

## Iranian wrestlers shine in Bishkek

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TEHRAN - Two of Iran's biggest Greco-Roman stars got their preparations for the World Championships underway with gold medals.

Mohammadhadi Saravi and Amin Mirzazadeh won the 97kg and 130kg weight classes respectively at the Kaba Uulu Kozhomkul & Raatbek Sanatbaev Ranking Series event in Bishkek on Thursday.

Saravi, who has not competed since winning a bronze medal at the World Championships in September 2022, returned to the mat and powered himself to the top of the podium in a 25-2 rout of his opponents.

While he controlled all his bouts, the most significant win for Saravi was over compatriot Mehdi Bali in the semifinals. This also makes him the front-runner to represent Iran at the World Championships in Belgrade in September.

Bali was hoping to earn a place on the national team but his 7-1 loss to Saravi all but closes the doors for him.

In the final, Saravi was up against Yiming LI (CHN) and walked to a 3-1 win to clinch the gold. He got the turn from pat terre while Li failed to do the same which proved to be the difference

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between the two, UWW. org reported.

Mirzazadeh, a world silver medalist, claimed two confidence-boosting wins, first over Osman Yildirim (TUR) who defeated him a year ago in Almaty and second over 2019 world silver medalist and Pan-American champion Oscar PINO (CUB) at 130kg.

After winning the Asian Championships last month, Mirzazadeh came into Bishkek with the same form and faced Yilidrim 4-1. Yildirim had beaten Mirzazadeh in Almaty in 2022 at the Bolat Turlykhanov Cup.

In a bout worthy of being a World Championships final, Pino began as the favorite in the final but as Mirzazadeh build pressure, he tired up and Mirzazadeh gained the upper hand. The two exchanged passivity but Mirzazadeh got an extra stepout to win the medal which has pushed him to the top of the rankings as well, replacing world and European champion Riza Kayaalp (TUR).

I feel happy to win this gold," Mirzazadeh said. I worked really hard for this competition. I will do the same to win the gold medal in Belgrade.

On winning against Pino, Mirzazadeh said that it is always difficult to win at 130kg.

In my weight class, most are good wrestlers," he said. But I train very hard for the Olympics. My weight has good wrestlers from Turkey and Cuba but I am training really hard for the gold medal and I am the best.

Another young Iranian who shone in Bishkek was Daniel Sohrabi, who won the 67kg. The U20 and U23 world champion wrestled Abror Atabaev (UZB) in his first bout and came out on top 7-5. If he thought his next bout be an easier one, Joni Khetsuriani (GEO) did not let that happen. Despite a barn-burner, it was Shorabi who won 6-5.

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In the semifinal, Shorabi defeated Sultan Assetuly (KAZ) 10-2 and booked a place in the final against Husiyuetu (CHN) who blanked Olympic champion Luis Orta (CUB) 9-0, his second win over the Cuban in four months. But Husiyuetu failed to hold up against Shorabi who won the gold medal after a dominating 8-2 win.

Uzbekistan emerged as the second-best team with two gold medals while Georgia and Kazakhstan won one gold each.