



Sports in Iran

Varzesh-e Bastani ("Ancient Sport")

- Ancient Persian sport that originated in the Persian Empire
- Emphasizes physical conditioning as well as moral and ethical values
- Practiced in a building called a zurkhaneh: "house of strength"



Varzesh-e bastani is an ancient Persian sport; its name translates to "ancient sport." Originating in the Persian Empire, varzesh-e bastani might look to Westerners like a combination of wrestling, lifting, aerobics, and meditation. It emphasizes inner strength through outer strength, combining physical strength training with an emphasis on moral and ethical values. The ideal athlete embodies characteristics such as kindness and humility while also being able to physically defend his community against external threats. Varzesh-e bastani is traditionally practiced in a building called a zurkhaneh, which means "house of strength." There, traditional rituals and music accompany the strength training sessions, creating both a spiritual and physical practice.

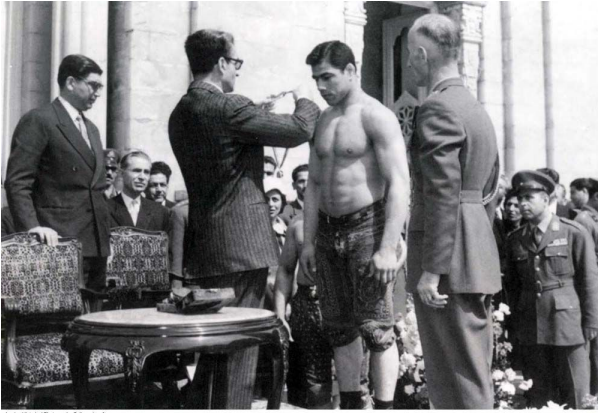
Koshti Pahlevani ("Heroic Wrestling")

- Particular form of wrestling that comes from varzesh-e-bastani
- Has been practiced since ancient times
- A martial art and combat sport
- Traditionally used to train warriors in Iran
- The Pahlevan of Iran: the national championship held annually



Iranian wrestling, or koshti pahlevani, translates to "heroic wrestling" and has been practiced since ancient times in Iran. It is a martial art and combat sport traditionally used to train warriors. Its modern form began in 1944. Techniques include throws, locks, trips, and pins, with a focus on maintaining balance and leverage. It also emphasizes ideas of honor and chivalry. The Pahlevan of Iran is the national championship of koshti pahlevani wrestling held each year in Iran. The champion earns the title of Pahlevan, earning the right to wear the Bazouband (a championship armband).

Gholamreza Takhti (b. 1930–d. 1968)



- Freestyle wrestler and varzesh-e-bastani practitioner
- Gold medalist at 1956 Summer Olympics, 1958 Asian Games, and 1959 and 1961 World Championships
- Popular for his connection with common Iranians and his kindness to poor people in particular

"The highest and best trophy that I have received is not a gold or silver medal. A human's heart is worth thousands of gold medals, and I know that thousands of my compatriots have devoted a small part of their kind hearts to me."

One of the most famous wrestlers in Iranian history is Gholamreza Takhti, a freestyle wrestler and varzesh-e-bastani practitioner. He was a gold medalist at the 1956 Summer Olympics, 1958 Asian games, and 1959 and 1961 World Championships. He was known for his sportsmanship and chivalry and generosity to his fellow Iranians. On September 1, 1962, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake hit a large village west of Tehran, leaving more than 12,200 people dead and thousands homeless. When the government asked its citizens to help, their response was weak, but when Takhti called on his fellow Iranians to provide assistance, people responded in droves. Takhti led a long line of trucks carrying aid for the people affected by the earthquake. Actions such as this endeared him to the hearts of Iranians who commemorate his death every year.

Continuing the Legacy

- Iranian wrestling team has become international champions and gold medalists
- Since 2000, second only to Russia in gold, silver, and bronze medals at the World Championships and Olympic Games
 - 47 Olympic medals to date
- Hassan Yazdani
 - Olympic and World Champion freestyle wrestler
 - Nicknames: The Greatest, Bulldozer, The Lion King



Today, Iranians continue to dominate and have impressive records in wrestling, weightlifting, and taekwondo. To date, Iran has forty-seven Olympic medals on record in freestyle wrestling. Since 2000, Iran has won a total of seventy-seven gold, silver, and bronze medals at the World Championships and Olympic Games, placing them behind Russia (122) and ahead of the United States (73). Currently, Hassan Yazdani dominates the world stage. He is an Olympic and World Champion freestyle wrestler who is carrying on the legacy of Iranian wrestling.

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