

U23 Wrestling World Championships: Final-day heroics as Iran clinches Greco-Roman three-peat



Iranian wrestlers Erfan Jarkani (left) and Yasin Yazdi celebrate with the national flag after winning gold in their respective Greco-Roman events at the U23 Wrestling World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, on October 14, 2026.



Sports Desk

Iran collected two gold medals through Erfan Jarkani and Yasin Yazdi in the Greco-Roman competition to secure a third successive team title in the discipline at the U23 Wrestling World Championships in Las Vegas, United States. The final-day triumph, coupled with a gold and two bronze medals on the preceding day, saw the Iranian 10-man squad leapfrog its rivals to claim the title with 119 points. Kazakhstan, having led the standings for the best part of the three days of action, settled for the runner-up spot with 114 points, courtesy of two golds, one silver and two bronzes, while Russia – eligible for team points for the first time since 2021 – finished third on 105 points, collecting one gold, one silver and one bronze. A senior Asian silver medalist in April, Jarkani held on to a 1-1 lead on criteria against

Manato Nakamura in the 63kg final before the Japanese wrestler's failed challenge at the end of the bout saw the Iranian edge out a 2-1 victory. Jarkani went on to dedicate his gold medal to the 168 victims, including 120 schoolchildren, killed in a U.S.-Israeli airstrike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School in Minab, southern Iran, on February 28. "To see the Iranian flag raised and hear our national anthem ring out in the heart of the U.S. under such difficult circumstances in my country was an indescribable feeling and a source of immense pride for me and all the team members. I'm happy that we were able to bring joy to the Iranian people," Jarkani said after adding to the bronze medal he won at the competition in 2024. At 87kg, Yazdi, also a silver medalist at the Asian Championships, secured the first gold medal of his international career with a 4-0 victory over Kazakhstan's Temirlan Turda-

kyn in what ultimately proved to be the team title decider. Yazdi was awarded the par terre position in the first period but failed to score. However, he opened the second period with a takedown, avoiding being placed in par terre himself. He was also awarded a second passivity point, extending his lead to 4-0. "I'd been waiting for this gold for about two or three years," Yazdi said. "I was able to win it here, and I hope I can keep winning more gold medals in the future." Yazdi said he had been aware of Turdakyn's shortcomings before the final and had focused more on standing exchanges than on par terre. "Before the final, I knew I could win the bout because I felt my opponent wasn't as well-prepared as I was," he said. "My opponent was tall, and I thought I might have trouble taking him down and controlling him on the mat, which is why I focused most of my ef-

fort on the standing exchanges. "I could tell that my opponent was starting to get tired in the last 30 seconds of the first period, so in the second period I put even more pressure on him," added the Iranian, a world U20 silver medalist in 2023. Wednesday's results followed Abolfazl Mohmedi's triumph in the 82kg class, while Mohammad Kamali and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi claimed bronze medals in their respective divisions. Mohmedi defeated opponents from Georgia, Croatia and Russia – conceding just one point in the process – to set up a final clash with Maritk Petrosyan, before edging out the Armenian 2-1 to take his medal tally at the competition to two, having won bronze last year in Novi Sad, Serbia. In the 67kg class, Kamali enjoyed an emphatic run to the semifinals, claiming three victories by technical superiority, but was no match for Russia's

Erzu Zakriev, suffering a 13-2 defeat. The Iranian bounced back with a 6-0 win over Armenia's Yurik Hoveyan in the bronze-medal bout. Seydi also finished on a winning note, recovering from a 4-1 loss to Ukrainian defending champion Yehor Yakushenko in the 97kg semifinals to defeat Kazakhstan's Nurassyl Amanaly 8-0 in the bronze-medal bout. Elsewhere, Mohammad Ashiri and Ahmadreza Mohsennejad endured disappointing campaigns, suffering early exits from the competition. Ashiri fell to an 8-6 defeat against Olivier Tomasz Skrzypczak in his opening bout in the 60kg class and missed out on a second chance to reach the podium after the Polish wrestler failed to advance to the final. A bronze medalist last year, Mohsennejad, who also won bronze at the Asian Championships, saw his 72kg campaign come to an end after a

single bout, as his 3-1 defeat to Shakhzod Kuchkorov was followed by the Uzbek wrestler's loss in the next round. Meanwhile, reigning world U20 champion Armin Shamsipour suffered a shock 8-1 defeat to Vishvajit Ramchandra More in the 55kg quarterfinals and was denied a shot at bronze after a shoulder injury sustained against the Indian forced him out of the repechage. Ahoura Bouveiri, who was beaten by eventual champion Moustafa Alameldin of Egypt in the second round, also missed out on a medal in the 77kg class after falling to a 10-1 defeat to Azerbaijan's Ruslan Nurullayev in the repechage. The 130kg event, dominated by Iran's Fardin Hedayati in the previous two editions, proved disappointing for the country this time, as Abolfazl Fat'hi – a world U20 bronze medalist last year – was beaten by Hungary's Laszlo Darabos on criteria after a 1-1 bout to crash out in the round of 16.

Preparations for 2027 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia 'progressing according to schedule'

THE NATIONAL – The local organizing committee of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup said preparations for hosting football's flagship continental event in Saudi Arabia are going ahead as per schedule despite recent attacks in the kingdom. The 19th edition of the Asian Cup is set to kick off with a Group A game between the host and Palestine at Riyadh's King Fahd Sports City Stadium on January 7. Saudi Arabia saw a number of events called off or postponed as fighting intensified between the kingdom and Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement.

Multiple attacks on airports in the country forced the Six Kings men's tennis tournament, scheduled for October 21-24, and the FIFA Esports final, set for October 16-25, to be postponed. Three matches in the Saudi Pro League this weekend were rescheduled to later in the season due to "logistical considerations". Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr saw its Asian Champions League Elite match at home against Uzbekistan's PFC Neftchi delayed by an hour on Monday after Saudi Arabia's Civil Defense said it had intercepted a missile fired towards Riyadh.

However, the tournament's local organizing committee said preparations are going ahead according to schedule. "Preparations across all organizational and operational areas are progressing according to the approved schedule, including work on venues, facilities and supporting services," the organizing committee said. "The LOC will continue to monitor developments relevant to the tournament and ensure the appropriate conditions are in place for its successful delivery." Earlier this week, AFC president Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa said the

confederation was in "no hurry" to decide whether the tournament needed to be postponed. "We can wait until the end of November. Things can change very quickly for better or worse in the region and it is question of seeing what happens," Al Khalifa told reporters in Zurich during the FIFA Council meeting. The Korea Football Association (KFA), meanwhile, said it was in communication with the AFC. "We are closely monitoring the situation in Saudi Arabia and plan to continue discussions regarding overall developments," the KFA said in a statement.

