Selection criteria to shape Iran's freestyle wrestling lineup for 2027

Sports Desk


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IAWF/IR

Iranian freestyle wrestlers are set to learn about their pathway toward upcoming international and continental tournaments when the new national team selection criteria for the 2027 season are unveiled.

The selection framework, drawn up by the Iranian Wrestling Federation and the national team coaching staff, will outline the pathway for contenders to qualify for the National Championships, scheduled for early January in Ahvaz.

Those who won medals at major international events in 2026, however, are expected to receive exemptions from the domestic competition and begin their bids for national team spots at next year's UWW Ranking Series events, starting with February's Zagreb Open.

The system is designed to assess wrestlers on technical merit and categorize them according to their achievements, with different entry points for established stars and emerging talents.

While some established stars will enter the process at more advanced stages, younger and less experienced wrestlers will have to work their way up from the national championships and prove themselves at international ranking events and continental competitions.

Meritocracy is expected to be the cornerstone of the system, leaving no room for preferential treatment, with all contenders required to follow the designated qualification routes.

In 57kg, no exemptions are expected following disappointing performances by the Iranian representatives at three major events.

Milad Valizadeh was one of four Iranians to miss out on the podium at October's Senior World Championships after his last-16 defeat to American Spencer Lee was followed by a loss via fall to Russia's Abubakar Mutaliev in the repechage.

Ali Yahyapour also bowed out of the U23 World Championships last month in Las Vegas, while Ali Momeni suffered a last-16 defeat to Tajikistan's Aiaal Belolyubskii at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games later that month.

The three setbacks leave little justification for granting any of the contenders an exemption from the national championships.

In 61kg, Ahmad Javan is assured of an exemption from the opening stages after winning the 2026 world title, thanks to an impressive victory over Russian star Zaur Uguev in the final.

Meanwhile, Ebrahim Khari, who claimed bronze at the U23 Worlds, will have to wait for the coaching staff's decision on his entry point.

Amouzad, Khatri strengthen their cases

Rahman Amouzad is set to be exempted from the national championships and the opening selection stage in the 65kg class following his bronze-medal finish at the World Championships.

Ahoura Khatri has also made a strong case for exemption after capturing gold at the U23 World Championships.

In 70kg, Sina Khalili has endured a difficult spell in recent competitions and will have to compete at the national championships. U23 world silver medalist Ebrahim Elahi, meanwhile, is also awaiting the coaching staff's decision.

In 74kg, Asian Games champion Younes Emami and world bronze medalist Amir-Mohammad Yazdani are certain to be exempted from the opening stages.

However, Ali Karampour has added another dimension to the competition after winning bronze at the U23 World Championships, leaving the coaching staff with a difficult decision over the emerging talent.

Nokhodi, Yousefi in strong positions

Mohammad Nokhodi, who won his fourth silver medal at the Senior World Championships, remains a leading contender in the 79kg division, although a possible move up to 86kg could alter the picture.

Even a move to 86kg would not necessarily force him to compete at the national championships, given his gold medal in the 79kg division at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

Mahdi Yousefi has also strengthened his position with an emphatic gold-medal performance in Las Vegas and is unlikely to be required to compete at the national championships.

Two-time world champion Kamran Qassempour, who failed to win a medal at 86kg at the World Championships, may have to begin his campaign at the national championships, in line with previous selection practices for wrestlers without a world medal.

The division could also feature Nokhodi, should he move up from 79kg in a bid to boost his chances of securing a place at the LA 2028 Olympics. Reza Afshar, meanwhile, could emerge as a new contender after winning bronze at the U23 Worlds.

If Qassempour is required to start from the opening stage, the 86kg category could emerge as one of the most fiercely contested divisions at the national championships.

Injury complicates selection in 92kg

Amirhossein Firouzpour, who finished fifth at 92kg at the World Championships, is recovering from an injury that requires surgery and is therefore unlikely to be fit for the national championships.

Abolfazl Rahmani, meanwhile, claimed gold at the U23 World Championships, leaving the coaching staff with a special decision to make regarding the two wrestlers.

In 97kg, Hassan Yazdani and Amirali Azarpira are certain to skip the national championships, with their battle for the national team spot expected to be settled in the final stages of the selection process.

Mohammad Mobin Azimi, who won bronze at the U23 World Championships, is likely to enter the fray at the national championships.

In 125kg, meanwhile, it is hard to imagine a genuine challenge to Amirhossein Zare', who secured four victories by technical superiority without conceding a single point en route to a fourth world title of his illustrious career, adding to his emphatic gold at the Asian Games.

If there is to be any domestic threat to his dominance, however, it will surely come from Abolfazl Mohammadnejad, who triumphed at both the U20 and U23 World Championships, providing further evidence of the country's growing depth in the superheavyweight division.

AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup:

Iran beats Lebanon to sweep group

Sports Desk


DAYERI

Iranian players celebrate a goal during a Group B victory over Lebanon at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Phang Nga, Thailand, on November 23, 2026.
AFC

Iran underlined its title ambitions with a 7-2 victory over Lebanon in its final Group B match at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Phang Nga, Thailand, on Monday.

The win capped a perfect group-stage campaign for the two-time defending champions, who opened their campaign with a 9-2 rout of Afghanistan before hammering Vietnam 10-2 on Saturday.

Lebanon, meanwhile, finished second in the group standings to set up a quarterfinal clash with Bahrain on Wednesday.

Mohammad Al Saleh gave Lebanon a promising start when he tested Iran goalkeeper Seyyed Mohammad Dastan in the opening minute, but the two-time semifinalist would find the going tough thereafter.

Iran opened the scoring in the fifth minute when Movahed Mohammadpour's overhead kick struck teammate Mahdi Shirmohammadi before crossing the goal line.

Reza Dayeri then hit the crossbar before Iran doubled its advantage in the sixth minute through Mohammadpour's free kick.

Lebanon goalkeeper Ali Hallal had to be on his toes late in the first period, making back-to-back saves from overhead attempts by Saeid Piramoun and Sobhan Faleh, but could do nothing to prevent Mohammad Masoumizadeh from extending Iran's lead in the 12th minute.

Lebanon showed more promise in attack in the second period, with Al Saleh firing just over from a free kick before Ahmad El Khatib forced a fingertip save from Seyyed Mahdi Mirjalili.

Their improved attacking play, however, yielded nothing, with Iran adding to its tally in the 18th minute when Mohammadali Mokhtari converted a penalty past Mohamed Choker.

After Choker made several good saves early in the third period, Lebanon conceded again in the 27th minute as Mokhtari turned home Dayeri's overhead attempt.

Lebanon pulled a goal back through Haitham Fattal's 29th-minute penalty, but Mirjalili restored Iran's five-goal advantage with a superb volley a minute later.

Al Saleh pulled another goal back for Lebanon in the 32nd minute, but Iran again responded, with Masoumizadeh finding the net in the 35th minute to seal a third straight victory for Ali Nadri's men, who are chasing a record-extending fifth title in the 12th edition of the continent's premier beach soccer competition.

Iranians conclude gymnastics campaign with five medals

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IRNA

Iranians wrapped up their gymnastics campaign with five medals, including three silver, at the Open SCO Cup in Moscow.

In the junior artistic gymnastics competition, Arshia Pourgholam claimed two silver medals in the parallel bars and horizontal bar events, while Rahin Hossein-Panahi secured bronze in the pommel horse.

Karin Kamangar also took bronze after finishing third in the vault final with a score of 12.533.

In trampoline, Bahareh Mosalaei and Fatemeh Tavassoli teamed up to win silver in the synchronized event with a score of 39.33.

The two Iranians also competed in the women's individual trampoline final, but both narrowly missed out on the podium, with Tavassoli finishing fourth and Mosalaei taking fifth place.

In the men's trampoline competition, Abolfazl Kimasi and Sajjad Kargar finished fourth and fifth, respectively, as Iran brought its campaign to a close with five medals.

Bringing together more than 2,000 athletes from Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states and invited teams, the Open SCO Cup, featuring 11 sporting events, concluded on Monday in the Russian capital.

ITTF World Youth Championships:

Iran U19 boys fall to China in quarterfinals

Sports Desk


ISNA

Iran's U19 boys' team missed out on a semifinal spot in the team event at the ITTF World Youth Championships in Istanbul after suffering a 3-0 defeat to China on Sunday.

Mohammad Habibi fell to a straight-game loss (11-8, 11-2, 15-13) against Wen Ruibo, before Benyamin Faraji was beaten by Li Hechen, who came from behind twice to win 3-2 (9-11, 12-10, 5-11, 11-6, 11-4).

Arshia Lorestani completed Iran's disappointing quarterfinal outing with a 3-0 defeat (11-9, 11-3, 11-6) against Zhou Guanhong.

Having opened their campaign in the last 16, the Iranians had defeated Italy 3-0 to advance to the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, Faraji and compatriot Faraz Shakiba have learned their opponents in the singles events, which get underway on Wednesday.

Ranked No. 11 in the latest ITTF boys' U19 rankings, Faraji will open his campaign against Turkey's Kenan Kahraman, who was part of the Turkish duo that won silver in the U15 doubles event last year.

Shakiba will take on world No. 21 Ukyo Kobayashi of Japan in the U15 boys' round of 32.