

Iran GR team scoops five world military wrestling medals



ALIREZA AKBARI/WF
Iman Mohammadi celebrates with the Iranian flag after claiming the freestyle 63kg gold at the CISM World Military Wrestling Championship in Tehran, Iran, on November 23, 2021.

Sports Desk

The first day of the Greco-Roman competitions at the 35th CISM World Military Wrestling Championship in Tehran saw Iranians collect five medals, including two golds.

On Tuesday, Ali Nourbakhshi made a clean sweep of victories in the 55kg contests – contested by four wrestlers in a round-robin format – for the gold.

Iman Mohammadi bagged a second gold of the day for the country, beating Russian Stepan Marianian 3-2 in the 63kg final.

A second final showdown of the afternoon involving Iranian and Russian wrestlers saw the host's Jamal Esmaili suffer a 5-4 defeat against Shamil Ozhaev and settle for the 82kg silver.

Esmaili's compatriot Mehdi Bali also came short against a Russian opponent as Aleksandr Golovin beat the Iranian by a pin to snatch the 97kg gold.

Meanwhile, Ashkan Sa'adatifar bounced back from a 7-1 semifinal defeat against Armenia's Karen Aslanyan – a three-time European bronze medalist – to outmuscle Hristos Heistoforidis of Greece

11-0 and grab the 72kg joint bronze – alongside Slevia Kristupas of Lithuania, who also won a world bronze in October.

FS runners-up

Earlier in the competitions, a total of 10 medals – including four golds – gave Iran a runner-up finish at the freestyle event.

Russia was crowned the champion with 215 points – five clear of Iran – with Armenia finishing third on 140 points.

Iranians Morteza Qiasi (65kg), Bahman Taymouri (79kg), Mohammad-Hossein Mohammadian (97kg), and Yadollah Mohebbi (125kg) claimed the ultimate prizes of their respective weight classes.

Ahmad Mohammad-nejad Javan (57kg), Mohammad-Baqer Yakhkeshi (61kg), Fariborz Babaei (74kg), and Mohammad-Hossein Mir-Baqban (92kg) added four silvers to Iran's medal count, while Mohammad-Mehdi Yeganeh and Hadi Vafaiepour took the bronze at the 70kg and 86kg contests respectively.

Second half blitz takes Iran to CAFA U-15 title

A stunning six-goal second half ensured Iran won the CAFA U-15 Championship, edging out hosts Tajikistan on goal difference on a dramatic final day of the football event.

Coming into Tuesday's fixtures second on the table, the Iranians powered to an 8-0 win over Kyrgyz Republic, with Tajikistan's 1-0 victory over Uzbekistan later in the day not enough to bridge the goal difference gap, the-afc.com reported.

Held at Dushanbe's Central Republican Stadium, the tournament gave some of Cen-

tral Asia's most promising youngsters crucial international experience ahead of next year's AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Iranians knew a big win would do their title chances no harm, and goals from Esmaili Qolizadeh Samian and Samir Hoboubati had them 2-0 up at half-time against Kyrgyzstan.

But Seyed Vahid Amiri's side went to a different level after the interval, with Qolizadeh making it three in the 50th minute, before Erfan Darvish Aali and Reza Qandipour made it 5-0 at the hour mark.

Another goal from Ali Rahman-nejad and two more from substitute Kasra Taheri rounded an eight-goal scoring spree which consigned Kyrgyz Republic to the bottom of the table, and gave Iran hope ahead of the final match between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Iran's massive win meant Tajikistan needed to pile on five goals of their own in the final match of the tournament, but Masrur Gafurov scored the game's only goal in the 58th minute, as the hosts were unable to bridge the gap in a 1-0 win over Uzbekistan.



Iranian players and coaching staff celebrate lifting the CAFA U15 Championship trophy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on November 23, 2021.

Knicks hold off LeBron-less Lakers fightback in NBA

The New York Knicks held off a second-half resurgence by the Los Angeles Lakers to edge to a 106-100 win in NBA.

Evan Fournier scored 26 points as six Knicks players reached double figures, BBC Sport reported.

The Lakers fought back from a 25-point deficit to level in the third quarter, but Immanuel Quickley scored four three-pointers in the fourth to seal the Knicks' win.

LeBron James was serving the first suspension of his career as the Lakers lost for the fourth time in five games.

Russell Westbrook top-scored for the Lakers with 31 points as he posted his fourth triple-double of the season, with Anthony Davis – playing with a non-COVID illness – adding 20 points.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, the Dallas Mavericks beat the Los Angeles Clippers 112-104 after overtime – forced by two Clippers' three-pointers in the last five seconds of normal time by Reggie Jackson and Paul George.

The Miami Heat staged a late comeback to defeat the Detroit Pistons 100-92, while the Portland Trail Blazers won 119-100 against the Denver Nuggets.



Knicks' Evan Fournier (13) goes up for a basket during an NBA victory over Lakers at Madison Square Garden, New York City, NY, US, on November 23, 2021.

Jardim hails 'dominant' Al Hilal after lifting ACL trophy



AMR NABIL/AP
Head coach Leonardo Jardim (C) lifts the trophy as Al Hilal players and coaching staff celebrate winning the AFC Champions League in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 23, 2021.

Al Hilal SFC head coach Leonardo Jardim hailed his side as deserving champions after defeating Korea Republic's Pohang Steelers 2-0 in the final to win the 2021 AFC Champions League (ACL) on Tuesday.

The Saudi powerhouse made it four titles in the competition and two in the last three years, also pipping their opponents to the title of the most successful club in the AFC Champions League history, having been joint holders of the record with Pohang Steelers, the-afc.com reported.

Goals from Nasser al-Dawsari – just 16 seconds into the game and the fastest goal ever in an ACL final – and Moussa Marega sent Al Hilal on the way to adding the title to the Asian crowns claimed by the club in 1991, 2000 and 2019.

Having joined Al Hilal in the summer, Jardim remains unbeaten across all competition and the 47-year-old capped off a scintillating knockout stage journey by becoming the first Portuguese manager to win the title.

"It's a wonderful moment. This was one of the reasons why I joined Al Hilal," said Jardim.

"Today is my first title with the club. Special thanks

to the players for their attitude and commitment in this match. We fought from start to finish and kept the opponents under pressure throughout the game."

Jardim's continental journey with the club started in the round of 16 where they beat Iranian giants Esteghlal 2-0, then followed through by knocking out the other Tehran powerhouse Persepolis 3-0 and booked their place in the final with a 2-1 win over domestic rivals Al Nassr.

"We fully deserved to be the champions. In the four games we played in this competition since my arrival, we scored nine goals and conceded just one, and that shows how strong and dominant we have been."

With their victory, the new Asian champions are set to join the likes of Chelsea and Egypt's Al Ahly as well as hosts Al Jazira in the 2021 FIFA Club World Cup taking place in the UAE early next year, the second time in the club's history.

"We play every game to win it. We know there will be strong teams in the FIFA Club World Cup, and we will not be favourites, but our objective will be to win as many matches as possible."

New manager, same performance level as Ronaldo again masks United flaws

On paper, a Manchester United victory away from home in Europe, especially one that sends them through to the last 16 of the Champions League, is a thing to be celebrated.

But the manner of the 2-0 win in Villarreal on Tuesday night was all too familiar for United fans, with their team below par for much of the contest, before one particular star player bailed them out once more, Reuters reported.

Before Cristiano Ronaldo struck in the 78th minute to break home hearts, however, United keeper David De Gea was forced to make sev-

eral fine saves to keep Villarreal at bay.

And it was not the first time this season Ronaldo has come to the rescue. United may have reached the last 16 with a group game to spare thanks to their win in the Estadio de la Ceramica, but it has been anything but a smooth ride.

It is the third time this season that the Portuguese forward has scored the decisive goal in the final 15 minutes of a Champions League match.

His stoppage-time winner broke Villarreal hearts in the reverse fixture – a match where

De Gea was again needed to keep the Spanish side out on plentiful occasions – before Ronaldo completed a 3-2 comeback victory over Atalanta with another late winner.

Not done there, Ronaldo then fired the pivotal last gasp equaliser in United's last Champions League match at Atalanta – where a loss would have left them up against it to qualify.

In both games against Atalanta and Villarreal, United were second best for long periods of the match. Other poor performances were punished, with United losing seven of their previous 13 in all competitions before Tuesday's trip to Spain – in form which saw Ole Gunnar Solskjaer sacked as coach.

Michael Carrick has come in to take temporary charge, with his first Champions League match following the same pattern as his predecessor's.

"The game panned out as I thought. When you've had results we've had and gone through what we have, it would be very foolish to think it would be free flowing and everything would be wonderful," Carrick said.

"I had a feeling it would be a tight game. I thought we'd be better after half time but it proved to be a little bit tougher at the start of the second half."

"We had players to change it, and in the end it worked out."

Thanks to Ronaldo – and Jadon Sancho's stoppage-time strike – it did work out for United, but it will take more than the sacking of Solskjaer to lift performance levels at the club.



TWITTER
Cristiano Ronaldo (R) celebrates after scoring Manchester United's first goal during a 2-0 victory over Villarreal in Villarreal, Spain, on November 23, 2021.