

Sohrabi aims to erase 2025 heartbreak with world gold

Sports Desk

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Daniyal Sohrabi has declared his intention to wipe away the bitter memory of the 2025 World Championships by claiming gold at the 2026 edition – but first, he must secure his place on the national team.

The 72kg wrestler, who battled his way to a bronze medal at last September's world showpiece in Zagreb despite a controversial defeat in the quarterfinals, says his immediate focus is on the national team trials, set to take place at the upcoming Ranking Series event starting June 4 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, where

he will face Mohammad-Javad Rezaei – an Asian silver medalist from April.

"Thank God, everything is going well. We are holding very good, high-quality training camps under the supervision of the technical staff," Sohrabi told reporters.

When asked about his objectives, the wrestler outlined a step-by-step approach.

"First, I have the national team trials against Mohammad-Javad Rezaei in Mongolia in June. That's why I want to take things step by step, and my focus right now is entirely on that match," he said. "God willing, if I succeed in the trials, my next goal will be to win the gold medal at the

2026 World Championships." Sohrabi's determination is fueled by the disappointment of last year's event, where he felt robbed of a shot at the final.

The Iranian, who had multiple bleeding stoppages against France's Ibrahim Ghanem, was medically timed out as the four minutes allotted for bleeding finished and the Frenchman, who was leading 4-2, had his hand raised as the winner.

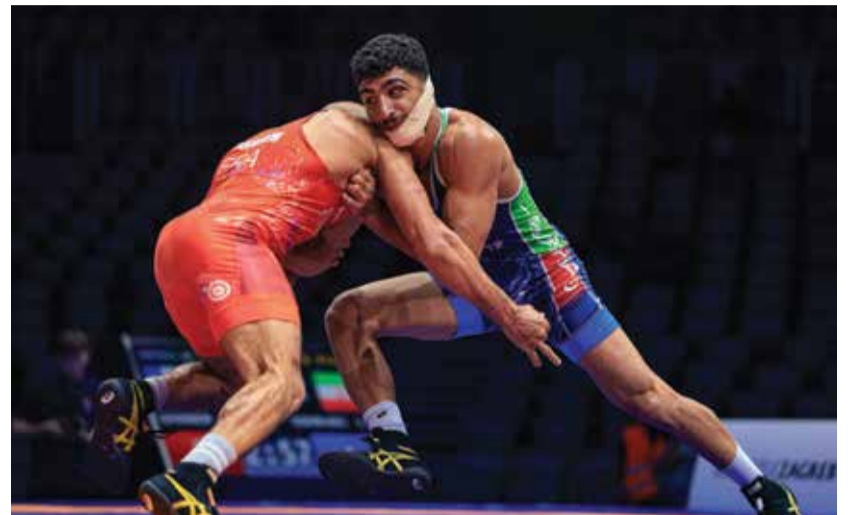
"Last year, a bitter incident happened to me," he explained. "My opponent caused bleeding on my face, but due to the four-minute medical rest rule and the fact that no caution was issued to my opponent, I lost

the match that would have taken me to the semifinals. The gold medal slipped away from me."

Despite that setback, Sohrabi managed to secure a bronze medal thanks to a comfortable 8-0 win against Kazakhstan's Meray Maulitkanov, but the taste of that near-miss has lingered.

"This year, I hope to bring honor to my country and raise the Iranian flag," he vowed.

With the trials looming and a world title in his sights, Sohrabi is leaving no room for distraction. For the 72kg star, 2026 is not just another season – it is a chance at redemption.



Iranian wrestler Daniyal Sohrabi (blue) is seen in action against France's Ibrahim Ghanem in the Greco-Roman 72kg contests at the UWW World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 19, 2025. **IAWFIR**

Limouchi becomes first Iranian to chair ITTF committee

Sports Desk

Sima Limouchi was officially confirmed as head of the Para Table Tennis Committee of the International Table Tennis Federation after receiving overwhelming support from members of the federation's general assembly.

According to IRNA, the decision was finalized during

the ITTF General Assembly, held alongside the World Table Tennis Championships in London. During the meeting, members reviewed the status of the federation's specialized committees and their interim heads before unanimously approving Limouchi's continued leadership of the Para Table Tennis Committee.

Limouchi had initially been

appointed interim chair of the committee during an ITTF Executive Board meeting in Chengdu in October last year.

Following approximately six months in the role, she has now officially secured the position on a permanent basis.

Currently serving as head coach of Iran's women's national table tennis team, Limouchi has become the first Iranian repre-

sentative in the country's table tennis history to chair one of the International Table Tennis Federation's official committees. The Para Table Tennis Committee is considered one of the ITTF's most important specialized bodies and is responsible for policymaking, development and oversight of international programs for athletes with disabilities.



IRNA

Persepolis to stick with Osmar despite poor run: Report

Sports Desk

Persepolis hierarchy has reaffirmed its commitment to head coach Osmar Vieira, insisting the Persian Gulf Pro League giant has no plans to make a change despite the team's alarming dip in form during the second half of the season, before the Iranian top flight campaign was called off on February 28.

The Tehran Reds endured a nightmare run after the Brazilian took charge of the bench for a second spell last November, managing just two wins in seven matches while suffering five defeats. The dismal stretch has seen Persepolis, who finished the first half of the season in second place, tumble all the way down to sixth in the standings. Unsurprisingly, fan discontent grew louder with each passing matchday.

According to reports from Football 360, the club remains fully behind the Brazilian tactician even as speculation swirls over potential replacements. Notably, Mahdi Taj, the head of the Iran Football Federation, recently revealed that only two teams had fully supported the decision to continue the league season despite the ongoing wartime circumstances in the country – and Persepolis was one of them.

The reasoning is clear: With eight matches still to play, Persepolis is fighting to salvage its hopes of securing a place in Asian competitions next season. If the season were to end now and spots were allocated based on the

current standings, the Reds, who have lifted the domestic trophy on seven occasions over the past decade, would miss out on continental competition for the second consecutive year – an unthinkable scenario for a club of Persepolis's stature.

Osmar's first stint at Persepolis could hardly have gone better. Over 17 matches across all competitions, he recorded 13 wins and lost just once in regular time, guiding the club to the league title in the 2023/24 season.

His second act, however, has been a different story. Appointed as successor to Wahid Hashemian, the Brazilian has won only seven of 14 matches – a 50 percent win rate – with two draws and five defeats in regular time. Despite those under-



FOOTBALL 360

club officials have shown no signs of wavering.

During the recent 40-day period of conflict and the subsequent ceasefire, Persepolis's management held several on-line coordination meetings with Osmar, who left Iran following the outbreak of war. A short preseason-style training block during the ceasefire was reportedly conducted according to the Brazilian's specifications.

With airspace now reopened, Vieira and his assistants are preparing to travel to Iran and have asked the club to arrange training sessions from the early days of June. The Brazilian remains the only foreign head coach currently active in Iran's top flight, and he is expected to be on the bench when the season resumes.

Despite rumors linking several high-profile Iranian coaches – including Yahya Golmohammadi, Karim Baqeri, Mahdi Tartar, and Hossein Abdi – to the Persepolis job for next season, follow-up inquiries have confirmed that club directors have not been swayed. Initial discussions regarding Persepolis's transfer market strategy for the upcoming campaign have already taken place with Osmar's input.

For now, Persepolis appears determined to tune out the noise. With their Asian hopes hanging by a thread and eight matches remaining to rescue their season, the club is banking on Vieira to turn things around – and has no intention of looking elsewhere.

Iran, IJF discuss expanded cooperation during Kazakhstan Grand Slam

Sports Desk

Arash Miresmaeili, President of the Iran Judo Federation, said he held a "highly important, private and influential" meeting with Marius Vizer, President of the International Judo Federation (IJF), on the sidelines of the Qazaqstan Barysy Grand Slam 2026 in Kazakhstan. According to Miresmaeili, the meeting lasted nearly two hours.

Miresmaeili said a wide range of issues related to Iranian judo were discussed during the talks. He added that Vizer expressed satisfaction with his recent meeting with Iran's Minister of Sports and Youth and pledged continued cooperation with Iranian judo. It was also agreed that the IJF would support members of Iran's national judo team to help ensure their participation in upcoming international competitions.

The Iran Judo Federation president said that taking part in IJF joint training camps and competing in high-level tournaments would help accelerate the progress of Iran's young judokas.

Miresmaeili also stated that discussions were held regarding Iranian referees and the possibility of expanding their presence at the international level. He announced that, with the support of the IJF president, an international coaching course involving 50 Iranian coaches and taught by world-class instructors will be held in Tehran in the coming months.

"Our coaches have been absent from such courses for several years, and this program could



Arash Miresmaeili
IRNA

represent a major leap forward for them," Miresmaeili said.

Referring to the four-year suspension of Iranian judo, he said the federation had remained active throughout the ban and was now focused on returning strongly to international events. "After six years, we competed in a Grand Slam event again, which itself shows that we are aiming for major international arenas," he said.

Miresmaeili further revealed that Vizer expressed condolences over the deaths of eight Iranian judokas during the recent war and asked him to convey his message of sympathy to their families. Vizer also expressed regret over the destruction of Iran's national judo training camp during recent attacks.

The Iran Judo Federation president added that the IJF chief had formally invited Iran's Minister of Sports and Youth to attend the Senior World Judo Championships, scheduled to be held in Azerbaijan in October, as a special guest. Commenting on the participa-

tion of three Iranian judokas in the Grand Slam tournaments in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, Miresmaeili said the federation had gradually promoted teenage and youth athletes over the past two years. After competing in World Cup events last year, the athletes advanced to higher-level competitions, including this year's Grand Slam tournaments. He praised the courage of the national team coaching staff, noting that the team had gone two months without training and missed several competitions, yet still chose to participate in the Grand Slam events. "Due to the special circumstances, we spent nearly 30 hours traveling overland," he said.

Miresmaeili emphasized that the Iranian judokas competing in the events were between 17 and 20 years old and needed exposure to elite-level tournaments in order to gain experience and prepare for larger international competitions.

Given the circumstances, he said the athletes' performances should not be judged, stressing that the main goal was participation and the accumulation of world ranking points ahead of future events, including competitions in Nagoya.

Describing the federation's recent efforts as "a major transformation" for Iranian judo, Miresmaeili said the recent defeats could ultimately prove to be "a valuable investment for the future."

"We must strive for a strong performance at the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya and then begin thinking about the Olympic Games," he said.