

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iran retains sitting volleyball dominance, wins triple gold in athletics

Sports Desk

Iran's men's sitting volleyball team defeated Kazakhstan in straight sets (25-17, 25-15, 25-17) in Friday's final to win gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, securing the title for the fifth consecutive time since the multi-sport event was first held in 2010. Iranians also enjoyed success elsewhere on the penultimate day of competition, collecting a host of medals, including three golds, in para athletics. There was an all-Iranian one-two in the men's F34 shot put, as world record holder Mehran Nekouei-majd claimed gold with a throw of 11.9 meters on his fourth attempt, while compatriot Mohammad-Taha Beygrezaei settled for silver with 11.61m. Mahdi Olad, who had won silver in the shot put earlier in the Games, posted a season-best 40.65m to claim gold in the men's F11 discus throw. The event was dominated by

Iranians, with Hassan Bajoulvand and Amirhossein Alipour taking silver and bronze, respectively. Elham Salehi spearheaded Iran's medal hunt in women's para athletics on Friday, winning gold in the F54/F53 shot put. Salehi, who had also won gold in the javelin throw on Monday, registered 6.79m to beat compatriot Shahla Hadidi, who finished second with 5.86m. Elsewhere at Paloma Mizuho Stadium, Hanan Kaab Omeir in the women's discus throw and Hormoz Seidi in the men's javelin throw won silver medals in their respective classes, while Farzaneh Sohrabi Tabar in the women's discus throw and Fatemeh Amirzadegani in the women's long jump added two bronze medals to Iran's para athletics haul.

In men's blind football, Hossein Rajabpour and Morteza Karimi scored within three



● ISNA

minutes of each other in the first half as Iran came from behind to beat Thailand 2-1

in the bronze-medal match. Iran also claimed bronze in para archery, with Somayeh

and Gholamreza Rahimi teaming up to beat India's pair 5-4 in the mixed recurve team

bronze-medal match. Abolfazl Zarifpour, meanwhile, took Iran's medal tally in para swimming to 13 by winning bronze in the men's 100m free-style S9 final. Friday's achievements followed another medal-laden day for Iran across several sports, with the delegation collecting five golds on Thursday. Sina Zeighaminejad claimed two swimming titles in the men's events, while Hajar Safarzadeh clocked 56.43 seconds to win gold in the women's 400m T12, breaking the Asian Para Games record in the process. Two-time Paralympic champion Saeid Afrooz also set a world record of 42.58m to claim gold in the men's F33/F34 javelin throw. In para powerlifting, reigning Paralympic champion Ahmad Aminzadeh won the men's +107kg title with a lift of 260kg, finishing 20kg ahead of Iranian silver medalist Mahdi Sayyadi.

Wrestling World Championships: New superheavyweight era in Greco-Roman as Hedayati makes debut

Sports Desk

For two decades, the Greco-Roman 130kg gold medal at the World Championships and Olympic Games has largely been contested by legendary Cuban Mijain López and Turkish great Riza Kayaalp, who have collected 14 titles between them across 24 major events. Iran's Amin Mirzazadeh has been the only wrestler to break their duopoly twice, winning world titles in 2023 and 2025. But a new force is ready to challenge the established order: Mirzazadeh's compatriot Fardin Hedayati. Having collected five

medal last year and returns in search of his second world title. China's Wenhao Jiang will also be a talent to watch after becoming his country's first U23 world champion in Greco-Roman wrestling last week in Las Vegas. Elsewhere, defending champion Mohammad-Hadi Saravi of Iran enters the competition as the man to beat at 97kg. The Paris Olympic champion reclaimed the world title in Zagreb last year, defeating Russia's Artur Sargsian in the final to secure his second world crown. Sargsian, who has now lost twice to Saravi, will be joined by returning bronze medalists Kiryl Maskevich of Belarus

Jafarov, a European champion with world and Olympic medals, will be determined to complete his collection with a senior world title. Cuba's Luis Orta, a former world champion, and Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov, who has moved up from 63kg, will also be in contention. Gholamreza Farokhi will return to the 82kg division after a difficult season at 87kg. Since winning the world title, the Iranian has struggled to replicate that success at senior level, missing out on gold at both the Asian Championships and the Asian Games. A return to his title-winning weight class offers an opportunity to regain his form and defend his crown.

Former world champion Akzhol Makhmudov of Kyrgyzstan will be among his leading rivals, alongside Asian champion Shahin Baddaghi of Qatar and European champion Gurban Gurbanov of Azerbaijan. Iran will also count on Ali Ahmadi Vafa at 60kg, where he will seek to make amends for missing out on a medal last year. At 63kg, Mohammad Keshtkar will aim to improve on his previous bronze medal as the division welcomes a new champion following Khalmakhanov's move to 67kg.

At 77kg, Asian champion Ali Oskou faces a difficult challenge against defending world champion Malkhas Amoyan of Armenia, while Daniah Sohrabi will seek to upgrade the bronze medal he won at 72kg last year. Payam Ahmadi will also be looking to go one better at 55kg after taking silver in a thrilling final against Georgia's Vakhtang Lolua in 2025. The two young wrestlers will again be among the contenders, alongside Azerbaijan's experienced Eldaniz Azizli. With established champions seeking to defend their crowns and emerging talents eager to make their mark, defending team champion Iran will look to strengthen its position among the leading forces in Greco-Roman wrestling.



● UNW

world and Asian age-group titles, the highly touted Iranian heavyweight, who defeated Mirzazadeh in the trials to secure his place on the national team, is ready for his World Championships debut as the global showpiece gets underway in Astana, Kazakhstan, today. With two years remaining before the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, gold in Astana would strengthen Hedayati's credentials as a serious contender for Olympic glory. However, he will face a tough challenge, as Kayaalp returns to the World Championships after a three-year absence, having claimed a record 13th European title in April. Another veteran in the mix is Russia's Sergei Semenov, who missed out on a

and Murad Ahmadiyev of Azerbaijan in challenging the Iranian. At 87kg, Iran's Alireza Mohmadi will return with unfinished business after narrowly missing out on his first senior world title last year. The Iranian Olympic silver medalist led Serbia's Aleksandr Komarov in the final before suffering a 4-3 defeat. Komarov will defend his crown, while Bulgaria's Olympic champion Semen Novikov is another major threat. Saeid Esmaeili, meanwhile, will aim to retain his world title at 67kg. The Iranian prodigy followed his Olympic triumph with world gold last year, defeating Azerbaijan's Hasrat Jafarov in the final. Their rivalry continued at the Islamic Solidarity Games, where Esmaeili again prevailed in the closing seconds.

Golmohammadi named Iran U23 coach

Sports Desk

Yahya Golmohammadi has been appointed head coach of Iran's U23 national team on a three-year contract, the Iranian Football Federation announced on Thursday.

Golmohammadi, 56, left his job at Duhok SC in the Iraqi top flight to take over from Hossein Abdi, who stepped down after his team suffered a group-stage exit at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan last month.

The former Iranian international center-back, who took charge of Duhok in June, led the club to two wins and six draws in 10 outings in the Iraq Stars League.

Golmohammadi enjoyed the most successful spell of his coaching career at Persepolis, guiding the Tehran Reds to three Persian Gulf Pro League titles and a domestic cup trophy, as well as the AFC Champions League final, during his four-year tenure. He parted ways with the capital club midway through the 2023-24 season following a falling-out with the club hierarchy.

He then took over at Foolad Khuzestan ahead of the 2024-25 campaign and led the southern Iranian side to an impressive fourth-place finish. However, a run of poor results saw him leave the club by mutual consent midway through the following season.

In his new role, Golmohammadi will be tasked with ending Iran's 52-year wait for a place in the Olympic football tournament. His team will compete in the next edition of the AFC U23 Asian Cup in Japan in January 2028, where the two finalists will secure qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

pics later that year. Golmohammadi's appointment is only the first step toward a new era for the U23 national team, but the main challenge is to build a cohesive and competitive side from a generation of players expected to carry the burden of Iranian football in the years to come. His experience managing major teams and working under the high-pressure conditions of Iranian football could prove valuable. However, success at the U23 level requires more than technical expertise; it also depends on careful planning, coordination with clubs and consistent access to talented players. Iran's U23 team has repeatedly struggled with preparations and securing the release of players during the club season in recent years. To achieve the ultimate goal, the new head coach must address these obstacles from the outset.



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