

# World Taekwondo Junior Championships: Zarrinkamar, Soltanian power Iran to double gold on Day 3



## Sports Desk

Iranians stole the show on Day 3 of the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, grabbing two golds and a bronze across four weight classes. Hana Zarrinkamar secured back-to-back golds at the competition with a victory over Czechia's Alice Bínová in the women's +68kg final on Tuesday, while Benjamin Soltanian dominated the men's -73kg event without dropping a single round all day. Bahar Tahmasbi settled for a consolation bronze in the women's -42kg event, raising Iran's medal tally to five across three days of



Iran's Hana Zarrinkamar (R) celebrates after winning the women's +68kg gold medal at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on April 14, 2026.  
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

action at the Martial Arts Sports Complex in Tashkent's Olympic City.

Zarrinkamar clinched the first round against Bínová by a points gap in swift fashion, then dominated the second to win 11-3. The Iranian started her day with a victory over Greece's Eleni Pramatioti (2-0), then defeated Dutch opponent Nielle Vroegh in three rounds to advance to the last eight, where she overcame Tunisia's Ilef Aleya in straight rounds. A 2-0 win over Croatia's Sara Zizic sent Zarrinkamar into the final.

Soltanian, meanwhile, capped his emphatic run with a 2-0 win over South Korea's Seung Min Ahn. The Iranian delivered a controlled performance in the final, taking the rounds 4-1 and 7-3. After a first-round bye, Soltanian swept Greece's Ioannis Kamakas, Bosnia's Adin Hodzic, Mexico's Joshua Cruz, and Ukraine's Roman Hodyma to book his place in the final.

Tahmasbi got off to a winning start, defeating Egypt's Joudy Mhamoud Ali 2-1, then overcame Russia's Svetlana Selezneva, Germany's Johanna Car Zander, and Spain's Rebeca Jule Saade before a 2-1 loss to South Korea's Geunmi Lee saw her settle for a joint third-place finish alongside Poland's Lena Kaszkowiak.

Amir-Arsalan Ahmadi was the other Iranian in action on Tuesday but suffered a first-round exit in the men's -45kg division, falling 2-1 to Denmark's Yosef Darid Aulagi.

Tuesday's results followed Mohammad-Erfan Khodaei's first gold for the country the previous day in Tashkent, a 2-0 victory over Poland's Antoni Sokolowski in the men's -55kg final — the Iranian's sixth straight-round win of the competition.

Pinar Lotfizadeh had opened Iran's account on Day 1, taking bronze in the women's -59kg class after a last-four defeat to China's Ren Kunyue on Sunday. The 15th edition of the championships — featuring 986 competitors from 115 countries — concludes on Friday.

Iran bagged 11 medals at the previous edition in Chuncheon, South Korea, in 2024, including a remarkable seven golds, to complete a clean sweep of the team titles.

## AFC Champions League Elite: Rabiei rues lack of prep, red card as 10-man Tractor exits in last 16

### Sports Desk

Tractor FC head coach Mohammad Rabiei regretted his side's lack of preparation after the Iranian top-flight champion fell to a 3-0 defeat against the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli in the last-16 round of the AFC Champions League Elite on Tuesday. Shabab Al Ahli dominated the opening stages at Jeddah's Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Sports City Stadium but, as the first half wore on, it was Tractor that started to take the initiative, going into the interval on top.

However, Tractor goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand's 52nd-minute sending-off for a foul on Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun outside the box turned the game in favor of the Emirati outfit. Yuri Cesar scored from the penalty spot 13 minutes later, before Iranian inter-

national midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi doubled the lead with a composed finish 10 minutes from time.

Brazilian striker Mateusão capped off Shabab Al Ahli's victory when he found the net eight minutes into stoppage time.

"The players were really passionate and motivated today, and we were able to keep our shape and discipline, especially in the first half," Rabiei said after the game.

"Our team suffered because for 40 days we have been a long way from training," added the Iranian coach, whose side had not played competitively since February 26 — two days before the United States and Israel initiated a war campaign against Iran. "We managed our energy in the first half with our strategy, and we created opportunities.

"That one incident changed the game," Rabiei



Tractor goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand (L) is shown a red card against Shabab Al Ahli in a last-16 game at the AFC Champions League Elite in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 14, 2026.  
● AFC

said of the red card. "After we went behind, we did our best to come back and played high-risk football to score the equalizer, but our opponent could use the space behind our defense to score more goals."

Meanwhile, Rabiei's opposite number on the Shabab Al Ahli bench, Paulo Sousa,

hailed the victory as "a big step" for his club, adding: "We are working really well. Since 2017, the club have been working to grow the group of players with young players, investing lots for that.

"Since my time here last year, my idea has been to create a winning mental-

ity, a culture of winning, looking mainly to be the protagonist in the match.

"For the players and the club, it's one more step that we have reached, and we are looking to recover, focusing on our opponents in the next one and to make another step."

The victory took the Dubai-based club into the last eight of the Asian elite clubs' competition for the first time since 2015, where Sousa's team will meet Thai champion Buriram United at the same venue on Friday.

Elsewhere in the West zone's first knockout round, former Liverpool midfielder Fabinho was on target from the penalty spot in the final seconds of extra time as Saudi Pro League champion Al Ittihad edged out the UAE's Al Wahda 1-0 later on Tuesday to set up a last-eight clash against Japan's FC Machida Zelvia on Friday.

## Iran's Valizadeh named Best Wrestler at Asian Championships

### Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Milad Valizadeh was named the Best Wrestler at the recently concluded Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Valizadeh built on last year's Asian silver and U23 world bronze to dominate the 57kg division, finishing with a 14-3 victory over Mongolian Munkh Erdene Batkhuyag in the final — the first gold medal for Iran in this weight class since Reza Atri's triumph in 2019.

The 21-year-old Iranian, who was also named the Best Attacker with an average of 11 points per bout, accumulated 35 points to complete a clean sweep of three superiority victories in the Kyrgyz capital. Valizadeh averaged just one minute and 51 seconds per match, finishing all his bouts before regulation time.

Meanwhile, Valizadeh's compatriot Mohammad-Mobin Azimi, a gold medalist in the freestyle 92kg event, was picked as the Best Defender af-



Iranian freestyle wrestler Milad Valizadeh (blue) is seen in action against Fuga Sasaki of Japan at the Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on April 10, 2026.  
● IAWFIR

ter not conceding a single point across three bouts. U23 world champion Azimi capped off his campaign with an 11-0 victory over Russian-born Magomed Sharipov (representing Bahrain) with just under a minute to go — and 10 seconds after scoring his first takedown of the final.

Kim Kwang-myong of North Korea was named the Most Entertaining Wrestler after claiming two superiority wins and one pinfall victory in four outings en route to the freestyle 61kg title.

Iran bagged a clean sweep of 10 medals, including two golds, to clinch the Greco-Roman title in Bishkek, before the freestyle squad secured the team trophy double for the country, courtesy of four golds, one silver, and three bronze medals.

## Vafaei secures spot at World Snooker Championship

### Sports Desk

Iran's Hossein Vafaei booked his place at the upcoming Halo World Snooker Championship after back-to-back victories in the qualifiers on Tuesday.

Entering the competition in the third qualifying round, Vafaei defeated Poland's Michał Szubarczyk 10-2, before overcoming China's Gao Yang 10-4 to progress to the main draw, which will kick off at the iconic Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, Britain, on Saturday.

"This morning I was not well at all," Vafaei, who qualified for a



● championshipleague.snooker.co.uk

fifth successive year, said after the victory over his Chinese

opponent. "It wasn't a great match. My opponent is hungry

and young, and he is my practice partner — every day I practice with him and he's such a great talent, but we didn't play that well.

"I'm fighting as well for my country, for my family, and I'm trying my best and will give it my all. The Crucible is a fantastic place for snooker, and we love to play in front of snooker lovers, especially at the Crucible."

The draw for the final stages of the showpiece will be made today, with the 16 top-seeded players drawn at random against the 16 qualifiers.