

# Greco-Roman Wrestlers Win Asian Championship in Bishkek



TEHRAN – Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers clinched 9 medals and secured the championship title in the 2024 Asian Wrestling Championship, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Naser Alizadeh and Amin Mirzazadeh

and Muhammad Hadi Saravi claimed four gold medals in the event.

Mirzazadeh showed once again how unstoppable he, as he rolled Minseok Kim (KOR) two times for all the points he needed in a 5-0 victory in the 130kg final.

"I really practiced hard for this and tried a lot to be able to create a significant difference with the other competitors and it makes me happy," Mirzazadeh said.

It was the first time in three matches that the Iranian didn't end it with enough gut wrenches from par terre, but it still got the job done.

Mirzazadeh had beaten Kim previously in the first round of the Tokyo Olympics, where he ended up taking a disappointing fifth by losing to the legendary Riza Kayaalp (TUR) in the bronze-medal match.

Mirzazadeh lost to Kayaalp again in the final of the 2022 worlds, but gained his revenge and his first world title in the gold-medal match last September in Belgrade. That makes him a leading candidate to end the hopes of Mijain Lopez (CUB) for an unprecedented fifth Olympic gold in Paris.

"I think it was a really great start for further preparation for the Olympics," Mir-

zazadeh said. "From tomorrow, when the competition ends, I have to start training and trying to make my people happy with the title in the Olympics."

At 87kg, Alizadeh maintained his dominance of Nursultan Tursynov (KAZ), beating him at the Asian Championships for the fourth year in a row and in a second consecutive final.

Alizadeh was never really challenged and clinched a 5-0 victory with a 2-point throw from par terre at the edge in the second period.

Alizadeh had beaten Tursynov in the first round in both 2021 and 2022 before defeating him 8-0 in last year's final in Astana. The 33-year-old Tursynov does have an Asian gold medal, won back in 2014.

In 97kg, Muhammad Hadi Saravi won Kazakhstan's wrestler 9-0 to seal his gold medal at the event.

## Iran's Beach Volleyballers Finish Runners-Up in Thailand



TEHRAN – The Iranian beach volleyball national team were given a drubbing on Tuesday in the men's final match of the AVC Beach Tour 23rd Samila Open to stand second in the event.

Iran's Abbas Pour-Asgari and Alireza Aghajani defeated India, the Maldives, Qatar, Indonesia, Japan, and the hosts Thailand in the earlier matches to power their way to the final match.

In the final match, they faced the Australian duo, Pitak Tip-

jan, Poravid Taovato, but were defeated 21-17 and 21-18 in the action-packed match.

The Thai city of Songkhla hosted the competitions from April 13 to 16.

Earlier this month, Iran won the gold medal of the AVC Beach Tour Nuvali Open in the Philippines.

The Iranian players grabbed the second spot at the 2024 China International Snow Volleyball Invitational Tournament in March.

## Paris 2024 Olympic Flame Lit in Greece

PARIS (AFP) - The sacred flame for the Paris 2024 Olympics was lit Tuesday in ancient Olympia, birthplace of the ancient Games, setting off an epic three-month torch relay to the July 26 opening ceremony.

The torch relay will culminate with the lighting of the Olympic flame in the French capital at the Games' opening ceremony. Paris will host the summer Olympics for a third time after 1900 and 1924.

"In these difficult times we are living through, with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news they are facing day in and day out," International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach said in his speech.

"We are longing for something which brings us together, something that is unifying, something that gives us hope. The Olympic flame that we are lighting today is the symbol of this hope."



President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach delivers a speech during the Olympic torch lighting ceremony for the Paris 2024 Olympics Games at the Ancient Olympia archaeological site, birthplace of the ancient Olympics in southern Greece, on April 16, 2024.

The flame will be officially handed over to Paris Games organizers in Athens's Panathenaic stadium, site of the first modern Games in 1896, on April 26 after an 11-day relay across Greece.

It will then depart the next day for France on board a three-mast-

ship, the "Belem", and will arrive on May 8 in Marseille, with up to 150,000 people expected to attend the ceremony in the southern city's Old Port.

Marseille, founded by the Greek settlers of Phocaea around 600 BCE, will host the Olympic

sailing competitions.

The French torch relay will last 68 days and will end in Paris with the lighting of the Olympic flame during the opening ceremony on July 26.

Officials on Tuesday stressed that the Paris Games will set new milestones, following the legacy of the other two prior Olympics held in the French capital.

For the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic imposed toned-down events for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Games, the flame-lighting ceremony was back with full regalia and scores of spectators.

The torch harks back to the ancient Olympics when a sacred flame burned throughout the Games. The tradition was revived in 1936 for the Berlin Games.

During the 11-day relay on Greek soil, some 600 torchbearers will carry the flame over a distance of 5,000 kilometres (3,100 miles) through 41 municipalities.

## Perfect Palmer Hits Four as Chelsea Thrash Woeful Everton 6-0



Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk heads the ball ahead of Everton's Ashley Young during the English Premier League soccer match.

LONDON (Reuters) - Chelsea midfielder Cole Palmer scored four goals, including a hat-trick in the first 30 minutes, as his side hammered Everton 6-0 on Monday to maintain their push for a European spot and leave the visitors still hovering above the relegation zone.

The 21-year-old Palmer underlined his England credentials with a classic left foot, header, right foot treble and then added a second-half penalty as Chelsea ran riot.

Nicolas Jackson and substitute Alfie Gilchrist were also on target as Chelsea remain ninth on 47 points but with games in hand on all the teams above them.

It was a sobering night for Sean Dyche's visitors, however, as the heavy defeat leaves Everton 16th on 27 points, two places and two points above the relegation zone.

Everton actually had the first good chance but Beto blasted over from point-blank range after 10 minutes and it was downhill from then on.

Palmer got things moving after 13 minutes when he nutmegged Jarrod Branthwaite, played a one-two with Jackson and instantly clipped in a shot from the edge of the box.

Five minutes later more intricate passing – albeit alongside tentative Everton defending – set up the second as Jordan Pickford parried a Jackson shot straight to Palmer, who nodded the ball into the empty net.

Pickford also handed Palmer his third goal as the midfielder intercepted a poor clearance 30 meters out and, with his weaker right foot,

chipped brilliantly over the retreating keeper after 29 minutes.

Jackson made it 4-0 just before the break and Palmer's fourth came from the penalty spot in the 64th minute but only after captain Conor Gallagher had to intervene to shove away Jackson and Noni Madueke as they squabbled for the ball after the latter was brought down in the box.

The calmly-taken penalty took Palmer alongside Manchester City's Erling Haaland at the top of the league scoring charts with 20 and his tally in all competitions to 23 as he became the first Chelsea player to reach 20 since Eden Hazard in 2018/19.

Pochettino was furious about the penalty taking incident that preceded it, though, apologizing for the "bad image" it sent around the world. "I made it clear that I won't accept this again - I promise that," he said.

Young substitute Gilchrist smashed home the sixth goal in the final minute to leave the Chelsea fans dreaming of Europe, and while it might not be a return to the Champions League they won in 2021, it would still represent progress after they looked marooned in mid-table two months ago.

Everton, in contrast, remain in dire danger of a first relegation since 1951 and face a massive home showdown with fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest on Sunday having seen their goal difference, as well as their confidence, take a hammering.

## Lemma Wins Men's Boston Marathon, Obiri Retains Women's Title



The 128th Boston Marathon - Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. - April 15, 2024 Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma poses with the trophy after winning the men's elite race.

BOSTON (Reuters) - Ethiopian Sisay Lemma won the 2024 Bos-

ton Marathon after a solo surge early in the race gave him the plat-

form to finish first in two hours, six minutes and 17 seconds.

His compatriot Mohamed Esa took second place, 41 seconds behind Lemma while defending champion Evans Chebet of Kenya was third, one minute and five seconds off the winner.

"I decided I wanted to start fast early," Lemma told ESPN.

The 33-year-old set a blistering pace until fatigue set in towards the end but neither Esa nor Chebet could catch him, although Esa made a late surge to secure second spot.

At one point during the race, the 2023 Valencia Marathon champion and fourth-fastest male marathoner in history appeared to be on course

to break the Boston Marathon record until he slowed down as the weather became warmer.

In the women's race, Kenya's Hellen Obiri clinched her second consecutive victory in Boston, crossing the finish line in two hours, 22 minutes, and 37 seconds, narrowly edging out compatriot Sharon Lokedi by eight seconds.

"I knew that Sharon was very strong so I tried my best at the end," Obiri said. "I tried to push, but she was still close behind me. To win here makes me so very happy."

Edna Kiplagat came third, 44 seconds behind Obiri, to complete Kenya's dominance of the difficult Boston course.

## Nadal Confirms Comeback at Barcelona Open, to Face Cobolli

MADRID (Reuters) - Rafa Nadal has confirmed he will play this week's Barcelona Open in what will be the Spaniard's first tournament since January.

The 37-year-old Nadal, whose last ATP Tour match was in Brisbane in January, withdrew from last week's Monte Carlo Masters, saying his body was not ready for competition.

Former world number one

Nadal has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season but is desperate to play at the French Open where he has won a record 14 titles.

Nadal's appearance in Brisbane was his first match in almost a year in which he was sidelined by a hip flexor injury.

He has won the Barcelona title on 12 occasions but has not played in the claycourt event since 2021.

