

U17 Wrestling World Championships: Iran denied freestyle team crown by narrowest margins



Iran's Benyamin Ashofteh (red) is seen in action against Azerbaijan's Ibrahim Hasanov in the freestyle 51kg final at the U17 Wrestling World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, on August 2, 2026.
● IAWFIR

Sports Desk

Iran missed out on its first freestyle team title at the U17 Wrestling World Championships in three years after being pipped by Russia in the title race in Baku, Azerbaijan.

A haul of three golds, one silver, and two bronze medals across the 10 weight classes saw Iran finish with 145 points – just one behind Russia, which claimed one more bronze medal than the Iranians.

India finished third with 123 points, courtesy of one gold, one silver, and four bronze medals, while Team USA, the two-time defending champion, endured a disappointing campaign, collecting just two silver medals to place seventh with 68 points. Iran held a narrow 110-106 lead over Russia after three of the five weight classes on the final day. With one gold-medal bout and one bronze-medal bout remaining for each team, Iran needed to win both matches or see Russia lose one to secure the title, but neither scenario unfolded.

Iran's Reza Shamsipour won gold at 71kg, while Russia's Mokhammad Baisultanov claimed bronze, extending Iran's lead to 135-121 heading into the final weight class.

It all came down to the final bout of the tournament at 92kg. After Reza Isazadeh lost his bronze-medal match 3-2 to India's Saksham Fnu, Iran remained on 145 points. All Abdurazak Shabanov needed to do was defeat American Salah Tsarni in the gold-medal bout to clinch the team title for Russia, and he did just that with a 9-4 victory, as Russia – eligible for team points for the first time since the 2021 edition – completed a clean sweep of the Greco-Roman and freestyle team crowns.

Iran also celebrated a gold medal at 51kg earlier on Sunday, where Benyamin Ashofteh

defeated host wrestler Ibrahim Hasanov 5-1 in the final. Hasanov opened the scoring after Ashofteh failed to score during the activity period, but the Iranian moved ahead on criteria at 1-1 in the second period after Hasanov was put on the activity clock.

Ashofteh then secured a takedown with 55 seconds remaining as Hasanov backed away before transitioning into a gut wrench for two more points to build a 5-1 lead with 37 seconds left.

Ashofteh held on to seal victory, while Hasanov, the reigning U17 European champion, settled for silver in front of the home crowd, which was again denied a home world champion.

At 71kg, Shamsipour survived a tense finish to defeat Georgia's Bohdan Kvantaliani 5-4 and claim Iran's third freestyle gold medal of the tournament.

After conceding a passivity point, Shamsipour responded with quick takedowns in the second period to build a 4-1 lead. With 19 seconds remaining, he was penalized for fleeing, and again with two seconds left when Kvantaliani forced a stepout. However, Shamsipour retained the criteria advantage at 4-4 thanks to his higher-scoring techniques.

Georgia challenged for another fleeing call in the closing seconds, but the appeal was unsuccessful, awarding Shamsipour an additional point and confirming the victory.

Sunday's results came after Iranian wrestlers had won four medals on the penultimate day of competition in Baku.

Amirali Ferasati led Iran's medal charge by claiming gold in the 80kg class.

The reigning U17 Asian champion capped a dominant campaign, during which he outscored his opponents 33-2 across four bouts, with a 10-0 technical superiority victory over Hungary's Zeteny Tugyi in the final.

Amirhossein Esmaili was Iran's other finalist, settling for silver after a 7-4 defeat to Russia's Magomed Omarov in a thrilling 110kg final, adding to the superheavyweight silver medal he won at the U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam. Elsewhere, Arman Elahi (55kg) and Sam Arshad (65kg) claimed bronze medals through the repechage.

Elahi, who also entered the competition as the reigning Asian champion, suffered a 5-1 quarterfinal defeat to Uzbekistan's Jakhongir Tulkunov but earned another chance at a podium finish after the Uzbekistani advanced to the final. The Iranian outclassed Hungary's Kyryl Shumeiko 7-0 in his first repechage bout before defeating Armenia's Davit Baleyan 5-2 in the bronze-medal match to finish joint third alongside India's Prathmesh Suryakant Patil.

Arshad, meanwhile, reached the semifinals with three successive technical superiority victories before falling 5-4 to Uzbekistan's Shokhiddin Aliev. He bounced back with a commanding 9-0 win over Kazakhstan's Zamir Daniyar in the bronze-medal bout.

The freestyle competition followed a disappointing Greco-Roman campaign for Iran, by its lofty standards, with the traditional powerhouse missing out on the team title for the first time in five editions.

Amirreza Tahmasbpour and Alireza Rezaei won gold in the 60kg and 80kg classes, respectively, while Amirreza Mehri (92kg) and Ali-Akbar Akou (110kg) added bronze medals as Iran finished third in the team standings with 96 points. Russia, eligible for team points for the first time since the 2021 edition, claimed the title with 127 points, while host Azerbaijan finished runner-up with 107 despite failing to win a single gold medal across the 10 weight classes.

WTT Youth Contender Vientiane 2026:

Faraji wins U19 boys' title



● IRIENews

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji claimed the U19 boys' singles title at the latest WTT Youth Contender event in Vientiane, Laos.

The teenage sensation came from behind to beat India's Abhinandh Pradhivadhi 3-2 (15-13, 9-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-9) in the final.

Faraji began his campaign with a 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-5) victory over Hong Kong's Wong Wan Hei in the round of 32 before defeating Wong Alvin, also

from Hong Kong, by the same scoreline (11-3, 12-10, 11-9) to progress to the quarterfinals. He then rallied past South Korea's Ma Yeongmin 3-1 (7-11, 11-7, 11-3, 11-9) to reach the last four, where he defeated Chinese Taipei's Chang Bing-En in straight games (11-6, 12-10, 13-11) to book his place in the final against the Indian.

The event served as part of Faraji's preparation ahead of the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, which will open on September 19. Faraji also competed in the U16 boys' singles event in

Vientiane but suffered an early exit after surrendering a two-game lead in a 3-2 defeat (2-11, 9-11, 12-10, 11-8, 11-7) to Chinese Taipei's Lu Shih-Yuan.

Faraz Shakiba and Mohammad Habibi were the other Iranians in action in the U19 boys' singles event, but both saw their campaigns end after just one match.

Handed a bye into the round of 32, Shakiba suffered a 3-2 defeat (11-8, 11-8, 7-11, 7-11, 11-5) to Chinese Taipei's Shih Jia-Hong, while Habibi exited at the same stage after a 3-0 loss (12-10, 11-9, 11-9) to Yang Hao-Jen.

Football Federation backs Qalenoei, dismisses coaching speculation

Sports Desk

An Iran Football Federation (FFIRI) board member has dismissed speculation over a possible change in the national team's coaching staff, insisting that Amir Qalenoei remains the federation's only candidate to lead Team Melli at the AFC Asian Cup.

present to guide Iran at the upcoming AFC Asian Cup.

A semifinalist at the previous two editions, Iran will begin its bid for a fourth Asian Cup title – and its first since 1976 – against China in Group C, which also features Kyrgyzstan and Syria, at Riyadh's Kingdom Arena on January 9 next year. “Our entire focus is on Mr. Qa-

mestic transfer market after progressing through the national youth teams, particularly the under-23 side.

“The time has come for these young but experienced players to wear the senior national team jersey,” Salari said. “We want to rely on their abilities as we pursue the Asian Cup title.” The Asian Cup will be Qalen-



● FFIRI

Speaking to Mehr News Agency, Mohammadrahman Salari said the federation is preparing to discuss an extension to Qalenoei's contract at its next board meeting, which is expected to be held within the coming week.

Salari also rejected reports linking former Iran internationals Javad Nekounam, Farhad Majidi and Yahya Golmohammadi with the national team job.

“These reports have no basis whatsoever,” he said. “Not only have the names of these three coaches never been discussed, but no other candidate has even been raised during board meetings.”

He stressed that the federation's full focus remains on Qalenoei and the plans he will

lenoei and the program he will put forward to ensure the national team's success at the Asian Cup,” Salari added. “There is no other issue under consideration at this stage.” Addressing suggestions that Iran should prioritize developing younger players over immediate results at the continental tournament, Salari said the federation does not view the two objectives as mutually exclusive.

“We do not believe success at the Asian Cup should be sacrificed for the sake of youth development,” he said. According to Salari, many of Iran's emerging talents have already established themselves among the country's most sought-after players in the do-

oei's fourth major tournament as Iran head coach. His current contract, signed in March 2023, expired last week.

During his first spell in charge, Iran was knocked out by South Korea in the quarterfinals of the 2007 Asian Cup, while his second tenure produced a semifinal finish at the 2024 edition, where Team Melli lost to host Qatar.

He was also at the helm during the recently concluded FIFA World Cup in North America, where Iran drew all three of its Group G matches – 2-2 against New Zealand, goalless against Belgium, and 1-1 with Egypt – to finish third in the standings and miss out on a place in the knockout stage of the expanded 48-team tournament.