

Wrestling World Championships:

Farrokhi defends 82kg title as Iran sweeps four Greco-Roman medals

Sports Desk

Gholamreza Farrokhi spearheaded Iran's four-medal haul by defending his 82kg title on Sunday, as the country made an early statement in its bid for a second successive Greco-Roman team crown at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

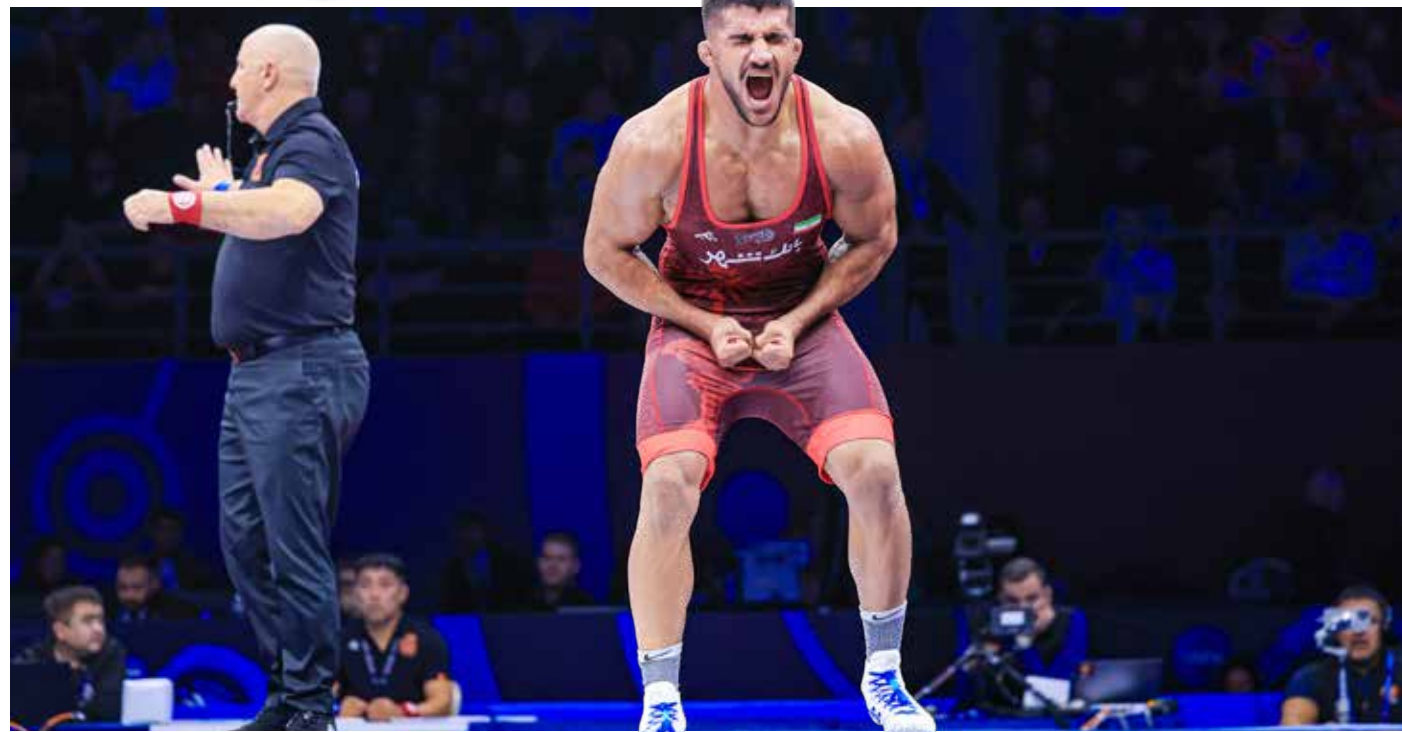
Payam Ahmadi and Ali Ahmadi-Vafa, meanwhile, added two silver medals to Iran's haul, while Ali Oskou won a consolation bronze, lifting the Iranian team to the top of the standings with 80 points – 20 clear of second-placed Azerbaijan – by the end of the second day of competition.

After a series of below-par performances in the 87kg category on the continental stage in recent months, Farrokhi was back to his best on returning to familiar territory, capping his campaign with a 7-1 victory over Turkey's Yuksel Saricicek, who had already pulled off a major upset by defeating Kyrgyzstan's Akzhol Makhmudov – a two-time world champion and Olympic bronze medalist – in the semifinals.

After seeing two compatriots lose their finals earlier in the evening session, Farrokhi stayed patient and kept his composure before scoring the decisive points in the second period to open Iran's gold account in Astana.

With the score tied at 1-1 on criteria after the two wrestlers traded passivity points, Farrokhi was on the verge of being forced out when he suddenly reached underneath his opponent and unleashed a counter body lift for four points with 1:50 remaining, leaving a stunned Saricicek slapping the mat in frustration.

As the clock ticked down and his efforts were repeatedly repelled, Saricicek gave up the fight with several seconds remaining, conceding a two-point penalty that further extended Farrokhi's winning margin.



Iran's Gholamreza Farrokhi celebrates after winning the Greco-Roman 82kg title at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Oct. 25, 2026.

● UWW

Saravi stunned in semis

Earlier in the day, Iran had secured two more places in the finals through Danial Sohrabi and Fardin Hedayati before reigning world and Olympic champion Mohammad-Hadi Saravi suffered a shock 5-1 defeat to Russia's Artur Sargsian in a controversial 97kg semifinal. The result prompted protests from the Iranian camp over the officiating decisions at mat side.

The defeat marked Saravi's first international loss since the 2023 World Championships semifinals, ending a 30-match winning streak for the two-time world champion. He had beaten Sargsian in their previous two meetings, including last year's final.

In the 72kg category, Sohrabi, a bronze medalist last year, hit a four-point suplex after a takedown and turned Kyrgyz opponent Amantur Ismailov for a quick victory. A failed challenge brought the final score to 9-0, setting up a final encounter with Hungary's Krisztian Istvan Vancza.

Hedayati, who has three age-group titles in the superheavyweight category, marked his senior World Championships debut in style by powering his way into the 130kg final.

The young Iranian, who stunned reigning world champion Amin Mirzazadeh in the national team trials to earn his place in Astana, opened his campaign with a fall victory over Lithuania's Romas Fridrikas before claiming three technical superiority wins without conceding a single point. He will face reigning silver medalist Darius Attila Vitek of Hungary in the final.

In a battle between youth and experience in the 55kg category, Ahmadi, a day after his 20th birthday, suffered a defeat in the final against veteran Azerbaijani wrestler Eldaniz Azizli, settling for a second consecutive silver medal at the Senior World Championships.

Beaten by the Iranian prodigy in last year's semifinals, Azizli, 34, made the most of the slightest opening presented by his tough opponent in a cagey affair. Azizli scored a perfectly timed counter from the bottom position in par terre to secure a 3-1 victory and claim his fifth world gold medal before announcing his retirement after the bout.

Azizli failed to score from the top position in par terre in the first period. The Iranian got his chance in the second and, need-

ing to score while trailing on criteria, started with a reverse cross-body hold before moving to a front headlock.

But that was where the young Iranian made a fatal mistake. As he tried to twist Azizli over, the Azerbaijani pulled down on Ahmadi's shoulders, sending both wrestlers temporarily to the mat and scoring a two-point exposure to take a 3-1 lead that he never relinquished.

"When I secured the first passivity call, I told myself right there on the mat that I had effectively won 70 to 80 percent of the match," Azizli said. "My tactic was to ensure, no matter what, that I would be the one to get the first 'active' status and score the first point."

"In the worst-case scenario, I would win 1-1. In the final moments, I knew that even if we wrestled for another whole day, I would never have conceded a point to him on that mat."

Lack of experience also cost Ahmadi-Vafa a chance at his first senior world title, as the 21-year-old surrendered a commanding first-period lead to suffer a fall defeat against world U23 champion Koto Gomi of Japan in the 60kg final.

Gomi capped a run to gold that included victories over Paris Olympic silver medalist Liguao Cao of China and defending champion Aidos Sultangali of Kazakhstan – in front of the latter's home crowd, no less – with the most improbable of wins.

Gomi fell into a 7-1 hole in the first period after Ahmadi-Vafa scored a stepout, a takedown and two two-point throws. The Iranian then maintained the gap by squirming his way out of two well-executed arm-throw attempts by Gomi.

But Gomi noticed that his efforts had taken a toll on Ahmadi-Vafa.

"There were parts of the first period that were a bit rough, but I had trained and the opponent had started to get winded," Gomi said. "Somehow I was able to turn it around."

In the second period, the Japanese wrestler waited for the precise moment to strike, hitting the Iranian with an inner arm throw that sent him directly onto his back before clamping down for the fall in 4:13 to cap his impressive run in Astana.

The final heartbreak prevented Ahmadi-Vafa, a senior Asian bronze medalist this year, from joining the so-called "Grand Slam" club, having already won world gold medals at the U17, U20 and U23 levels.

Oskou, meanwhile, recovered from a 2-0 defeat to Azerbaijan's Sanan Suleymanov in Saturday's semifinal to edge Uzbekistan's Doniyorxon Nakibov in the 77kg bronze-medal bout.

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Iranian weightlifters will look to make their mark on the global stage following a demanding campaign at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games when the IWF World Championships get underway in Ningbo, China, on Monday. Super-heavyweight duo Ali Davoudi and Alireza Yousefi will headline the eight-man men's roster, with both expected to contend in the +110kg category.

Former world champion and Olympic silver medalist Davoudi will enter the competition on the back of a morale-boosting gold medal at the Asian Games last month, while Yousefi will also fancy his chances after making a strong return to action at the Asian Championships in May following an 18-month injury layoff. He set a world record to win clean and jerk gold, adding a snatch bronze and a silver medal in the total. Former world champion Mirmostafa Javadi and Abdollah Beiranvand will compete in the 85kg cate-

Weightlifting World Championships:

Iranians aiming to make their mark on global stage

gory, while Ali A'alipour – also an Asian Games gold medalist – and Hamidreza Zarei will feature in the 95kg division.

In the 110kg category, Alireza Moeini will look to build on his impressive performance at last year's World Championships, where he claimed snatch gold and total silver.

Joining Moeini in the category is Alireza Nasiri. The young Iranian set two world junior records on his way to winning clean and jerk gold and total silver last year but endured a disappointing Asian Games campaign, missing out on the podium.

Javadi and Beiranvand will be Iran's first lifters in action, competing in Group A of the 85kg category with declared entry totals of 375kg. Colombia's Yeison López leads the entry list with 390kg. Javadi will be making his



Iran's Alireza Yousefi will compete in the men's +110kg category at the Weightlifting World Championships.

● IWF

fifth appearance at the World Championships. His previous outing, in Manama, Bahrain, in 2024, ended in disappointment after he failed to register a successful clean and jerk, leaving him without a total.

In the 95kg category, A'alipour will compete in Group A with an entry total of 400kg, the highest among the participants in the di-

vision, while Zarei is scheduled to lift in Group B with a declared total of 380kg. A'alipour finished fourth overall at the World Championships in Norway, recording 176kg in the snatch and 211kg in the clean and jerk for a total of 387kg. He claimed snatch silver and placed fourth in the clean and jerk.

Zarei, meanwhile, won clean

and jerk gold in the 96kg category at the World Junior Championships in Lima, Peru, after lifting 209kg.

In the 110kg division, Nasiri will compete in Group

A with an entry total of 420kg, while Moeini is scheduled to lift in Group B with 397kg. The category features 46 competitors, with Uzbekistan's Akbar Djuraev leading the entry list at 425kg.

Nasiri enjoyed a successful outing at the World Championships in Norway, winning silver medals in both the clean and jerk and the total. His 231kg clean and jerk also set a world junior record.

Moeini also made his mark in Norway, winning snatch gold and total silver in the 94kg category after lifting 182kg in the snatch to establish a world record.

Davoudi and Yousefi will round off Iran's men's campaign in the +110kg division, both carrying declared entry totals of 455kg. Armenia's Varazdat Lalayan tops the entry list at 460kg. Davoudi won snatch bronze at the previous World Championships with a

196kg lift but failed to register a successful clean and jerk. Yousefi, meanwhile, claimed clean and jerk gold with 262kg and total bronze with 456kg at the 2024 World Championships in Manama.

In the women's competition, Reyhaneh Karimi will compete in Group A of the 69kg category with an entry total of 247kg. The young Iranian will look to build on her historic Asian Games campaign, where she won bronze to secure Iran's first-ever women's weightlifting medal at the multi-sport event.

North Korea's Hyang Kuk Song leads the entry list in the category at 270kg. Karimi finished ninth at the World Junior Championships last year.

Nasim Qassemi will make her World Championships debut in the 77kg division, competing in Group C with an entry total of 237kg. The category features 38 competitors, with China's Peng Cuiting and Yang Qixia leading the entry list at 270kg.