

# Asian Taekwondo Championships: Iran finishes men's runner-up, Kiani saves the day for women's team



Iran's Nahid Kiani, pictured at the Paris 2024 Olympics, won the women's -57kg  
● WORLD TAEKWONDO



## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's team had to settle for a runner-up finish at the Asian Taekwondo Championships in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, despite an impressive haul of four gold medals, as well as one silver and one bronze across eight weight classes.

Ali Tajik's men must have felt unlucky to miss out on defending their team title, as only a single bronze medal separated them from South Korea, which celebrated its 21st men's crown in 27 editions.

Jordan finished third with one gold and two bronze medals.

The final day of the showpiece at the M Bank Arena

saw Iran's Amirreza Sadegian finish his campaign with a consolation bronze medal in the men's -80kg category after a semifinal setback against South Korea's Seo Geon-woo.

Amir-Abbas Rahnama and Mohammad-Hassan Palangfakan were also in action on the final day, finishing empty-handed in the men's -68kg event.

Reigning Olympic champion Arian Salimi had opened Iran's gold-medal account in the Mongolian capital with a dramatic victory in Thursday's +87kg showdown, before world champion Abolfazl Zandi (-58kg) and Mahdi Hajimousaei (-63kg) claimed the top prize in their respective divisions over the following two days.

Yasin Valizadeh, meanwhile, marked his senior debut at

the Asian Championships with an impressive silver medal in the -54kg division. Amir-Sina Bakhtiari (-74kg) was the other Iranian gold medalist in the men's competition, though his medal was not counted toward the country's tally, as he was handed a place in the event through an Asian Taekwondo Union invitation.

## Kiani to the rescue

The highlight of Iran's final-day campaign, however, came in the women's competition, where Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani won gold in the -57kg category.

Former world champion Kiani, who recovered from knee surgery in time to make the showpiece, defeated Uzbekistan's Madina Mirabzalova in straight

rounds in the final to add to the Asian title she won in 2022.

Yalda Valinejad, meanwhile, suffered a 2-1 semifinal defeat against China's Luo Zongshi – the 2022 world champion and a two-time Asian Games gold medalist – to finish with a bronze medal in the women's -62kg class.

The two medals brought an end to a disappointing campaign for the Iranian women, after Masoumeh Ranjbar, Fatemeh Ahmadi, Baran Nemati, Mahla Momenzadeh, Fereshteh Fat'hi, Saghar Moradi, and Olympic bronze medalist Mobina Nematzadeh all missed out on medals in their respective events.

Iran finished fourth in the women's standings behind Chinese Taipei, South Korea, and China.

## Para Powerlifting African Open Championships: Iranians complete one-two in heavyweight classes

### Sports Desk

Iranian para powerlifters dominated the men's heavyweight and super-heavyweight events on Day 3 of the African Open Championships in Oran, Algeria, collecting 10 medals – including four golds – on Saturday.

Reigning Paralympic champion Ali-Akbar Gharibshahi was in a league of his own in the -107kg class, posting a 240kg effort with his third attempt to win the gold. A total tally of 705kg secured a second gold medal for the 44-year-old Iranian.

His compatriot Saman Razi – a former world and Paralympic bronze medalist – settled for silver with 205kg. Reza Enayatollahi completed an all-Iranian top three with a successful 200kg effort, while also securing the top prize in the next-generation age class. Later in the day, the +107kg contest proved to be a two-horse race between the two Iranians. Ahmad Aminzadeh – also a gold winner at Paris 2024 – finished atop the

podium thanks to a lift of 247kg, nine kilograms clear of his fellow Iranian Mahdi Sayyadi. Sayyadi still managed to win the total gold with 703kg, while Aminzadeh, who finished his campaign with two attempts, placed second with a 487kg tally.



Ali-Akbar Gharibshahi, pictured with the Paris 2024 Paralympic gold, secured two men's -107kg golds at the African Open Championships in Oran, Algeria.  
● IRNA

Aliasghar Abareqi also enjoyed a clean sweep of two golds on Saturday, thanks to a 210-220-223 performance in the men's -97kg class. Mobin Mohammadkhani took the bronze with 215kg. Further success came for the Iranian squad in the women's competitions.

of 93kg and 98kg secured double next-generation golds for the Iranian athlete. Saturday's results followed a standout performance from Iranian duo Amir Jafari and Mohsen Bakhtiar in the men's -72kg contests the previous night.

A Paralympic silver medalist at Tokyo 2020, Jafari began

his campaign with a 196kg lift but failed a 205kg attempt on his second try. He bounced back to overcome the weight with his final lift, pipping Bakhtiar – who also posted a best lift of 205kg – for the top prize.

Reigning Paralympic bronze medalist Bakhtiar, however, went on to clinch the total gold with an impressive tally of 605kg.

Iran's Alireza Izadi and Mahdiyeh Mohammadian had collected four medals between them on the first day of the competition. Competing in the men's -59kg class, Izadi posted three lifts to bag bronze with 183kg before winning the total gold with a 542kg tally.

In the women's -55kg competition, Mohammadian registered three successful lifts (95-102-105) to finish with bronze and the total silver. Featuring more than 150 contestants from 20 countries, the event – the third regional championships in this year's four-event series – is a mandatory part of the LA28 Paralympic qualification pathway.

## Iranian football legend Parviz Qelichkhani, dies at 81



● VARZESH3

### Sports Desk

Parviz Qelichkhani, widely regarded as one of the finest players in the Asian football history, passed away in Paris on Saturday at the age of 81. He had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Qelichkhani was a talisman of Iranian football's golden generation in the late 1960s and early 1970s – alongside Ali Jabbari and Ali Parvin – and a pivotal figure in the national team's major achievements during its glory years.

Though primarily an established holding midfielder, Qelichkhani was best known for his versatility across the pitch, having played in every position – except goalkeeper – for club and country throughout his career. He remains the only player in the continent to have won the Asian Cup on three occasions, captaining the national team to its last title in the continental showpiece on home soil in 1976.

Capped 66 times for the national team between 1964 and 1977, Qelichkhani scored 14 international goals – the first and arguably most famous of which was the late winner in the 2-1 victory over Israel in Tehran's iconic Amjadiyeh Stadium in 1968, which secured Iran's first of three Asian Cup titles and sparked nationwide street celebrations – a defining moment that cemented football as the nation's most popular sport.

He also won an Asian Games gold medal with Iran at Tehran 1974 and was a member of the Esteghlal team – then known as Taj – that claimed the Asian Club Championship trophy in 1970.

Qelichkhani made his Team Melli debut at the 1964 Summer Olympics against East Germany at the age of 17. He later represented Iran at the Munich 1972 and Montreal 1976 Olympics, scoring his last international goal in a 2-1 quarterfinal loss to the Soviet Union – a goal that

remains Iran's last in the multi-sport event to this day.

However, Qelichkhani's left-leaning and anti-monarchy political views ultimately cost him a place in Iran's maiden World Cup campaign in 1978 in Argentina.

In a 2010 interview, Qelichkhani – who in his later years preferred to be recognized as an activist rather than a football great – underlined how his childhood in a poor, working-class family in southern Tehran, along with his devotion to his sporting role model Gholamreza Takhti – the late Iranian wrestling great who attained legendary status as a 'people's champion' for his profound moral values – had shaped his political mindset in the 1960s.

At club level, Qelichkhani played for both of Tehran's archrivals, Esteghlal and Persepolis, as well as Kian, Pas, Oqab, and Daraei, before ending his career with the San Jose Earthquakes in 1979.

## CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship: Iran eases past Sri Lanka in straight sets

### Sports Desk

Iran secured a second successive victory at the CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship, defeating Sri Lanka in straight sets (25-16, 25-13, 25-11) in Kathmandu, Nepal.

South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's side had opened its title defense with a comfortable 3-0 rout of Bangladesh on Friday.

A sterner test awaits the Iranian women in their final pool game today against Kazakhstan, which emerged victorious 3-1 when the two teams met at last year's AVC Women's Volleyball Cup.

Iran achieved a historic feat at last year's CAVA event in Tashkent, capturing its maiden international women's volleyball gold medal since the establishment of

the national team in 1963, thanks to a straight-set victory over host Uzbekistan in the final.

This year's tournament marks the beginning of a congested international calendar for the Iranian women, who are also set to compete at the AVC Women's Nations Cup – starting June 6 in Candon, Philippines – where they have been drawn along-

side defending champion Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Lebanon in the same group.

That campaign will be followed by September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in Japan, which will mark Iran's first women's volleyball appearance at the multi-sport event since the 1974 edition on home soil.