

Historic Gold for Iran as Moradi Wins First Women's Taekwondo Title at Asian Games



Iran's Saghar Moradi competes in women's under-67kg taekwondo event at 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya on October 2, 2026.

TEHARN - Saghar Moradi made history by winning Iran's first women's taekwondo gold medal in Asian Games history, claiming the under-67kg title at the Aichi-Nagoya Games.

Moradi, 19, defeated Uzbekistan's Ozoda Sobirjonova in the final to secure the landmark victory. Moradi received a bye in the opening round before facing Kyrgyzstan's Tamiris Sulaimanova. The Iranian won in two straight rounds to advance to the semifinals and guarantee herself at least a bronze medal.

She then faced Chinese Taipei's Wang Wei-Chia in the semifinals. Moradi dominated the opening round 14-3.

The second round was closer. Moradi came from behind to win 7-5 and book her place in the final.

Her last opponent was Sobirjonova, a familiar name in the -67kg division. The Uzbek is the 2025 WT Presidents Cup Asian regional champion and has also won the

Asian Championships title in the weight class.

The final began with a closely fought first round. The score was tied 8-8, but Moradi took the round on the countback for scoring more successful attacks.

She then pulled away in the second round, winning 16-11 to claim the gold medal.

The victory marked a historic breakthrough for Iranian women's taekwondo at the Asian Games. Moradi's gold was also Iran's 15th gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya Games.

Moradi entered the Asian Games in strong form. In August, she won the women's under-67kg title at the World Taekwondo Women's Open Championships in Taiyuan, China, winning six consecutive bouts without dropping a round.

In the men's -58kg division, Abolfazl Zandi was eliminated in the round of 16 against Kazakhstan's Temirlan. Zandi, who had defeated his Tajik opponent in

the opening stage, lost in straight rounds (11-2, 16-11). The Iranian fighter appeared to struggle with a hand injury midway through the second round while trailing 13-8.

In the men's -80kg category, Amir Sina Bakhtiari bowed out in his opening contest, losing 2-0 (5-4, 2-0) to China's Xiang.

In the women's -49kg division, Sayna Karimi exited the competition following an injury against host-nation fighter Okamoto of Japan in the round of 16. After defeating Hong Kong's Lam Siu in her preliminary match, Karimi took the first round against Okamoto 17-6 before dropping the second 10-3. While leading 3-1 in the decisive third round, Karimi suffered a severe leg injury during an exchange of strikes. Despite attempting to fight through the pain, she was forced to concede the bout while trailing 15-6.

Friday's events also featured the debut of Virtual Taekwondo at the Asian Games, an esport dis-

cipline where athletes wear VR headsets and motion-tracking sensors on their head, hands, and feet to compete in non-contact bouts. Bakhtiari represented Iran in the event, defeating Uzbekistan's Jasurbek 2-0 in the opening round before being eliminated following a straight-round loss to a Singaporean competitor.

Iran now ranks sixth in the medals table of the Games as the delegation has earned 15 gold, 17 silver, and 13 bronze medals so far.

The Aichi-Nagoya Games are taking place from September 19 to October 4 at venues across Japan, bringing together around 17,000 athletes and officials from 45 countries and regions to compete in 43 sports.

Iran's delegation, named the "Minab Angels" in tribute to those massacred in the US-Israeli attack on Shajarah Tayybe Elementary School in Minab on February 28, is represented by 305 athletes competing in 38 sports.

Zare, Nokhodi Strike Gold in Asian Games Freestyle Wrestling



TEHARN - Iran won two gold medals in men's freestyle wrestling at the 2026 Asian Games, with Amir Hussein Zare triumphing at 125kg and Muhammad Nokhodi defeating Japan's Hayato Ishiguro to claim the 86kg title.

Nokhodi, a world silver medalist, completed his run to the title with a 9-6 victory over Ishiguro on Friday, the 2025 world silver medalist at 86kg.

The Iranian had reached the final with three wins. He opened with an 11-0 technical-superiority victory over Palestine's Rayyan Aburiala, followed by an 11-1 win over South Korea's Lee Gyeongyeon. He then beat Kyrgyzstan's Malik Shavaev 3-0 in the semifinals.

For Nokhodi, the victory marked a significant achievement after moving up from 79kg to compete at 86kg.

Speaking after receiving the gold, Nokhodi thanked those who had supported him and the Iranian public for their prayers.

Nokhodi said his previous experience competing at 86kg had helped him adjust to the category in Nagoya. He had wrestled at the weight class at a ranking event in Mongolia two or three months earlier, giving him some familiarity with its demands, although he noted that training and competition were different.

Looking ahead to the World Championships in about a month, Nokhodi said he hoped Iran's wrestlers could once again give their supporters reason to celebrate.

Zare also produced a dominant campaign at 125kg. The world champion and defending Asian Games champion opened with a 10-0 win over Japan's Taiki Yamamoto.

He followed it with an 11-0 tech-

nical-superiority victory over Turkmenistan's Zyyamhammet Saparov and a 3-3 criteria win against Kazakhstan's Yedige Kassimbek in the semifinals.

Zare then defeated China's Buheerdun 12-2 in the final to retain his Asian Games crown.

Zare is a three-time world champion, a Paris 2024 Olympic silver medalist and a Tokyo 2020 Olympic bronze medalist. He also won the Asian Games 125kg title in 2023.

Two-time Asian Games gold medalist Amirhussein Zare said he was pleased to retain his title after overcoming a high-level field in Nagoya.

"Thank God, I was able to win the Asian Games gold medal for the second time," Zare said. He added that the competition had its own particular challenges, given both its importance and the team's main objective of preparing strongly for the upcoming World Championships.

Zare said all teams had brought their leading wrestlers to the Asian Games, making it clear that no opponent could be underestimated.

"Perhaps many people had already set aside the gold medal for me, but the competition showed that you have to work hard to become champion," he said, crediting the Iranian coaching staff, federation officials and the support of the Iranian people for his victory.

Zare also said he intended to dedicate the gold medal to the museum of the shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Shia Imam.

"I consider Imam Reza the true owner of these medals, and I believe that whatever I have achieved has been through his grace and blessing," he said

Greco-Roman Wrestler Abdevali Beats Olympic Champion to Gold

Tehran - Iran secured another wrestling gold medal at the 2026 Asian Games on Thursday as Alireza Abdevali defeated Japan's Olympic champion Nao Kusaka 5-3 in the men's Greco-Roman 77kg final, while teammate Mehdi Bali added a bronze in the 97kg category.

Abdevali edged Kusaka in a closely fought final at the Nagoya City Inae Sports Center on Thursday, adding another

gold to Iran's wrestling haul at the Games.

Kusaka entered the final as the reigning Olympic champion. He won the 77kg title at the Paris 2024 Olympics and had also faced Iran's Abdevali at the 2025 World Championships.

Abdevali took control early and led 2-0 after the opening period. Kusaka responded in the second, but the Iranian maintained his advantage to secure

the 5-3 victory.

The result gave Abdevali the biggest senior title of his career and denied Kusaka a second major title in the weight class.

The Japanese wrestler had reached the final after a dramatic 11-9 victory over Kazakhstan's Demeu Zhadravey in the quarterfinals. Zhadravey was the silver medalist behind Kusaka at the Paris Olympics.

Abdevali had advanced to the

final after defeating Qatar's Shahin Badaghimofrad 9-0 in the semifinal. Badaghimofrad, an Asian champion at 82kg, had moved down to 77kg for the Games.

Iran had already celebrated gold in wrestling on Wednesday. Amin Mirzazadeh successfully defended his Asian Games title in the 130kg class, beating Uzbekistan's Rafael Tsitsuashvili 3-1 in the final.

Speed Climber Alipour Secures Silver at Nagoya Asian Games



TEHRAN - Iranian speed climber Reza Alipour clinched the silver medal in the men's speed event at the 2026 Nagoya Asian Games on Thursday, completing a medal hat-trick across three consecutive editions of the Games.

Competing on the 12th day of the competition, Alipour registered a time of 5.36 seconds in the final to finish as the runner-up.

The victory marks Alipour's third consecutive Asian Games medal, following back-to-back gold medal

triumphs in the previous two tournaments.

China's Chushu Hong captured the gold medal after stopping the clock at 4.71 seconds.

Earlier in the four-man semifinal round, two climbers were disqualified for false starts, allowing Alipour to advance directly to the final. Another false start occurred in the final race, leaving three contenders to battle for the podium, where Alipour sealed the silver finish.

Volleyballers Sweep Pakistan to Reach Asian Games Final

TEHRAN - Iran's national men's volleyball team advanced to the final of the 2026 Nagoya Asian Games after cruising past Pakistan in straight sets in the semifinals on Friday.

The Iranian squad delivered a dominant performance, sealing a comprehensive 3-0 victory with set scores of 25-13, 25-15, and 25-11.

Head coach Roberto Piazza started the encounter with a lineup comprising Amin Esmaeilnezhad, Arshia Behnezhad, Issa Naseri, Morteza



Sharifi, Muhammad Valizadeh, and Ali Haghparast.

Iran reached the semifinals after topping the preliminary group stage with three consecutive victories against Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, and Indonesia, followed by a quarterfinal triumph over South Korea.

Piazza's men are scheduled to compete for the gold medal on Saturday at 13:50 local time against the winner of the semifinal clash between China and Japan.