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Iran lowest ever in medals table UGLY!

IranTimes:It was the worst Olympic performance ever for Iran; in the medal standings, the team ranked 51st, lower than it has ever ranked before. Four years ago, Iran had a medal haul of two golds, two silvers and two bronzes. This year, it was hardly a haul—just one gold and one bronze. The gold came in taekwondo, thanks to Hadi Saei, who won a gold four years ago and had been favored to repeat. The bronze went to Seyed Morad Mohammadi in the 60- kilo division of freestyle wrestling. Wrestling is Iran's true national sport. Yet, the freestyle team could only collect a measly 17 points and ended tied with Japan for 10th place. In Greco-Roman wrestling, the team was tied for 20th place. With 12 wrestlers— freestyle and Greco-Roman combined—only three could finish high enough to warrant any notice. The outcome was one third-place finish, two in fifth place, three in 10th place, three in 11th, and then 15th, 16th and 19th



place. In weightlifting, Hossain Rezazadeh retired just days before the Olympics. His records still stand. He was replaced at the last minute by Rashid Sharifi, who did respectably with a sixth place finish, the best of Iran's three weightlifters. In other sports, Iran has never done very well—and this year was no exception. In table tennis and badminton, it was one appearance, a loss, and out. Iran's woman rower came in last. Its male archer finished 60th of 64 in the competition. Ehsan Haddadi, who was third in the world in discus going into the Olympics, faded and ended up in 17th place at the Olympics. He managed only 61.34 meters, nowhere near the 69.31 meters he achieved earlier this year. Gerd Kanter of Estonia won the gold with a throw of only 68.82 meters. Did the pollution drag everyone down? The best note in the "other sports" was probably from Sajjad Moradi who ran in the 800-meter race. For the first time, an Iranian runner made it beyond the initial qualifying race. In the semifinals, with the top eight runners advancing, Moradi came in ninth. He finished 61st in the 2004 Olympics, so this year was certainly a banner appearance for him. For the first time, Iran had an entry in the decathlon, Hadi Sepehrzad, who was not on the original list of athletes published by the Iranian Olympic Committee. Sepehrzad finished 22nd overall. But in the 10- event competition, he came in third in the discus and fourth in the shot put. There have been calls for Iranian team officials to be fired because Iran's performance was so bad. Iran's ranking in the medals at each Olympics is shown in the accompanying table at the bottom of this page. The 51st place finish was the worst ever, even below the 44th place finish in 1992. The best Iran has ever done was way back in 1956, when Iran ranked 14th. At the daily Jam-e Jam, Hojjatollah Akbar-Abadi was seething, especially at the wrestling outcome. "The ones responsible should be punished," he said. Kian Rad, writing in the daily Mardom Salari, didn't join in the call for a hanging, but he lambasted officials for "sloganeering." He said Iran should shift focus from quantity to quality, emphasizing top performances rather than just trying to qualify more people in more events.

SUMMARY

The following is a summary of how all of the

Iranian Olympians performed this month at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Freestyle wrestling

Iran tied for 10th place with Japan in team scores with 17 points. Russia was tops with 59 points, followed by Ukraine with 32 and Uzbekistan with 31.

- 55 kg—Abbas Dabaghi—10th of 19 wrestlers new to the team
- 60 kg—Seyed Morad Mohammadi—BRONZE medalist gold medal in 2006 World Championships; 14th in 2007
- 66 kg—Mehdi Taqvi—10th of 21 wrestlers new to the team
- 74 kg—Meysam Mostafa Jokar—19th of 21 wrestlers new to the team
- 84 kg— Reza Yazdani—11th of 20 wrestlers bronze in 2006 & 2007
- 96 kg—Saeed Ebrahimi—10th of 19 wrestlers silver in 2007
- 120 kg—Fardin Masumi—5th of 20 wrestlers bronze in 2006; 13th in 2007

Greco-Roman wrestling

Iran tied for 20th place in team scores with Sweden and the Czech Republic. Iran had six points. Russia topped the tally with 49 points, followed by France with 30 and China with 26.

- 55 kg—Hamid Sourian—5th of 19 wrestlers gold medalist last three years in World Championships
- 60 kg— no entry
- 66 kg—Ali Mohammadi—11th of 20 wrestlers 29th in 2006; 12th in 2007
- 74 kg—no entry
- 84 kg—Hassan Tahmasebi—11th of 20 wrestlers, bronze in 2006 & 2007
- 96 kg—Qasem Rezai—16th of 20 wrestlers, bronze in 2007
- 120 kg—Masud Hashemzadeh—15th of 20 wrestlers, only Iranian wrestler this year who was in 2004 Olympics, but was disqualified in bronze round; placed 7th in 2006 and 22nd in 2007

Taekwondo

80 kg—Hadi Saei—GOLD medallist; won four straight matches, gold medal in 2004 Olympics as well

- 58 kg—Reza Naderian—lost first match and out
- 49 kg—Sara Khoshjamaal Fekri—Lost second match and out. First Iranian female judoka in Olympics

Judo

Only the top eight are ranked in each weight

- 60 kg—Masud Haji-Akhundzadeh—unranked; 2-2 in matches,lost bronze round in 2004 Olympics
- 66 kg—Arash Mir Esmaili—unranked; 2-2 in matches, went to 2004 Olympics; did not make weight
- 73 kg—Ali Malumat—5th place; 3-2 in matches
- 81 kg—Hamed Malek Mohammadi—unranked; 1-1 in matches
- 90 kg—Hossain Qomi—unranked; 0-1 in matches
- 100 kg—no entry
- 100+ kg—Mohammad-Reza Rudaki—5th place; 4-2 in matches

Weightlifting

- 94 kg—Asghar Ebrahimi—7th of 18 16th in 2004 Olympics
- 105 kg—Mohsen Beyranvand—11th of 20 unranked in 2004 Olympics
- 105 kg—Rashid Sharifi—6th of 14 replaced Hossain Rezazadeh

Boxing

- 69kg—Morteza Sepahvand—3 matches and out
- 81kg—Mehdi Qorbani—1 match and out
- 91kg—Ali Mazaheri—1 match and out

Archery

- Hojatollah Vaezi—60th of 64 men
- Najmeh Abtin—62nd of 64 women

Athletics (formerly Track & Field)

- Hadi Sepehrzad—decathlon—22nd; 39 started, 26 finished
- Ehsan Haddadi—discus—17th of 37 men Third in world going into Olympics
- Abbas Samimi—discus—26th of 37 men 29th of 39 in 2004 Olympics

42 Iranians killed in Kyrgyz crash



IranTimes:A plane from a Kyrgyzstan airline flying to Tehran crashed shortly after takeoff from the capital of Kyrgyzstan, killing 42 Iranians and 23 others on board. The cause of the crash is yet unknown. The pilot reported a sudden decompression about 10 minutes after takeoff and said he was returning to the airport. He turned around and began to return, but the aircraft crash landed. Some reports put the crash site 12 kilometers short of the runway while others said it was very close to the airport. Decompression—the loss of air pressure inside the plane—would not cause a crash. Passengers said the aircraft erupted in flames upon crashing and those who survived the crash blindly tried to find their way through the smoke to safety. Ali Kazemi, 39, a businessman from Tehran, said from his hospital bed that scorching heat built up inside after the crash landing. "At one moment, we could not breathe at all because our lungs were burning. Then I saw another Iranian escape by the plane's rear door. I ran and fell to the ground." In the end, the passenger cabin and cockpit were completely incinerated. In the morning, only the tail survived, sitting above the ashes. The plane carried 90 passengers and crew. A total of 25 survived, including all six crew members. It isn't known how many of the 65 dead were killed in the crash landing and how many died from the flames. The survivors included 10- Iranians and 15 Kyrgyz nationals, including the six crew members. But all the crew members had Russian names. The survivors included seven of 17 mem-

bers of a Kyrgyz high school basketball team. The dead included 42 Iranians, 16 Kyrgyz, three Kazakhs, one Chinese, one Turk and two Canadians. The two Canadians both had Iranian names: Mohammad Reyhani- Mamaqani and Babak Mohammadi. No other information on the Iranian-Canadians was available as of press time. The aircraft was a Boeing 737-200. Transport Minister Nurlan Sulaimanov said it was built in 1979 and had been inspected and cleared two months ago. The airplane was being flown by Itek Air, a private Kyrgyzstan company. It is not allowed to fly in Europe because it has not met EU safety standards. There was confusion with some reports saying the plane was owned by Iran's Aseman Airlines and was leased to Itek, while others said the plane was owned by Itek and chartered by Aseman. Prime Minister Igor Chudinov said one of the survivors was "a representative of the airline." That man had a Persian name, Darab Ehsan Zarrabi, and an Iranian passport. But the prime minister didn't say what airline he represented. He was listed on the manifest among the crew members. The Manas Airport, from which the plane took off, also houses a U.S. air base that supports supply lines to Afghanistan. That prompted some speculation of terrorism. But Kyrgyz officials discounted that, and decompression is not a normal sign of terrorism. U.S. airmen rushed to the scene of the crash and helped in the rescue effort. The crash in Kyrgyzstan came four days after a fatal crash in Madrid that killed 154 people.

Just a solitary gold this year

IranTimes:This year, the only gold found at the Olympics by an Iranian was in taekwondo, where Hadi Saei pulled down his second Olympic gold. Now, the Tehran municipality has decreed that a square near his home will be renamed Meidan-e Saei in his honor. Saei won the gold medal at 68 kilos in the 2004 Olympics. For Beijing, Saei was four years older and a tad beefier; he moved up to the 80-kilo division. But it didn't look like it was to be a golden day for Saei when he started his gold medal match against Italy's Mauro Sarmiento. At the end of the first round, Sarmiento was ahead 4-2 and Saei was looking rocky. But Saei came back with a flash. He scored two unanswered points in the second round and another pair in the third round to beat Sarmiento 6-4 and clasp the gold medal. Saei told Iranian reporters, "My gold medal belongs to the Iranian people, especially to my late father and two brothers. I am so happy because I made millions of Iranians happy." Saei has scored the most of any Iranian at the Olympics, with two golds as well as a bronze from 2000.



Weightlifter Hossain Rezazadeh is second with two golds in 2000 and 2004. The late wrestler Gholam-Reza Takhti bagged one gold and two silvers over his Olympic career.

- Amin Nikfar—shotput—started, but no mark
- Sajjad Moradi—800 meters—14th in first round of 61 runners. 24 advanced to semis. 9th in semifinals; 8 advanced to finals. He was 61st of 72 in the 2004 Olympics.
- Ehsan Mohajer Shojai—800 meters—50th of 61 runners
- Rowing
- Homa Hossaini—26th of 26 women in single sculls
- Mohsen Shadi—25th of 31 men in single sculls
- Cycling
- Hossain Askari—35th of 39 men in time trial —52nd in road race; 152 started, 90 finished
- Qader Mizbani—79th in road race

- Mehdi Sohrabi—did not finish road race
- Table tennis
- Afshin Nowruzi—one match and out; lost 4 sets to 2
- Badminton
- Kaveh Mehrabi—one match and out
- Lives in Denmark
- Swimming—100-meter breast stroke
- Mohammad Alirezai—did not show up
- Was drawn in heat with an Israeli swimmer
- Basketball
- 11th of 12 teams
- This was the sole team sport in which Iran participated.