

# Ulaanbaatar Open Ranking Series: Sohrabi wins all-Iranian final to secure Worlds spot

## Sports Desk

Greco-Roman wrestler Danial Sohrabi booked his place at October's World Championships in Astana after rallying past his fellow Iranian, Mohammad-Javad Rezaei, in a thrilling 72kg final at the Ulaanbaatar Open on Thursday.

Earlier, on the opening day of the third Ranking Series event of the season, world silver medalist Payam Ahmadi cruised to the top prize in the 55kg class.

Both Sohrabi and Rezaei followed identical paths to the final, posting back-to-back superiority victories without conceding a single point.

In the final, Sohrabi was the first to go in par terre. Rezaei – silver medalist at April's Asian Championships – did his best to turn Sohrabi twice and take a 5-0 lead. Sohrabi, who felt hard done by after settling for bronze in last year's world championship, seemed unfazed despite falling behind.

When the second period began, he managed to earn the par terre position for himself. However, he turned Rezaei only once. When Sohrabi tried a throw, Rezaei managed to defend it, but the former was awarded a step-out, making the score 5-4.

Shortly after, Sohrabi brought down Rezaei for a takedown and took a 6-5 lead. He then turned Rezaei again to extend his lead to 8-5, which he defended to win the gold medal – his second in a row at the Ulaanbaatar Open.

Ahmadi, meanwhile, emerged as the most dominant wrestler of the day, outscoring his opponents 33-0 in four bouts to claim the gold medal in the Nordic bracket.

Ahmadi opened the day against Asian silver medalist Lalit of India and secured an easy 8-0 technical superiority win in one minute and 57 seconds.

In Round 2, Ahmadi took only 33 seconds to see off home favorite Davaabandi



Greco-Roman wrestler Danial Sohrabi (red) is seen in action against Mohammad-Javad Rezaei in an all-Iranian 72kg final at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on June 4, 2026.

UWW

Munkh Erdene. He blocked the Mongolian's body lock attempt for four points and threw him again for four more points. He took just 46 seconds to do the same to Sumiyabazar Munkhaya – also from the host coun-

try – in Round 3. Ahmadi's final bout was against Türkiye's Emin Cakir. The 20-year-old Iranian, who grabbed an impressive silver on his senior Worlds debut last year, pulled off two four-point

throws from par terre to complete a 9-0 victory and win the gold.

"Payam delivered an outstanding performance today, defeating all four of his opponents in dominant fashion," said Iran head

coach Hassan Rangraz of the young prodigy, who also grabbed junior world and Asian golds last year.

"Securing four victories in a combined total of just five minutes underscored his exceptional technical level. The achievement was even more impressive given that he had been away from competitive action for nearly nine months, part of which was spent recovering from surgery, keeping him away from training."

In Friday's morning session, Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar progressed to the final of the 63kg event, thanks to a 9-0 semifinal rout of South Korea's Choi Hyun-woong.

Keshtkar's most significant win, however, came in the second round, where he defeated Asian silver medalist Erfan Jarkani 6-2 in an all-Iranian battle to punch his ticket for the World Championships, looking to improve on last year's bronze in Zagreb. With Sohrabi and Keshtkar joining Ahmadi and reign-

ing world and Olympic champions Saeid Esmaeili (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg), as well as Asian silver medalist Ali Oskou (77kg), world champion Gholamreza Farrokhi (82kg), and Alireza Mohmadi (87kg) – who has won consecutive world silver medals on either side of his Olympic silver at Paris 2024 – in the Iranian Greco-Roman squad for the Wrestling Worlds, the remaining spot up for grabs will be decided through a highly anticipated 130kg showdown featuring Amin Mirzazadeh and Fardin Hedayati at the International Takhti Cup, which begins on June 15 in Kerman.

Two-time world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Mirzazadeh will need a victory in a best-of-three contest against Hedayati, who is aiming for a breakthrough at senior level, having already collected three world titles across the under-23 and junior age groups.

## Iran beat Mali in last World Cup warm-up before heading to Tijuana

REUTERS – Iran will head off to their World Cup base this weekend with a spring in their step after beating Mali 2-0 in a friendly behind closed doors in Turkey on Thursday, even if some uncertainty still clouds their participation in the tournament.

Goals from midfielder Saeid Ezatollahi and right back Ramin Rezaeian either side of halftime gave Team Melli a record of three wins and a single loss in their four friendlies this year in the Turkish resort city of Antalya.

The friendlies are the only competitive football the Iran-based players have played since the domestic league was suspended in the wake of U.S. and Israel air strikes on the Islamic Republic in late February that triggered a regional war.

The squad have received visas for Mexico, officials confirmed this week, and will leave Turkey today for their tournament base in the border city of Tijuana.

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed to host the squad after being told

that the U.S. authorities did not want Iran staying in their original base in Arizona throughout the June 11 to July 19 tournament.

The squad have not yet received the visas they will need to get into the U.S. to play their group games against New Zealand and Belgium in Los Angeles and Egypt in Seattle, however. Iranian FA (FFIRI) President Mehdi Taj told Iranian media this week that the U.S. visas were the main concern for the federation as Iran's tournament opener against

New Zealand on June 15 approaches.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday there was "no problem" with the Iran squad entering the country, but Washington would not let officials or staff with ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) accompany them.

Iranian midfielder Saeid Ezatollahi (6) celebrates his goal during a 2-0 victory over Mali in a friendly in Antalya, Turkey, on June 4, 2026.

FFIRI



## Iran looking to carry CAVA momentum into Women's Nations Cup

## Sports Desk

Iran's women's volleyball national team will look to build on last week's CAVA Championship title when it opens its AVC Women's Nations Cup campaign against Indonesia in Candon, Philippines, today.

The Iranian side, which has been away from the country since April 21 as part of an unprecedented preparatory program amid the regional conflict, defeated Kazakhstan in four sets in Kathmandu, Nepal, to secure back-to-back CAVA trophies. The triumph continued the team's upward trajectory over the past 12 months, following its historic 2025 CAVA title – the country's first international gold medal since



Iran's women's volleyball national team celebrates winning the CAVA Championship title in Kathmandu, Nepal, on May 29, 2026.

AVC

the launch of the women's national team program in 1963 – as well as a bronze medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's side steps into today's opener fresh off victories against the Philippines in back-to-back three-set warm-up

friendlies this week. Iran won the first match in straight sets (25-23, 26-24, 25-21) before prevailing again on Thursday (26-24, 25-27, 25-9) – statement results against the team that made the podium at the previous two editions of the Nations Cup, with bronze in 2024 and silver

in 2025.

Today's Pool B opener against Indonesia marks a rematch of the teams' two meetings at last year's tournament in Hanoi, Vietnam. Iran won a five-set thriller in the pool stage before suffering a 3-1 defeat in the classification round and ultimately settling for sixth place.

Lee's side will then face 2022 champion Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, and defending three-time champion Vietnam before taking on Lebanon in its final group-stage match on June 12.

Iran also faced Kazakhstan in Hanoi, falling in four sets during the pool stage. Formerly known as the AVC Women's Challenge Cup, this year's tournament features 12 of Asia's top women's national

teams outside those competing in the Volleyball Nations League. In addition to competing for the continental title, teams will seek valuable FIVB Volleyball World Ranking points and potentially strengthen their chances of qualifying for the VNL and other top-tier competitions.

The Philippines headlines Pool A alongside Chinese Taipei – bronze medalist in the 2023 and 2025 editions – Australia, which reached the semifinals in 2024, Uzbekistan, which finished fourth in 2022, and tournament newcomers South Korea and Kyrgyzstan.

The top two teams from each pool will advance to the semifinals, with the final scheduled to take place at Candon City Arena on June 14.

## IWBF Men's Repechage: Iran to begin bid for World Championship berth against Senegal

## Sports Desk

Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team will take on Senegal in its Group B opener at the 2026 IWBF Men's Repechage in Suphan Buri, Thailand, on Monday.

The tournament is the final qualification event for the 2026 IWBF World Championships, with eight teams competing for the remaining four places at September's global showcase in Ottawa, Canada.

Iran will follow its opener against Senegal with a clash against Brazil on Tuesday before facing Poland in its final group-stage fixture on

Wednesday.

Host Thailand is joined by South Korea, the Netherlands, and Venezuela in Group A, while Iran, Senegal, Brazil, and Poland make up Group B.

The top team in each group will face the bottom-placed team from the opposite group in the crossover round, while the runners-up will meet the third-placed team from the other pool. The winners of the four crossover matches will qualify for the World Championships, which will also serve as a qualification pathway toward the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.