

## Wrestling U17 Asian Championships: Iranians dominate Day 1 with six golds in seven GR events

### Sports Desk

Iranian boys stole the show on the opening day of the Wrestling U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam, grabbing six gold medals across seven Greco-Roman classes on Thursday. Ali-Akbar Akoo capped off an emphatic run for the Iranian squad by defeating Kazakhstan's Arystan Temergali 8-1 in the 110kg final. Armin Esmail had opened Iran's account earlier in the day with an 8-2 victory over Uzbekistan's Tokhirjon Karimov in the 45kg showdown. Another final showdown featuring Iranian and Uzbek wrestlers saw Ali Esmaili beat Javokhir Sharifboev 4-1 for the top prize in the 48kg event. Vahid Ashiri claimed the 55kg gold at the expense of Kyrgyzstan's Syimykh Askarov, who fell to a 3-1 loss against the Iranian. Amirreza Tahmasbpour was in a league of his own in the 60kg, securing three victories without conceding a single point – including two by superiority – en route to the final, before making quick work of Kyrgyzstan's Baiel Zhamalidinov with a 9-0 scoreline. Amirreza Mehri added Iran's fifth gold courtesy of a 3-1 win against South Korea's Jongyeon Na in the 92kg final. Ahmad Badraddin was the only Iranian to finish his campaign empty-handed on the first day of the competition, after his last-four 12-3 loss to eventual champion Kuanyshbek Zhanagzhol of Kazakhstan was followed by a 7-0 defeat against Uzbekistan's Bunyod Hasanov in the 51kg bronze-medal contest. Thursday's triumphs, coupled with the results in Friday's morning session – which saw Esmail Zaherdoust advance to the 71kg final, and Hamed Dehqanzadeh (65kg) and Mahdi Gholamian (80kg) reach the bronze bouts in their respective events – were enough for the Iranian 10-man squad to secure the Greco-Roman team title even before the evening session at the Tien Son Sport Center. The Greco-Roman competition will be followed by the women's event, before the Iranian freestyle squad vies for a team title double for the country, starting with the 65kg, 71kg, and 80kg contests today.



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Amirreza Mehri celebrates after winning gold in the 92kg class at the U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam, on May 28, 2026.  
● AMIRREZA ALIASGHARI/UWW

## FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League: Piazza names Iran's 16-man roster for Week 1



Iranian players and coaching staff are pictured during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on May 26, 2026.  
● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

### Sports Desk

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza has confirmed Iran's 16-man squad for the opening week of the preliminary round of the upcoming Volleyball Nations League (VNL). Aiming to secure its first VNL Finals berth in four years, Iran will kick off its campaign with a daunting test against Brazil in Brasilia on June 10 – a rematch of last year's preliminary-round opener, which the South American powerhouse won in straight sets on home soil. Iran is set to face Brazil in a friendly double-header on June 2 and 4 as part of its week-long preparation at the Brazilian national team's training camp in Socorro. Star opposite Amin Esmailnejad will be a surprise absentee in the Brazilian capital, as he is among the four Iranians – alongside outside hitters Ehsan Daneshdoust, Esmail Mosafer, and Abdolreza Abdolhamidi – omitted by Piazza for Week 1. Bardia Sa'adat was also ruled out after suffering a finger injury in the buildup to the AVC Men's Champions League earlier

this month, with Foolad Sirjan's Ali Hajipour expected to be Piazza's first-choice opposite in the starting lineup. Tricky tests will come thick and fast in the Brazilian capital for Piazza's men, who will take on Bulgaria – a World Championship finalist last September – on June 11 before facing Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium. Iran also faced Argentina and Bulgaria in last year's edition, defeating the former 3-1 before concluding the preliminary phase with a straight-set victory over the European side. Iran will then travel to Orléans, France, for the second week of action, beginning with a mammoth clash against host and reigning Olympic champion France at the CO'Met Arena on June 24, followed by matches against the United States, Japan, and Cuba. The third and final week of the preliminaries will see Iran face Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, with further matches against Germany, Slovenia, and Türkiye. The top eight teams in the 18-team standings will advance to the VNL Finals, which will begin

with the quarterfinals in Ningbo Beilun, China, on July 29. China is already guaranteed a place in the Finals as host nation. Iran enjoyed a respectable run in the 2025 preliminaries in Piazza's first year in charge. Having finished among the bottom three teams in the previous two editions, Iran staged a late surge to finish eighth with six wins from 12 matches. However, it ultimately missed out on the Finals after host China was granted a place in the last eight despite finishing second from bottom.

The following is Iran's 16-man squad:

**Setters:** Arshia Behnejad, Emran Kookjeili  
**Opposite spikers:** Ali Hajipour, Amirmohammad Golzadeh, Pouya Aryakhah  
**Outside hitters:** Morteza Sharifi, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh, Mobin Nasri, Ali Haqqarast, Amirhossein Esfandiar  
**Middle blockers:** Yousef Kazemi, Seyyed Issa Nasser, Mohammad Valizadeh, Armin Qelichniazi  
**Liberos:** Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Hossein Hajikalateh

## Iranian winger Sayyadmanesh to leave Westerlo as free agent

### Sports Desk

Allahyar Sayyadmanesh is set to embark on a new chapter in his career after the Iranian winger confirmed he is parting ways with Belgian top-flight side KVC Westerlo. "Another chapter of my life has come to an end – a chapter I'll always appreciate. Grateful for my 2.5

years at @kvcwesterlo," wrote the 24-year-old on Instagram on Thursday. Sayyadmanesh has also played for Turkish clubs Fenerbahçe and Istanbulspor, Ukraine's Zorya Lugansk, and English second-tier outfit Hull City since being introduced to European club football at the start of the 2019/20 season.

Having joined midway through the 2021/22 campaign, Sayyadmanesh bagged 14 goals and 13 assists in 84 appearances across all competitions for Westerlo. He found the net on seven occasions and provided teammates with five assists in 31 outings as Westerlo made it to the Jupiler Pro League Europe playoffs in the newly finished season, but ultimately missed out on a place in continental club competitions. Westerlo was keen on a contract extension for the versatile winger, who is capable of playing on both flanks, but negotiations in recent months fell through. Sayyadmanesh, who has one international goal in nine caps to his name, was hoping his impressive season would convince national team head coach Amir Qalenoee to pick him for the upcoming FIFA World Cup in North America, but he was ultimately overlooked for the provisional squad.



● TSI

## Aichi-Nagoya 2026:

## Alipour to chase third Asian Games gold as Iran confirms climbing duo

### Sports Desk

Iranian speed sensation Reza Alipour is set to vie for a third successive Asian Games gold medal after the country confirmed its sport climbing duo for Aichi-Nagoya 2026, which will kick off with the opening ceremony on September 19. Reza Zarei, chairman of the Iran Mountaineering & Sport Climbing Federation, made the announcement earlier this week, adding that Alipour will be joined by Sarina Ghaffari, who will compete in the women's boulder event. "Alipour was a gold medalist in the previous two editions in Jakarta and Hangzhou, and holds a significant advantage over other contenders in the country, which is why he was selected for the men's speed event at the Asian Games," Zarei said. A 2018 world champi-



● WORLD CLIMBING

on and a gold medalist at the World Games, the 32-year-old Alipour was nicknamed 'Persian Cheetah' and 'Usain Bolt of speed climbing' when footage of him scaling the 15-meter wall in 5.48 seconds – a then-world record – at the 2017 Climb-

ing World Cup went viral on social media. The Iranian, who also has an Asian Championships gold and six World Cup titles to his name, was unfortunate to miss out on a podium finish at the 2024 Paris Olympics after falling to American Sam Watson

in the bronze-medal race. Alipour, however, will have to improve his game if he is to succeed at the multi-sport event, after he endured a below-par run at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, last month, suffering last-16 exits in both the individual and relay events. Meanwhile, Ghaffari, 20, will look to build on a decent run of performances over the past couple of years – most notably a gold-winning campaign at the 2024 Asian Youth Championships – in chasing Asian Games glory at the Nagoya International Exhibition Hall. "We wanted to have more climbers in the Iranian delegation, but under the technical committee's policies, the decision was made to stick with two competitors. I just hope they will both be in peak form by the time they head to the Asian Games," Zarei said.