

IWF World Junior Championships: Iran steals the show in heavyweight, beats the odds to defend men's title



Iranian weightlifters Abolfazl Zare' (1) and Hamidreza Mohammadi-Tanha make a lift during their triple-gold winning campaigns at the IWF World Championships in Ismailia, Egypt, on May 8, 2026.

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifters dominated the final day of the IWF World Junior Championships in Ismailia, Egypt, sweeping the gold and silver medals across the two heavyweight categories, as the country celebrated back-to-back men's title at the showpiece. A haul of six golds, seven silvers, and one bronze medal saw the Iranian eight-man squad stand atop the team table with 520 points – a tremendous achievement that came against the backdrop of the complications the team had struggled with in the buildup to the event. While the team's preparation had been massively hampered by the wartime situation in the country, the Iranian weightlifters – coached by former world and Olympic champion Sohrab Moradi – only arrived in Ismail-

ia on Tuesday after a visa delay had threatened to derail their title defense. Hamidreza Mohammadi-Tanha capped off Iran's emphatic run on the final day by completing a clean sweep of three golds in the +110kg weight class. Stepping onto the platform as the favorite to emulate his triple-gold winning campaign of last year in Lima, Mohammadi-Tanha delivered a six-from-six 180-221-401 performance to finish above his compatriot Taha Nemati, who settled for three silvers for a second straight year with 172-220-392. Turkish weightlifter Selahattin Altun finished third in the snatch with a 170kg lift, with Uzbekistan's Omadillo Olimov bagging the other two bronzes on 219-388. It was also an Iranian one-two in the 110kg division earlier in the day, with Abolfazl Zare' hitting

the 400kg mark in total for three gold medals. Zare, who had collected three medals – including the total silver – in the 102kg class in Lima, made five successful lifts for 180-220-400, ahead of his teammate Farhad Qolizadeh, who registered 179-208-387 to take his personal tally to five medals following last year's C&J and total silvers. Zare' jumped 11kg for his final attempt despite having won already. "He has done 185-226 in training," Sajjad Anoushiravani, president of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation, said of the 19-year-old's performance. "We are very strong at 110kg. We have four athletes all trying to qualify for the Olympic Games," added the former Olympic superheavyweight silver medalist, referring to Friday's medalists plus Amirhossein

Sepah and Alireza Nasiri, all aged 19 or 20. Nasiri won last year – his second junior world title – and set junior world records of 231kg in clean and jerk and 414kg on total at the Senior World Championships in Forde, Norway, last October. He will lift at the Asian Championships in India next weekend. Italy's Simone Abati secured the snatch and total bronzes in 110kg with 173-373, with China's Wang Guizhou, who bombed out in snatch, missing his first two clean and jerks before making the last effort on 207kg for a bronze medal. Iran's 'big four' collectively weighed 528kg and lifted 1,580kg – slightly up on last year in body weight and kilos lifted. Friday's feat came after Hamidreza Zarei had opened Iran's account in Ismailia by collecting a silver and a bronze medal in the

men's 94kg event on the penultimate day of the competition. The Iranian registered three successful lifts in the snatch but was unlucky to miss out on the podium – finishing fourth with 162kg – before a much-improved performance in the clean & jerk saw him secure silver with a 204kg effort. Zarei's 366kg tally earned him the total bronze – the third world junior medal of the Iranian's career, after the 96kg clean & jerk gold he won in Lima. Mohammad-Amin Habibi was the other Iranian in the 94kg class, finishing sixth in both snatch and C&J categories with 161kg and 187kg respectively, before placing fifth in the total standings. Amir-Mohammad Rahmati and Mohammad-Amin Davvand were the first Iranians on the platform in Ismailia, competing

in the men's 88kg division on Wednesday. Rahmati stood seventh in total with a 152-180-332 performance, while Davvand crashed out after three failed attempts in clean & jerk. "The long journey and lack of rest affected our first two athletes but the others were fine and performed well," added Anoushiravani, who Egyptian sports minister to thank, who, after prompting from the IWF president Mohammed Jalood, helped to clear the way for Iran's late entry into the competition. Egypt followed Iran in the men's standings with 427 points, with Venezuela in third on 380. In the overall medal table, which also featured the women's competition, China dominated with an impressive 19 gold medals, with Iran and Venezuela, which bagged five golds, in the following spots, respectively.

Abdi set for Iran U23 job, Taj says

Sports Desk

Hossein Abdi is set to be appointed as the head coach of the Iranian under-23 national team, Mahdi Taj, the chairman of the Iranian Football Federation, confirmed on Friday. Abdi, 59, will take over from Omidreza Ravankhah, who parted ways with the national governing body following a dreadful U23 Asian Cup in January, which saw Iran finish bottom of Group C with two points, failing to find the net across three games in Saudi Arabia against eventual semifinalists South Korea, Uzbekistan, and Lebanon.

"Hossein Abdi has been chosen to take charge of the under-23 national team. We held positive talks with him, and the appointment was well received by the federation's board as well," Taj told IRIB TV. The appointment will mark the third age-group national team job for Abdi, following decent spells with the U17 and U20 teams over the past three years. He led Iran to a last-four finish at the U17 Asian Cup in Thailand in 2023, securing qualification for the U-17 World Cup later that year in Indonesia. Iran began its World Cup campaign with a memorable 3-2 comeback victory over Brazil and went on to finish third in the group and progress to the round of 16 before falling to a shootout defeat against Morocco. Abdi's second spell was not quite as impressive as the first, as Iran made a clean sweep of three group victories at the U20 Asian Cup in China last year but crashed out after a shootout setback against Japan in the quarterfinals, missing out on a place at

the 2025 U-20 World Cup in Chile. "In many countries around the world, there is an established framework for developing youth teams, and we followed the same path. We appointed Abdi as the head coach of the under-17 team, and he built a squad from 300 to 400 players. That team managed to defeat Brazil at the World Cup and lost 2-1 to England in the dying minutes," Taj said. "That generation of players then stepped up to the under-20s and were unlucky to lose to Japan on penalties. Now we have decided to stay the course and move the entire team, still led by Abdi, up to the under-23 level," added the FFIRI chief. Abdi's first test in the new role will come at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September. Iran will be hoping to secure a first football berth at the Olympics since 1976 when they take part in the 2028 U23 Asian Cup, where the two finalists will qualify for the LA 2028 Games.

Asian Women's U16 Handball Championship: Iran to play Hong Kong in opener

Sports Desk

Iran will be looking for a flying start at the inaugural Asian Women's U16 Handball Championship when they take on Hong Kong in Almaty, Kazakh-

stan, today. Thursday, respectively. The final day of the league phase will see Iran square off against Kyrgyzstan on Friday. As if the Iranian team needed added motivation to go all out for glo-

national Handball Federation. Reihaneh Hosseini, Fatemeh Shafiei, Aysan Biglari, Tamana Aram, Negar Rezaei, Niayesh Mansouri, Hasti Mirakhori, Aida Arab, Fatemeh Orangi, Nazanin-Zahra Bahralou, Dina Dezfouli, Fatemeh Dehqani, Maryam Zamani, Zahra Rastad, Yasna Yazdani-Moqaddam, and Sarina Rafiei are the members of the Iranian squad in Almaty, with Sheida Fallahi in charge as head coach. Despite a hampered buildup to the competition, caused by the wartime situation in the country – including damage to the national team's training facilities in Tehran – the team will still hope to add further glory to Iranian women's handball. The country enjoyed a gold-winning campaign at last October's 2025 Asian Youth Games in Manama before claiming an impressive bronze medal at November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.



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stan, today. Featuring six teams, the tournament will be held in a round-robin format, with the top four in the table progressing to the semifinals. The Iranian girls will face the host team in their second outing on Monday, followed by games against Uzbekistan and China on Wednesday and

ry in Almaty, the event also serves as the qualification pathway for the inaugural IHF Women's U16 World Championship, with the two finalists securing a place at the global showpiece, scheduled to take place from October 15 to 24. The host country of the world event has yet to be confirmed by the Inter-