

U17 Wrestling World Championships: Iran out to dethrone US, fend off Russia to reclaim freestyle title

Sports Desk

Iran will be among the traditional favorites, alongside the United States and Russia, for the team title when the freestyle competition at the U17 Wrestling World Championships gets underway in Baku on Thursday. Having had to settle for runner-up finishes behind Team USA over the past two years, the Iranian squad will face an even more daunting task in its bid to claim a first team crown since 2023. Unlike the previous four editions, wrestling powerhouse Russia will be eligible for team points at this year's championships, while Japan, host Azerbaijan and India could also emerge as serious contenders. However, head coach Sadeq Goudarzi's team will look to build on a successful Asian Championships campaign in May, where it collected eight medals – including four golds – across 10 weight classes to beat Japan and India to the freestyle title in Da Nang, Vietnam. Mahdi Damercheli – one of the four Iranian gold medalists in Da Nang – will represent the country in the 45kg class, with U17 Pan-American champion Rylen Wax of the United States, Russia's national champion Aldar Badmaev and reigning U17 European champion Marko Kvasniuk of Ukraine also among the favorites. Amirali Ragheb will be eager to improve on his Asian silver

medal in the 48kg division, though Uzbekistan's Farrukh Makhmudov, who defeated the Iranian in May's final, will again be in the field, along with host wrestler Huseyn Rzazade, Ukraine's Volodymyr Boiko – the U17 European silver medalist – and Russia's Kirill Kondrashov, last year's European U15 champion. Asian champion Benjamin Ashofteh will be among the leading contenders in the 51kg class, which also features Asian silver medalist Masamune Ushimado of Japan, American Evan Restivo and Russia's Islam Kurakhmaev, a rising prospect from Dagestan. Arman Elahi will enter the 55kg competition as the Asian champion, looking to fend off challenges from Japan's Kyosuke Ikeda and Kazakhstan's Temirlan Murat, who finished behind the Iranian in Da Nang. American Chase Karenbauer and Russia's Mustafa Bersanukaev will also be in the mix, alongside Georgia's European bronze medalist Temuri Tutarashvili and Uzbekistan's Jakhongir Tulkunov, who gave Elahi his toughest bout in Vietnam. Mohammad-Taha Ganjeh, a bronze medalist at the U17 Asian Championships, will represent Iran in the 60kg category, where India's Sitender will compete as the defending world champion. The field also includes U17 European champion Sergei Karmrian of Russia, runner-up Mykyta Kuzmenko



of Ukraine and Asian champion Bekzodbek Ibrohimov of Uzbekistan. In the 65kg division, Iran will be represented by unheralded Sam Arshad, who faces a stiff challenge from American Arseni Kikiniou, who made history by winning medals in both freestyle and Greco-Roman last year, Puerto Rico's Jovani Solis and Russia's Magomed Ibragimov. In what appears to be a wide-open 70kg division, Iran's Reza Shamsipour, who was not part of the Asian Championships squad, will face U17 Asian champion

Adilet Rysbay of Kazakhstan, U17 European champion Nikolay Iliev of Bulgaria, Russia's Mokhammad Baisultanov and American Camryn Howard. Iran's Amirali Ferasati dominated the 80kg field to win Asian gold in Da Nang and is expected to mount another strong challenge in Baku, though home favorite and U17 European champion Nihad Suleymanli will have other ideas. Mohammadreza Issazadeh was one of only two Iranians to miss the podium at the Asian Championships and will need to deliver

a much-improved performance in the 92kg division, which also features U17 European champion Abdurazak Shabanov of Russia, European silver medalist Ali Dadaev of France and U17 Pan-American champion Salah Tsarni of the United States. Amirhossein Esmali will look to avenge his defeat to India's Arush Rana in the U17 Asian final should the pair meet again in the 110kg division. Host wrestler and returning world bronze medalist Hakim Taghiyev will be aiming to upgrade his medal on home soil, while U17 European



Iranian freestyle wrestlers are seen in action during an U17 national team's training session in Tehran, Iran, on July 8, 2026.

● YASSIN BAHRAMI/LAWFIR

champion Murtaz Bagdavadze of Georgia, silver medalist Stefan Stefanov of Bulgaria, Russia's Magomed Omarov and American Peter Mocco are also among the wrestlers to watch in the heavyweight class.

"We have carefully analyzed our opponents and also taken into account the conditions of competing in Azerbaijan," Goudarzi said ahead of his team's departure for Baku.

"Because of the 40-day war and the unavailability of our wrestlers, we missed a couple of warm-up tournaments, but our strength and conditioning coach worked around the clock to ensure the wrestlers reached the required level of physical and technical readiness," added the former Olympic silver medalist. Beyond immediate results, Goudarzi stressed that developing the next generation of elite wrestlers remains the program's long-term objective.

"Our priority is building a strong pipeline for Iranian wrestling, helping these wrestlers progress to the senior level and ultimately win Olympic gold medals.

"I believe these boys can bring many good days to Iranian wrestling. I hope the Iranian people remember their names."

WSPS World Cup Novi Sad 2026:

Javanmardi misses podium on long-awaited return

Sports Desk

Iranian para shooting great Sareh Javanmardi had to settle for a fourth-place finish in the mixed 50m pistol SH1 event at the first WSPS World Cup of the season in Novi Sad, Serbia, on Monday. Nicknamed the "Pistol Queen," the four-time Paralympic champion, who announced in June that she would come out of re-

tirement to pursue a second Asian Para Games gold medal in October, delivered a score of 535 to top the elimination round. She then finished third in the combined elimination and qualification standings to advance to the final, but ultimately missed out on a podium finish. The 41-year-old still did enough to secure qualification for September's World Championships in Changwon, South Korea –

where she will make her first appearance in seven years – as well as the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games, which begin on October 18. Javanmardi appeared to have brought the curtain down on her illustrious career after winning the women's 10m air pistol title at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, citing "personal reasons as well as certain circumstances within the Iranian sports structure" for her

decision. The decorated shooter, however, had a change of heart and resumed training with the national team in recent months. Ali Galavi was the other Iranian in action in the mixed 50m pistol event in Novi Sad but failed to progress to the final after posting 523 points to finish 11th in qualification. Nevertheless, the result was enough for him to secure a place at the upcoming Asian Para Games.



● ISNA

CAVA Beach Volleyball Championships:

Iranian pairs claim men's gold, bronze

Sports Desk

Iran capped a dominant campaign at the CAVA Beach Volleyball Championships by winning the men's gold and bronze medals on the final day of the tournament in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Iranian duo of Abbas

Pourasgari and Alireza Aqajani defeated Kazakhstan's first team in straight sets, 21-19, 21-5, in Monday's final to lift the title and complete an unbeaten run of six victories. The pair had already secured qualification for the 2026 Asian Beach Volleyball Championships by reaching the final.

Iran also collected the bronze medal through Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenoee, who defeated Kazakhstan's second team 21-11, 21-16 in the third-place playoff. Khakizadeh and Qalenoee, who teamed up to win silver at April's Asian Beach Games, advanced to the semifinals as Group A winners after recording four consecutive victories over Kazakhstan, two Uzbek teams and the Maldives. Their only defeat came against Kazakhstan's first team in the last four. Rahman Raoufi and Abdolraouf Bastegani served as the team's coaches, while Nader Ansari was the delegation leader. The two medals took Iran's volleyball medal haul across all disciplines into double figures over the past four months.



● volleyball.ir

World Fencing Championships:

Pakdaman crashes out in men's saber last 16

Sports Desk

Iran's Ali Pakdaman suffered a last-16 exit in the men's individual saber event, capping a disappointing campaign for the country's quadruple at the World Fencing Championships in Hong Kong. The former Asian champion claimed five successive victories to advance from the preliminary rounds. He then defeated Matteo Neri – a member of Italy's team that won gold at the previous edition – 15-13, before edging American William

Morrill by the same scoreline. Pakdaman's run ended with a 15-6 defeat to Egypt's Mohamed Amer. Russia's Pavel Graudyn defeated South Korea's Do Gyeong-dong 15-7

in the final to win the title, while Amer and Romania's Radu Nițu shared the bronze medals. Mohammad Fotouhi, Nima Zahedi, and Taha Kargarpour were the

other Iranian fencers in the men's saber event. All progressed from the preliminary phase but failed to advance beyond the round of 64.

Zahedi was beaten 15-13 by Uzbekistan's Sardor Abduraimbekov in his second knockout bout, while Kargarpour overcame Ukraine's Oleksiy Statsenko 15-11 before losing 15-11 to Russia's Kamil Ibragimov. Fotouhi, meanwhile, suffered a 15-10 defeat to Saudi Arabia's Adel Almutairi in the opening knockout round.



● Jiji