

Wrestling World Championships:

Hedayati, Sohrabi strike gold as Iran clinches Greco-Roman crown



Iranian wrestler Fardin Hedayati celebrates after his victory over Hungary's Darius Vitek in the Greco-Roman 130kg final at the UWW World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Oct. 26, 2026.

UWW

Sports Desk

Fardin Hedayati and Danial Sohrabi added two more gold medals to Iran's haul to help the country claim a second successive Greco-Roman team title at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, meanwhile, secured a consolation bronze in the 97kg class, while Saeid Esmaili and Alireza Mohammadi reached the finals in their respective weight classes. Head coach Hassan Rangraz's squad secured nine medals across 10 weight classes to defend its crown with one day to spare in the Greco-Roman competition.

Superheavyweight dominance

Perhaps the toughest test Hedayati faced on his path to the 130kg gold medal in his senior World Championships debut came four months earlier and more than 2,600 kilometers away. That was when he defeated reigning world champion and compatriot Amin Mirzazadeh in a domestic trial to secure his place on Iran's team

for the global showpiece. With Mirzazadeh absent, Hedayati ensured Iran maintained its dominance in the superheavyweight division with a quicksilver 8-0 rout of Hungary's Darius Vitek in the final at Astana's Barys Arena. "To win the most precious medal, the gold, in my very first senior World Championships is incredible, and it brings me such joy to make my fellow countrymen happy,"

Hedayati said. "Seeing my dear compatriots happy means the world to me. It's worth even more than a world or Olympic gold medal." Nothing better illustrated Iran's dominance than the emphatic fashion in which Hedayati swept aside his opponents en route to adding senior world gold to his world U20 title in 2023 and world U23 crowns in 2024 and 2025. Hedayati won four of his five matches by technical superiority, while the other ended in an injury default after just 11 seconds. He did not concede a single point and finished all five bouts in the first period. His total time on the mat was 7:09, barely more than the length of a single match.

In the final, Hedayati kept the pressure on Vitek, rapidly stringing together a series of point-scoring moves. A stepout was followed by a takedown, a two-point tilt and a gut wrench to give him a 7-0 lead before either

wrestler could break a sweat. The stepout that clinched the gold came just 42 seconds into the bout.

To reach the top in Astana, Hedayati first had to overcome two-time world champion and Paris Olympic bronze medalist Mirzazadeh, who defeated Vitek 7-2 to win world gold last year.

"Hedayati is more explosive," Vitek said when asked to compare the two Iranian champions. "I tried to prepare for this, but he was better."

In the team-selection playoff in June in Kerman, Iran, Hedayati got the better of Mirzazadeh with a 5-1 victory in the first bout of what was supposed to be a best-of-three series. Mirzazadeh opted to forgo the remaining matches, symbolically handing the baton to Hedayati.

Whether he can ever reclaim his place remains to be seen. Emboldened by his triumph, Hedayati is determined to put in the hard work required to achieve even greater success.

"Wrestling is a sport where there are no fixed limits or records," He-

dayati said. "My task has become harder today compared to yesterday."

"I didn't have a senior world championships gold medal, but now I've secured one. It's going to require a tremendous amount of effort. From this point forward, I am fully committed to continuing on this path, with the aim of winning multiple world and Olympic medals, all through hard work and dedication."

Relief for Sohrabi

Sohrabi ground out a 4-0 victory over Hungary's Krisztian Vancza in the final to add the world title to his Asian gold from 2025.

Monday's triumph also came as a relief for the Iranian, who had to settle for bronze at last year's edition after a controversial quarterfinal defeat to France's Ibrahim Ghanem. Sohrabi, who suffered multiple bleeding stoppages against the Frenchman, was timed out when the four minutes allotted for medical treatment expired. Ghanem, who was leading 4-2, was then declared the winner.

"Over the past year, the only thing on my mind

was winning the world gold medal," Sohrabi said. "Every single day, I would write down: 'I must win the world gold medal.' I wrote it down every single day."

"Thankfully, through the kind prayers of the people, I was able to win the gold and bring happiness to my dear fellow countrymen."

Sohrabi had the first and only par terre opportunity of the match but was unable to turn Vancza. He did, however, force a stepout to take a 2-0 lead into the break.

In the second period, Sohrabi charged in for a bear hug before maneuvering Vancza onto the mat for a takedown that completed the scoring.

In the 97kg class, defending champion Saravi bounced back from a semifinal defeat to Russia's Artur Sargsian — his first international loss since the 2023 World Championships semifinals, ending a 30-match winning streak for the two-time Olympic medalist — to beat Sweden's Alex Kessidis 3-0 for the fifth world medal of his career.

The decorated Iranian

combined a passivity point in the first period with a go-behind takedown in the second to overcome the veteran Swede and add to his world gold medals from 2021 and 2025 and bronze from 2023.

Earlier in the day, Saeid Esmaili, also a gold medalist at the Paris Olympics, remained on course for a second consecutive world title by reaching the 67kg final.

Esmaili got the better of Hasrat Jafarov in the semifinals, winning 1-1 on criteria to record his third victory over the familiar Azerbaijani rival in as many meetings over the past 12 months. Esmaili was awarded the par terre position in the first period but failed to break through Jafarov's defense, taking a 1-0 lead into the break. Jafarov was awarded the par terre position in the second period but also failed to score.

At 87kg, Mohammadi, a silver medalist last year, dominated Armenia's Gevorg Tadevosyan 10-1 in the semifinals to set up a rematch of the 2024 Paris Olympic final against Ukraine's Semen Novikov, who won that bout.



Iranian wrestler Danial Sohrabi celebrates with the national flag after winning the Greco-Roman 72kg gold medal at the UWW World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Oct. 26, 2026.

UWW

AFC Champions League Elite:

Tractor beaten by Al Ain, remains winless in league stage

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor remained in search of its first victory in the new AFC Champions League Elite season after suffering a 2-1 away defeat to the UAE's Al Ain on Monday.

Moroccan striker Houssine Rahimi scored the winner with 20 minutes remaining to help the home side maintain its perfect record and reach nine points in the league stage. Tractor, meanwhile, languished in 13th place in the 16-team West Zone table with a single point, having lost 1-0 to Shabab Al Ahli in its opener before drawing 0-0 with Al Shamal a fortnight ago.

Al Ain started on the front foot at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, with Rahimi,

Georgios Giakoumakis and Dorde Skoko ensuring that Tractor's second-choice goalkeeper, Parsa Jafari, had a busy night. Jafari was filling in for injured Iranian international Alireza Beiranvand.

The home side broke the deadlock in the 21st minute through an unlikely source. Centre-back Ramy Rabia strode forward and unleashed a swerving left-footed shot from 30 yards that caught Jafari off guard and found the bottom corner.

Jafari was called into action again nine minutes later, coming quickly off his line to deny Rahimi before reacting to the Moroccan forward's low strike from outside the box moments later.

The momentum Al Ain had built in the first half was

nowhere to be seen at the start of the second period as Tractor came roaring back. Fullback Danial Esmailifar rattled the post with a thunderous shot in the 55th minute. The rebound fell to Tibor Halilovic on the edge of the box, and the Croatian midfielder curled a spectacular effort past Eisa to equalize.

A stung Al Ain raised its game again and restored its lead through the prolific Rahimi, who escaped his marker at the back post to steer home Yahya Benkhaleq's pinpoint cross from the right flank in the 70th minute.

The home side had opportunities to extend its lead, with substitute Erik twice finding himself in promising positions. However, Tractor captain Shoja

Khalilzadeh used his experience to snuff out both threats as Al Ain settled for a narrow victory. Despite the defeat, Tractor head coach Javad Nekounam believed his side deserved more from the game.

"We had watched Al Ain's matches and knew their strengths. For around 70 minutes, we played better and forced them to defend. We created several chances, but Al Ain was professional and clever, and took its chances," Nekounam said.

"We lost three key players before this match, while two others are injured. We also face travel difficulties and do not have enough players to compete under these conditions."

Tractor will look to get off the mark when it takes on



Uzbekistan's PFC Neftchi in Muscat, Oman, on November 2.

Nekounam also expressed frustration at having to play home matches at

neutral venues, saying: "If we were playing at home, 80,000 people would come to support us. We can beat any team on our own ground."

Tractor fullback Danial Esmailifar (c) is seen in action against Al Ain in the AFC Champions League Elite at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain, UAE, on Oct. 26, 2026.

AFC