

## Esfandiari Wins Gold

## Iran's Youth Weightlifting Team Finish Runners-Up in Asia



Members of Iran's national youth weightlifting team pose for a photograph at the 2023 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in New Delhi, India, on August 5, 2023.

NEW DELHI – Iran's youth weightlifting team became the vice-champion of Asia at the 2023 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in

India. Young Iranian boys finished runner-up in the Asian Weightlifting Championship after winning 3 gold, 11 silver, and 7

bronze medals and gaining 708 team points.

Uzbekistan stood in the first place with 729 points and India won the third title with 599

points.

Earlier, Iran's youth women weightlifters stood in fourth place after receiving 2 gold, 4 silver, and 3 bronze medals and gaining 531 team points.

Uzbekistan, India, and Vietnam ranked first, second, and third respectively.

The weightlifting competitions of the 2023 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships were held in New Delhi, India, from July 28 to August 5.

Alireza Esfandiari of Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2023 Asian Junior Weightlifting on Saturday.

He lifted 177kg in the snatch and 207kg in the clean and jerk to win the gold medal for a total of 384kg in the +109kg weight category.

The silver medal went to South Korean weightlifter Ji-yong Nam with (156-213-369) and Uzbekistan's Kurbonmorod Momozov seized the bronze with (160-200-360).

## Buffon Takes Up Italy National Team Role

ROME (AFP) – Gianluigi Buffon has taken a role with the Italian national football team, the goalkeeping great announced on Saturday three days after hanging up his gloves.

The 45-year-old will assist head coach Roberto Mancini as Italy's delegation chief, a post formerly occupied by the late Gianluca Vialli.

"The blue jersey is part of my life," said Buffon, who won the World Cup with Italy in 2006.

"I will put myself at the disposal of Roberto Mancini and the group, and I shall tread lightly," he promised.

"With Italy it is not the prize

that counts but the investment, the sacrifices and the availability."

The Italian federation described the event as a "great day for Italy" because "Gigi is coming home".

Buffon will be in his new job in time for Italy's Euro 2024 qualifiers in September against North Macedonia and Ukraine.

He holds the record for most Serie A matches contested (657) and is the most capped player in Italy's history with 176 (1997-2018).

That encompassed five World Cups which included the high of 2006 when Italy beat France in a penalty shootout.



Gianluigi Buffon has returned to the Italian national team as delegation chief.

## Fritz Downs Murray on Way to Washington Semis, Evans Topples Tiafoe



U.S. top seed Taylor Fritz defeated Britain's Andy Murray to reach the quarter-finals of the ATP Washington Open.

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Top-seeded Taylor Fritz battled past three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 6-4 then returned to breeze past Jordan Thompson and reach the semi-finals of the rain-hit Washington Open.

Fritz was not the only player pulling double duty at the combined ATP and WTA hardcourt tennis tournament, after rain brought play to a premature end on Thursday.

Britain's Daniel Evans defeated Alexander Shevchenko 6-4, 6-3 then came back to upset second-seeded hometown hero Frances Tiafoe 6-4, 7-5.

Tiafoe had made short work of

his third-round opponent, dispatching Chinese teenager Shang Juncheng 6-2, 6-3.

But ninth-seeded Evans gained an early break in each set and turned back the American's bid to rally in the second, breaking Tiafoe for a 6-5 lead and saving a break point as he served out the match in the next game.

Evans next faces Bulgarian fifth-seed Grigor Dimitrov, who got some unexpected rest when France's Ugo Humbert withdrew from their quarter-final with a leg injury.

Fritz next faces Tallon Griekspoor, who finished off a rain-disrupted three-set victory over

France's Gael Monfils before beating American J.J. Wolf 7-5, 6-4 in the quarter-finals.

Fritz, ranked ninth in the world, looked anything but fatigued as he raced past Thompson 6-3, 6-3 in one hour and 17 minutes.

Thompson had earlier beaten Wimbledon quarter-finalist Christopher Eubanks 6-2, 6-2, while Fritz had needed three hours to subdue the 44th-ranked Murray.

Murray, showing his formidable range of skills at age 36, won his first break chance of the match with a forehand cross-court drop volley winner on the line, breaking Fritz and pulling level at 5-5 on the way to a first set tie-break.

Murray smashed a forehand winner for a 3-1 lead, took a quick break to replace a shattered shoe, then took two points off Fritz's serve as he pocketed the set.

Fritz battled back to take the second and they fought to 4-4 in the third before Murray swatted a backhand wide to surrender a break.

Down 0-40 in the 10th game, Fritz saved three break points. Murray denied him on two match points before Fritz blasted a forehand winner on his third chance.

"I think that the match with Andy earlier was insanely high level," Fritz said. "I thought he played really well. I thought he served re-

ally well.

"It was a war," he added. "With how these balls are, they're so slow, dead, it's really tough to finish points. You're going to inevitably have these really long, physical rallies.

"I did a great job to win that. And then I did a really good job to come back and play how I played in that last match.

"I feel like my body probably couldn't have handled another battle like I had with Andy," Fritz added.

In women's action, top seed Jessica Pegula rallied past Wimbledon semi-finalist Elina Svitolina 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 to book a semi-final showdown with Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari.

Sakkari had to win twice on Friday, beating Canadian Leylah Fernandez 7-5, 6-2 before dispatching seventh-seeded American Madison Keys 6-3, 6-3 in the quarter-finals.

Third-seeded American Coco Gauff cruised past sixth-seeded Swiss Belinda Bencic 6-1, 6-2 to line up a semi-final against defending champion Liudmila Samsonova, a 6-4, 6-2 winner over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Gauff, in contrast, was never troubled by reigning Olympic champion Bencic, converting six of her nine break chances.

## Tottenham Hotspur 'Seriously Interested' in Signing Man Utd Target Taremi



Tottenham Hotspur are seriously interested in signing Manchester United target Mehdi Taremi (R).

LONDON (Dispatches) – Tottenham Hotspur is seriously interested in signing Manchester United target Mehdi Taremi, according to Record.

The Iran international has been a key player for Porto over the past three seasons. He was in tremendous form last term with 31 goals and 14 assists from 51 appearances.

He is now prepared to take the next step in his career, and Record claims that the 31-year-old has always reserved the dream of playing in the Premier League.

United boss Erik ten Hag is a keen admirer of the striker, but it is reported that Spurs is currently in pole position to land his signature from Porto this summer.

The north London club is 'seriously interested' in signing Taremi, and is targeting a deal worth €24 million for him. Porto is holding out for around €30m.

Meanwhile, Manchester United sealed their swoop for Denmark striker Rasmus Hojlund from Atalanta for a reported fee of £64 million (\$82 million) on Saturday.

Hojlund agreed a five-year contract with the option of a further season as Erik ten Hag finally got his wish to bring in a striker ahead of the new Premier League campaign.

The 20-year-old could cost United a further £8 million if add-on clauses in his contract are met.

"It is no secret that I have been a fan of this great club since I was a small boy and I dreamed of walking out at Old Trafford as a Manchester United player," Hojlund said.

"I am incredibly excited by

this opportunity to turn that dream into a reality and I am determined to repay the faith that the club has shown in me.

"It is still early in my career, but I know that I am ready to make this step up and play with this group of world-class players."

Ten Hag made Hojlund his top target after United reportedly refused to pay Tottenham's asking price for England striker Harry Kane, who appears bound for German champions Bayern Munich.

French champions Paris Saint Germain were said to be in the hunt for Hojlund's signature before United won the race.

Ten Hag was keen to boost his striking options after a season in which his side often lacked a cutting edge.

United finished third in the Premier League but scored just 58 goals -- 36 fewer than champions Manchester City.

Although Hojlund has a low profile compared to many of his new team-mates, Ten Hag is confident he can thrive under the Old Trafford spotlight.

United football director John Murtough said: "Rasmus is a truly exceptional talent. He possesses technical and physical attributes which rank him amongst the best players in the world for his age group.

"Working under Erik and his coaches will provide Rasmus with the perfect development platform."

Hojlund has enjoyed a sudden rise since starting his career in relative obscurity with Danish club FC Copenhagen in 2020.

## Iran Women's Basketball Team Fall Short Against South Korea

TEHRAN – Iran's women's basketball team lost to South Korea 87-44 at the 2023 William Jones Cup International Tournament opener on Saturday.

Iran will also face the Philippines, Chinese Taipei-A, Japan and Chinese Taipei-B in the following days.

Marking its 42nd edition, the Jones Cup is an official basketball competition recognized by the International Basketball Federation.

Slated for August 12-20, the men's division features the local teams, as well as counterparts from Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, the UAE, Qatar, the US and Iran.