# A'alipour sets sights on dethroning Olympic champion Nasar

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Ali A'alipour has set his sights on dethroning Bulgarian superstar Karlos Nasar, saying he relishes the prospect of challenging the world and Olympic champion as he targets a gold medal at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

The 21-year-old has emerged as one of Iran's brightest prospects in recent years.

A'alipour made his mark on his World Championships debut in 2024, collecting bronze medals in the total and clean & jerk in the 96kg class in Manama, before claiming snatch silver in the newly introduced 94kg division last year in Førde, Norway.

Also a two-time Asian champion, A'alipour enjoyed a memorable campaign at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September, claiming gold in the 95kg class at the expense of 2024 world champion Nurgissa Adiletuly of Kazakhstan, who settled for silver.

The Iranian followed his Asian Games triumph, which ended the country's eight-year wait for a weightlifting gold at the continental showpiece, with another impressive performance at the World Championships in Ningbo, China, earlier this month.

A'alipour posted a 181kg snatch, a 215kg clean & jerk and a 396kg total to collect three bronze medals, taking an important first step in the qualifying process for LA28.

Nasar, however, proved to be in a league of his own in the 95kg division, setting three world records (185kg snatch, 230kg clean & jerk and 415kg total) to sweep all three gold medals.

Adiletuly, meanwhile, settled for three silver medals with a 182kg snatch, a 217kg clean & jerk and a 399kg total.

In an interview with IRNA, A'alipour said he was encouraged by the praise of Iranian weightlifting legend Hossein Rezazadeh, who believes the young lifter has the potential to outperform Nasar, but stressed that he still has room to improve.

"I am grateful to have reached a level where one of the great figures in world weightlifting acknowledges my performance. I don't want to praise myself, but I lifted good weights in Ningbo," he said.

"If I can avoid serious injuries and continue to improve gradually, I believe I can win Olympic gold."

A'alipour admitted that a back injury and insufficient recovery time affected his performance at the World Championships, which came just 25 days after the Asian Games.

He said he had suffered severe back spasms upon returning from Japan, leaving him unable to train for 10 to 15 days and requiring physiotherapy instead.

His coaches even suggested that he withdraw from the world event, but he decided to compete because of its importance as an Olympic qualifying competition.

"I had only a few days of training and even lifted behind the scenes at the competition venue to assess my condition. Thankfully, I managed to come close to the weights I had lifted at the Asian Games," he said.

A'alipour added that fatigue from the Asian Games, combined with his injury, prevented him from producing his best performance in Ningbo.

Weightlifting requires considerable recovery time, he noted, while the tight competition schedule had left him and his teammates short of the time needed to recover properly.

He also pointed to the impact of the demanding schedule on his compatriot Ali Davoudi, who was unable to lift 260kg in the superheavyweight competition.

A'alipour, however, is unfazed by the prospect of competing in eight or nine events over the two-year Olympic qualification cycle, saying the demanding schedule is nothing new to Iranian lifters.

Beyond his Olympic ambitions, the young weightlifter is also motivated by the prospect of making history for his home province of West Azarbaijan.

No weightlifter from the province has won an Olympic medal, while his hometown of Shut has yet to produce another international medal-winning lifter, he said.

A'alipour added that competing against the world's best had always been part of his ambitions, rather than taking the easier route to medals.

"I had always imagined myself competing against powerful opponents from different countries. I never wanted to face weaker rivals and win medals easily," he said.

"Competing against a strong opponent like Karlos Nasar, who is an Olympic champion and holds world records, is much more enjoyable. Beating him would be worth far more."



*Iranian weightlifter Ali A'alipour competes in the men's 95kg category at the IWF World Championships in Ningbo, China, on November 4, 2026.*
*IWF*

## Asian Women's Handball Championship:

# Iran unfazed by tough group, targets World Championship berth, says coach Fakhri

Sports Desk

Iran women's handball team is targeting a fourth successive qualification for the World Championship despite facing strong opposition from Asian heavyweights Japan and China in the group stage at the upcoming Asian Championship, Iranian coach Seyedeh Maryam Fakhri said.

Fakhri made the remarks after Iran completed its ninth and final training camp ahead of the 21st edition of the continental showpiece, which will get underway in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

Iran will kick off its Group A campaign against Hong Kong on the opening day of the competition at Dostyk Universal Sports Complex, before squaring off against 10-time silver medalist China the following day.

A semifinalist in the previous three editions, Iran will then take on Thailand next Wednesday, followed by a daunting test against defending champion Japan on the final day of the group stage.

The top four in each of the two groups will progress to the quarterfinals, with the semifinalists securing direct qualification for the global showpiece, scheduled to be held in Hungary from November 30 to December 19 next year.

Iran's final camp began with 19 players, with the coaching staff focusing on improving the team's readiness and identifying its strengths and weaknesses, Fakhri told ISNA.

Fakhri also highlighted the team's preparations through a friendly tournament in Turkey, saying it was the first time Iran had had the opportunity to take part in an international preparatory competition ahead of an Asian championship.

Iran faced Ukraine and hosts Turkey in the tournament, with Fakhri describing both matches as valuable tests that helped the coaching staff assess the team's strengths and shortcomings. With an average age of 24, the Iranian squad is determined to make the most of its preparations and compete for a place at the World Championship.

"China and Japan are among the contenders in Asian handball, but we have also done our best in preparation, and we hope to put in good performances and establish ourselves among the contenders," Fakhri said.

The coach also expressed appreciation for the support provided by the Iranian Handball Federation, saying it had played an important role in the team's preparations.

Fatemeh Khalili, Elnaz Yarmohammadi, Zahra Afshari, Bahar Izadgashb, Hadiseh Norouzi, Aseman Badvi, Arezoo Kianiara, Fatemeh Merikh, Mehrban Badvi, Shahrzad Nasouhi, Mobina Hassannejad, Negar Zandeboodi, Saeideh Ghazanfari, Hanieh Karimi, Samin Karimi, Leila Hosseini, Elaheh Nikan, Elnaz Ghasemi and Maedeh Oshaghi have been named in the Iranian squad for the upcoming showpiece.

Hanieh Karimi acknowledged changes to the national team squad, saying: "Several players have retired from international handball, while others were ruled out due to injuries, paving the way for younger faces to join the squad."

"Securing a World Championship berth is our main objective, and we are looking to take a bigger step forward. We will fight to achieve this goal and strive to deliver a better performance than in previous editions," added the Iranian.



*IRIHF*



*Khatoon Bam's Sara Didar celebrates one of her two goals during a 4-1 victory over Persepolis in Iran's Women's Premier League in Tehran, Iran, on November 16, 2026.*
*MARZIYEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA*

## Iran's Women's Premier League:

# Khatoon hammers leaders Persepolis

Sports Desk

Eleven-time champion Bam Khatoon strengthened its status as the dominant force in the Iranian Women's Premier League after hammering leaders Persepolis 4-1 in Tehran on Monday.

Eager to bounce back from a group-stage exit at the AFC Women's Champions League in Yangon, Myanmar, earlier this month, Khatoon started on the front foot at Shahid Kazemi Stadium, with Mona Hamoudi giving the visitors the lead from the penalty spot in the 15th minute as they went into halftime 1-0 ahead.

Khatoon picked up where it had left off after the break, with Sara Didar finding the net twice and Zahra Sarbali also getting on the scoresheet as Marziyeh Jafari's side scored three goals in nine minutes to establish a commanding lead just past the hour mark.

Zeinab Abbaspour pulled one back for the Tehran Reds with 10 minutes remaining, but it proved too little, too late as Niloufar Ardalan's team suffered its second defeat of the season.

Despite the setback, Persepolis remained top of the table with 18 points from eight games, while Khatoon climbed to fourth on 14 points with two games in hand.

Persepolis now has Golgohar and archrival Esteghlal breathing down its neck after both teams won their matches to move into second and third place, respectively, on 16 points apiece.

Hajar Dabbaghi and Tania Jahanshahi scored in either half as Esteghlal defeated Malavan FC 2-0 at home.

Having managed just one victory in its previous five outings, Golgohar Sirjan bounced back in style with a 5-0 home thrashing of Ava Tehran.

Afsaneh Chatrehnoor stole the show for Golgohar with a hat-trick and an assist, with all five goals coming in the second half.

Elsewhere, Sepahan returned to winning ways after three games with a 2-0 home victory over Ista Alborz to move up to fifth in the table on 13 points.

Varesh Nowshahr, meanwhile, defeated bottom-placed Palayesh Gas Ilam 1-0 away from home.