

U20 Wrestling World Championships: Iranians to extend GR supremacy, make up for Baku setback

Sports Desk

Iran will chase a fifth successive Greco-Roman team title, and a seventh in nine editions, when the U20 Wrestling World Championships get underway in Bratislava, Slovakia, on August 16.

The Iranian squad, however, will face a daunting task in retaining its dominance, as wrestling powerhouse Russia – the only nation other than Iran to have won the under-20 Greco-Roman team title over the past decade – will be eligible for team points for the first time since the 2021 edition. Russia marked its return to the global stage in style last week by completing a clean sweep of the team trophies at the U17 World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, snapping Iran's four-year title-winning

Amirsam Mohammadi (R), pictured after his final victory at July's U17 Asian Championships, will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman 97kg category at the U20 Wrestling World Championships. ● LAWFIIR

streak in the Greco-Roman competition in the process. Iran will enter the tournament on the back of a commanding Greco-Roman campaign at the U20 Asian Championships in Pattaya, Thailand, last month, where the country claimed the team title thanks to five gold medals, one silver, and three bronzes across 10 weight classes. A U17 world champion in 2024, Armin Shamsipour will compete in the 55kg division fresh off a gold medal-winning run in Pattaya, aiming to follow in the footsteps of his compatriot Payam Ahmadi, who won



gold in the category last year in Samokov, Bulgaria, before going on to claim an impressive silver medal on his senior World Champi-

onships debut. Amirali Heidari will represent Iran in the 60kg event, looking to improve on his bronze medal in Pattaya,

while Ali Gharibi will compete in the 63kg division on the back of an emphatic international debut in the Thai city, where he secured

three successive superiority victories on his way to the title. The 67kg draw will see Il-ya Alikhani feature after

replacing Mohammadreza Gholami, the bronze medalist at the continental championships, in the Iranian squad.

Ahmadreza Mohammadian will compete in the 72kg division, hoping to bounce back from a disappointing campaign at the 2025 World Championships, where he crashed out in the opening round.

Amir Saeidi Nava will represent the country in the 77kg division, while Alireza Mohammad-Hosseini will compete in the 82kg division as the reigning Asian champion. Amirhossein Nematzadeh, the bronze medalist in Pattaya, will take part in the 87kg competition.

A U17 world champion at 92kg last year, Amirsam Mohammadi, who suffered a quarterfinal exit in the 87kg class at the 2025 World Championships, will be among the favorites in the 97kg category after proving to be in a league of his own at the Asian event, outscoring his opponents 28-0 across four bouts.

Amirhossein Abdevali will also look to build on his Asian gold medal when he begins his campaign in the 130kg division.

Iran to bid for hosting revived Asian Futsal Club Ch'ship

Sports Desk

Iran will submit an official bid to host the revived AFC Futsal Club Championship on Kish Island, Ehsan Kamyani, the head of the Iranian Football Federation's Futsal Committee, has confirmed.



● AFC

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced on Thursday that the continental showpiece will resume after an eight-year hiatus, with clubs from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam set to feature in the tournament, which will kick off on December 6, 2027. Kamyani credited Iranian Football Federation president Mehdi Taj, who also serves as chairman of the AFC Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee, for playing a key role in bringing the competition back. "We should first extend our special thanks to Mr. Taj. He made sig-

nificant efforts to ensure the AFC Futsal Club Championship was reinstated," Kamyani told the official website of the national football governing body. He added that all qualified member associations are eligible to apply to host the event and confirmed that

Iran will officially enter the bidding process.

"Our proposal is to stage the tournament on Kish Island," he said. Kamyani also revealed that the federation will seek permission from the AFC to enter two Iranian clubs in the competition instead of one. "According to the federation's regulations, we will follow the approved procedures, but we will consult with Mr. Taj to see if it is possible for Iran to have two representatives – the champions of the previous and the upcoming Persian Gulf Futsal Premier League seasons," he said. The futsal official expressed confi-

dence that the tournament would quickly establish itself as one of Asia's premier club competitions. "The launch of this competition is a very important step. Many participating clubs have high-quality foreign players, and the technical standard will be high. I am confident we will witness exciting matches from the very first edition," Kamyani said.

He added that the competition is expected to expand in both scale and commercial value over time.

"As the tournament continues, both the number of participating teams and its technical and economic value will grow. The interest shown by different countries in hosting the event demonstrates its strong potential for development," he said. Kamyani also stressed that, should Iran win the hosting rights, the federation would ensure the tournament is staged to the highest standard while adjusting the domestic futsal league schedule to give the country's representative(s) sufficient preparation time.

Nagoya Oceans of Japan defeated Iran's Mes Sungun 2-0 in the final when the tournament was last held in Bangkok in 2019, claiming a record-extending fourth title in the competition's 10th edition. Mes remains the most recent of four Iranian clubs – alongside Giti Pasand, Foolad Mahan, and Ta'sisat Daryaei – to have won the title, lifting the trophy in 2018.

FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship: 14-man roster named ahead of final training camp

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Arash Sadeghian has named a 14-man squad for a training camp, which begins today in Tehran, ahead of the upcoming FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship.

The second edition of the global showpiece, featuring 24 teams, will kick off on August 19 in Doha, Qatar, with Iran facing a daunting group-stage campaign against Brazil, Japan, and Bulgaria in Pool E.

The camp will serve as the final stage of preparation for the Iranian team, which secured qualification for the tournament after finishing runner-up at the Asian U16 Championship in July. Pakistan, which rallied from two sets down to stun Iran in a thrilling five-set final in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, last month, will make its debut at the world event, with Japan, India, Chinese Taipei, and host Qatar completing the Asian contingent in Doha.

Iran finished fifth at the inaugural U17 World Cham-



● MOHAMMAD-JAVAD AMINI/volleyball.ir

pionship in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2024 after defeating Belgium 3-2 in its final classification match.

Italy came from two sets down to beat Argentina in the final in the Bulgarian capital, while Chinese Taipei defeated Spain 3-2 to claim the bronze medal.

Setter Aydin Poozesh and outside hitter Azhvan Namazi, who were named to the tournament's Dream Team at the Asian Championship, headline the Iranian roster, which also includes

Sina Hazrati, Akam Ebrahimnejad, Seyyed Amirreza Mirhosseini, Arash Ashrafi, Hamzeh Aghcheli, Amirreza Faramarzi, Monib Sheikh, Mohammadreza Zibaei, Sina Ahmadi, Parsa Maghsoudi, Radan Salehi, and Yasin Asadzadeh.

Mostafa Rezaei will serve as team manager, while Sadeqiani will be assisted by technical advisor Hossein Vaziri and coaches Vahid Sadeqi, Hesameddin Nayiji, Asghar Najafi, Javad Rezaei-Nasr, and Hamid Ahmadi.

Iran likely to feature in four-team tournament in Basra

Sports Desk

Iran is expected to take part in a four-nation international tournament in the Iraqi city of Basra during the November FIFA international window, according to Iraqi media reports. Hosts Iraq and Uzbekistan have reportedly confirmed their participation, while the Iranian Football Fed-

eration (FFIRI) has given its initial approval to join the tournament.

Should Iran's participation be finalized, the event will serve as part of Team Melli's preparations for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, which kicks off on January 7 in Saudi Arabia.

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.

The Basra tournament could also set up another meeting between Iran and Uzbekistan, a fixture that has developed into one of Asian football's most com-

pelling rivalries in recent years.

The future of Iran's bench, however, remains unclear. Head coach Amir Qalenoee's contract, signed in March 2023, expired last week, and the FFIRI has yet to officially confirm an extension ahead of the continental showpiece.

Qalenoee, who guided Iran to the quarterfinals of the

2007 Asian Cup during his first spell in charge and to the semifinals of the 2023 edition, also oversaw Team Melli's campaign at the recently concluded FIFA World Cup in North America. Iran drew with New Zealand (2-2), Belgium (0-0), and Egypt (1-1) to finish third in its group and miss out on a place in the knockout stage.

