campaign in the 97kg division. A fifth showdown with his familiar rival Kyle Snyder was denied after the American lost to fellow Russian Mukhamed Khaniev in the quarterfinals. Instead, Sadulaev faced his young compatriot in the final.

Sadulaev was tested by Khaniev in the first period, but a powerful double-leg takedown gave him a 4-0 lead. Khaniev narrowed the gap to 4-2, yet a composed Sadulaev never allowed him to dictate the pace.

Keeping Khaniev at arm's length, Sadulaev added three counter takedowns while conceding two stepouts to secure a 10-4 victory and book his place at the European Championships.

Iran names girls' roster for World Junior Taekwondo Championships



● taekwondo.ir

Sports Desk

Iran has confirmed its girls' squad for the upcoming World Junior Taekwondo Championships, set to kick off on April 12 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The final selection trials were held on Wednesday at the Taekwondo House in Tehran, with official referees overseeing the contests under the supervision of the women's technical committee and coaching staff.

Hana Zarrinkamar will spearhead the Iranian squad in the Uzbek capital as she chases back-to-back world junior titles, having claimed the -68kg gold in 2024, when competing in the +68kg class.

Zarrinkamar will be joined by Bahar Tahmasbi (-42kg), Negar Mozaffari (-44kg), Zahra Mousavi (-46kg), Helia Ebrahimian (-49kg), Rozhan Heidari (-52kg), Dina Babarrahim (-55kg), Pinar Lotfizadeh (-59kg), Aynaz Mikaeili (-63kg), and Asal Goltapeh (-68kg).

Iran will be aiming to replicate its 2024 success in Chuncheon, South Korea, where the team secured four gold medals and one silver across 10 weight classes to claim a third girls' team title in 14 editions of the competition.

The team will be led by head coach Niloufar Safarian, assisted by Parvin Keshavarz, Fatemeh Kheiri, and Zahra Kongerani.

FIVB Boys' U17 World Championship:

Iran among 24-team field for revamped showpiece in Doha

Sports Desk

Iran will be among the favorites at the 2026 FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship when the revamped 24-team tournament gets underway in Doha, Qatar, on August 19.

The draw for the pool phase of the competition will take place on March 18.

The inaugural edition of the tournament – featuring 16 teams – was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in August 2024. Iran suffered a narrow 3-2 defeat to Italy in the quarterfinals but bounced back with victories over Brazil (3-0) and Belgium (3-2) to secure a consolation fifth-place finish. Italy will arrive in Doha as the

defending champion after defeating Argentina in a five-set thriller in the 2024 final. The Europeans will be joined by Spain, France, Poland, Czechia, Romania, Türkiye and Bulgaria, highlighting the depth of the continent's field following qualification through the CEV pathway.

Host nation Qatar qualifies automatically, while Pakistan, Iran, India, Japan and Chinese Taipei secured their spots through last year's Asian U16 Championship in Thailand, underscoring the continent's strong commitment to youth development.

Iran surrendered a two-set lead in the continental final in Thailand, eventually falling 3-2 to Pakistan.



● AVC

From South America, Argentina will compete alongside Brazil and Venezuela. Puerto Rico, Cuba, the United States and

Mexico complete the NORCECA contingent. Africa will be represented by Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria.

Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League:

Playoffs set for first-leg thrillers in last eight



● volleyball.ir

The first round of the Women's Volleyball Premier League playoffs will be played today, with four crucial matches scheduled in Tehran, Tabriz, Karaj and Isfahan as the eight best teams from the regular season battle for places in the semifinals.

The domestic top flight has reached its most decisive stage, where there is no margin for error. The quarterfinals will be contested in a best-of-three format, with the second legs set for March 3.

Saipa will host Malavan in Tehran. Saipa topped Group A with eight wins, two defeats and 24 points, and the defending champion enters the playoffs aiming to secure a third consecutive title. Malavan, in its debut top-flight season, qualified as the fourth team from Group B with four wins and 10 points, adding extra intrigue to the all-Tehran clash.

In Tabriz, Moqavemat Shahrdari Tabriz will face Shahin Bandar Ameri at Shahid Tavana Hall. Shahrdari finished second in Group A with eight wins and 24

points, while Shahin, enjoying its first Premier League campaign, claimed third place in Group B with six wins and 18 points, making this one of the most evenly matched ties.

Karaj's Enghelab Hall will see Shahr Arka Alborz, the Group B winner with nine wins and 27 points, take on San'at Mes Rafsanjan, which squeezed into the playoffs as the fourth-placed team from Group A.

Meanwhile, in Isfahan, Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan meets Majan Mazandaran in a high-profile encounter between two title contenders.

Foolad will step onto the court fresh from a historic CAVA Women's League title in Malé, Maldives, a fortnight ago – marking the country's first gold medal in women's international club competitions.

Majan, composed of Iran's under-18 national team players, enjoyed an impressive regular season under national team head coach Lee Do-hee, claiming eight wins from 10 matches to finish third in Group A.