

# World champions to headline Iran's wrestling charge at Asian Games

## Sports Desk

Reigning world super-heavyweight champions Amirhossein Zare' and Amin Mirzazadeh will spearhead Iran's freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling squads, respectively, at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

With the wrestling competition at the multi-sport event, which will kick off on Sept. 30, and the following World Championships – starting Oct. 24 in Astana, Kazakhstan – separated by less than a month, the Iranian Wrestling Federation has opted for different lineups at the two major tournaments.

Despite global stars Hassan Yazdani, Kamran Qasempour, Rahman Amouzad, Saeid Esmaeili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi all being left out of the equation, the two rosters will still be rich in

international pedigree for the four-day continental showpiece at Nagoya's Inae Sports Center.

Zare', who will chase a second successive 125kg gold at the Asian Games, is one of three Iranian wrestlers across the two disciplines who will also compete at the World Championships. Joining Zare' in the freestyle squad is three-time world silver medalist Mohammad Nokhodi, who will be among the favorites in the 86kg contest in Nagoya before dropping to 79kg for the Senior Worlds.

Former world U23 bronze medalist Ali Momeni will compete in the 57kg category, while Abbas Ebrahimzadeh will aim for a second continental medal of his career after winning bronze at last year's Asian Championships. Two-time world bronze medalist Younes Ema-



World champion Amirhossein Zare', pictured during a training session in Tehran on Aug. 16, will compete in the freestyle wrestling 125kg event at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

● IAWFIR

titles.

Gholamreza Farrokhi is the third Iranian wrestler set to feature at both the Asian Games and the World Championships.

The 23-year-old will be the wrestler to watch in the 87kg contest in Nagoya before putting his world 82kg title on the line in Astana.

A glorious 2025 season saw Farrokhi post an impressive 17-0 record, including 11 technical-superiority wins, across different tournaments, collecting gold at the Senior and U23 World Championships as well as the Islamic Solidarity Games. His performances earned him United World

mi will also go after back-to-back Asian Games titles in the 74kg category, while Olympic bronze medalist and world silver winner Amirali Azarpira, who fell short against Yazdani in the battle for a Senior Worlds spot, will be the wrestler to

beat in the 97kg event.

### Aiming for solace

Unlike Zare', Mirzazadeh was denied a chance to defend his world title after being stunned by world U23 champion Fardin Heydari in the domestic 130kg trials, and noth-

ing short of a second Asian Games triumph would provide some consolation for the Olympic bronze medalist.

Elsewhere in the Greco-Roman contests, Mohammad-Javad Rezaei will look to improve on his silver-winning run

at June's Asian Championships when he gets his 72kg campaign underway in Nagoya.

Alireza Abdevali will compete in the 77kg event, where the 22-year-old will go after his maiden senior international gold after winning two world U20

Wrestling's recognition as the Greco-Roman Breakout Performer of the Year.

However, Farrokhi will still need a surge in form at the Asian Games after suffering a shock 11-4 loss to Kyrgyzstan's Asan Zhanyshov in the 87kg final at the Asian Championships.

Three-time Asian champion Mahdi Bali completes the Iranian six-man Greco-Roman squad, eyeing glory in the 97kg category in his first international appearance in three years. Yielding a record 155 medals, wrestling has been Iran's most prolific sport in Asian Games history, accounting for 74 of the country's 192 gold medals across all sports and editions. Iran bagged five golds, four silvers and one bronze across 12 freestyle and Greco-Roman categories in Hangzhou 2022.

## FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship: Pakistan rivalry renewed as Iran eyes last-four spot



Iranian middle-blocker Mohammadreza Zibaei (6) hits a spike during a last-16 win against Chinese Taipei at the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship in Doha, Qatar, on Aug. 25, 2026.

● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

## Sports Desk

Iran and Pakistan are set for a fourth encounter in a year – their second in seven days – when they square off in an all-Asian quarterfinal at the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship in Doha today. Iran defeated Chinese Taipei in straight sets (25-18, 25-19, 25-21), while Pakistan pulled off a remarkable fightback to beat Egypt in a five-set thriller (17-25, 21-25, 25-18, 25-15, 15-12) in the round of 16 on Tuesday. Captain and opposite spiker Sina Hazrati topped the scoring for Iran with 20 points, with outside hitter Arash Ashrafi adding 10, as Iran came out on top against the East Asian side – a semifinalist in the previous edition – for a second time in Doha, having also emerged victorious in straight sets in the pool phase. Having beaten Iran twice at

the Asian U16 Championship last year, Pakistan will chase a third win in four outings against its western neighbor, looking to make up for its comprehensive loss in Pool E on Friday. Pakistan came out on top against Iran in four sets in a second-round pool game at the Asian U16 event before rallying from two sets down to stun Arash Sadeqian's boys in the final in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, last summer. Iran, however, avenged the two setbacks in style, with Hazrati and Ashrafi stealing the show with a game-high 16 points apiece to steer their team to a commanding 3-0 (25-23, 25-22, 25-18) triumph at the world showpiece. A global powerhouse in age-group volleyball, Iran will look to improve on its fifth-place finish at the inaugural world U17 event in 2024, where it defeated Belgium 3-2 in its fi-

nal classification match. The winner of today's game will face Argentina or Poland in the semifinals on Friday. In a repeat of the 2024 final in Sofia, Argentina defeated holders Italy 3-1 (25-20, 25-23, 20-25, 25-16) to advance, while Poland rallied from two sets down to edge Turkey 3-2 (22-25, 23-25, 25-20, 25-22, 15-9). Elsewhere in the round of 16, France came from behind to beat Spain 3-2 (23-25, 25-19, 25-16, 23-25, 15-10), setting up a quarterfinal clash against Romania, which overcame Tunisia 3-1 (25-16, 25-11, 23-25, 25-19). The stage is also set for an all-South American battle between Brazil and Venezuela for a place in the semifinals. Brazil made quick work of India, winning 25-17, 25-13 and 25-14, while Venezuela knocked out Bulgaria after delivering a stunning fightback to win 3-2 (28-30, 17-25, 25-19, 25-18, 15-12).

## FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers: Amini back in time for Iran's crunch doubleheader

## Sports Desk

Mohammad Amini is all set for a comeback on the international stage after the young star rejoined Iran just days before Window 4 of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 Asian qualifiers.

Iran will resume its World Cup qualifying campaign against New Zealand in the second-round Group E opener in Pasay, Philippines, on Friday before taking on the Philippines two days later.

The 21-year-old is expected to suit up for the continental powerhouse for the first time since the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup in Saudi Arabia, where Iran gave the country its first medal in the event in eight years by claiming bronze. He was unable to play in Iran's 79-73 victory over New Zealand in the third-place game due to a knee injury sustained in the semifinal against Australia, but there was no denying the impact he had through-

out the tournament.

Amini averaged 14.6 points and 5.8 rebounds, with his best showing coming in the quarterfinals, when he posted a double-double with 30 points and 11 rebounds to lead his side to a 78-75 win over Chinese Taipei in a remarkable comeback.

He was expected to carry over his fine



form into Window 1 of the World Cup qualifiers last November but did not play due to personal reasons. The former youth standout is now back in the fold.

This time, he is bringing even more experience with him. A member of French club SLUC Nancy Basket for four years, Amini played for the Boston Celtics in the 2026 NBA Summer League last July.

His return will make Team Iran even stronger despite the absence of Sina Vahedi, who continues his road to recovery after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury in the club scene last March.

Amini is set to provide another mismatch in the backcourt given his 2.01-meter (6-foot-7) frame, adding more dynamism to a rotation that already features Sarem Jafari, Mobin Shekhi and Piter Girgoorian, among others.

Iran is hoping to sustain its fine form after topping Group D with a 5-1 record in the first round.

## Iran targets 17 athletics golds at Asian Para Games

## Sports Desk

Iran is targeting 17 gold medals in athletics at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games, despite sending a smaller squad than at the previous edition due to the merger of classification classes, according to the

country's chief de mission.

Ali-Asghar Hadizadeh said Iran will send 45 athletes to the multi-sport event, which will open on Oct. 18, including 20 women, with the number of competitors reduced compared with the previous edition fol-

lowing the consolidation of classes.

"Despite this, we are predicting 17 gold medals at this edition," Hadizadeh told ISNA.

He also highlighted the increased representation of women in Iran's athletics delegation, saying the team had sought to

combine medal ambitions with the development of women's athletics.

"Although the National Paralympic Committee's policy for this edition is to focus on quality and achieve the best possible results, we have also prioritized the development of the sport among women alongside winning medals," he said.

Iran bagged 51 athletics medals, including 17 golds, at the previous edition of the Games in Hangzhou, China.