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ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW 2026



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01 FREESTYLE

61 KG

Ahmad Masoud Mohammadnezhadjavan (IRI)
defeats Kum Chol Ri (PRK)



SOON AFTER RAZAMBEK JAMALOV (UZB) BECAME THE OLYMPIC CHAMPION IN 2024, HE WENT MISSING FROM THE WRESTLING WORLD. PAST INJURIES AND TWO SURGERIES KEPT HIM OUT OF ACTION FOR CLOSE TO TWO YEARS, SKIPPING THE ENTIRE 2025 AND EARLY 2026 SEASON.

But the Paris Olympic champion at 74kg is returning to action at the Asian Championships in Bishkek, from April 6 to 12 at 79kg, leading a young Uzbekistan team.

"I missed wrestling," JAMALOV said.

"It was tough watching others win medals while I couldn't. It made me feel more motivated to win."





Mahdi Yousefi

JAMALOV will have a chance to win his first medal at the Asian Championships, which will be his debut continental championships in Asia.

At 79kg, **JAMALOV** should not face much trouble but will be checked as he has wrestled only five matches against Asian wrestlers in his career.

The foremost will be Iran's defending Asian champion **Mahdi YOUSEFI** (IRI), who also won U20 world gold last year. Another challenge will be the weight class itself as **JAMALOV** will be wrestling at his highest weight in his career.

"I have wrestled Asian wrestlers before and I know their style," he said.

"I will try to wrestle according to my style and make it challenging for them."



Razambek Jamalov

Daichi Takatani

WEIGHT TO WATCH





Ernazar Akmatiev

The 70kg weight class will be one of the toughest in Bishkek with three world medalists entered along with two returning medalists.

Defending champion and world bronze medalist **Ernazar AKMATALIEV** (KGZ) will lead the challenge against a field that also has world silver medalist **Tulga TUMUR OCHIR** (MGL) and former world and Asian champion **Taishi NARIKUNI** (JPN).

Returning to the Asian Championships in four years, **NARIKUNI** will also be wrestling 72kg Greco-Roman in a bid to win double titles. In 2022, won Freestyle 70kg gold after beating **AKMATALIEV** in a memorable final.

AKMATALIEV will look to avenge that loss in front of his home fans and also keep the gold medal with himself. He defeated **VIKTOR RASSADIN** (TJK) last year but the Tajikistan wrestler is returning with the hopes of upgrading his silver to gold.





Viktor Rassadin

U23 world silver medalist and returning bronze medalist **Sina KHALILI** (IRI) will also be looking for some revenge especially against **RASSADIN** who defeated the Iranian in the opening round last year.



97KG BATTLE

Can Olympic champion **Akhmed TAZHUDINOV** (BRN) return to golden ways or will **Arash YOSHIDA** (JPN) defend his title? Will **Amirali AZARPIRA** (IRI) come back and sail through the field?

All the questions will be answered in Bishkek as the 97kg battle heats up. World silver medalist **AZARPIRA** and world bronze medalists **YOSHIDA** and **TAZHUDINOV** are among the favorites to win gold.

YOSHIDA is the defending champion but did not wrestle **TAZHUDINOV**, who pulled out late from the tournament last year.





Amirali Azarpira

Akhmed Tazhudinov

TAZHUDINOV has been off-color for a few tournaments now, losing at the World Championships and later at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

AZARPIRA was the one who handed **TAZHUDINOV** the defeat in the semifinals of the World Championships in a very tactical bout. He will be in the race to win gold in Bishkek but a match against **YOSHIDA** will be a fan-delight.

Former U20 world champion at 92kg, **Sherzod POYONOV** (UZB) will also be in the mix but may find the going tough as he is still adjusting to the new weight class.



**ZARE
LEADS
IRAN**





Amir Hossein Zare

Iran is bringing a young team to Bishkek but has world champion **Amir Hossein ZARE** (IRI) lead the pack.

He will be the favorite to win the 125kg gold medal despite the presence of **Shamil SHARIPOV** (BRN), who is perhaps the second-best heavyweight around the world in action.

U20 world and Asian champion **Yedige KASSIMBEK** (KAZ) will be making his senior debut at 125kg and will look to at least finish on the podium.

At 86kg, **Kamran GHASEMPOUR** (IRI) will look to put a disappointing end to last year and start with a gold medal at the Asian Championships, a feat that should not be a hard one to achieve.



Yedige Kassimbek



Mobin Azimi

Mobin AZIMI (IRI) may face a tougher battle at 92kg with the likes of **Magomed SHARIPOV** (BRN), **Takashi ISHIGURO** (JPN) and **Azamat DAULETBEKOV** (KAZ) entered in the field.

However, **AZIMI** appears to be little ahead in the race to win gold.



AOYAGI
AIMS 74KG
GLORY

In the premier weight 74kg, world champion at 70kg **Yoshinosuke AOYAGI** (JPN) will look to add an Asian title to his name. He finished with a bronze medal at 70kg last year.

He will face the likes of **Magomedrasul ASLUEV** (BRN), **Amirmohammad YAZDANI** (IRI) and **Orozobek TOK-TOMAMBETOV** (KGZ), among others in the field.



Yoshinosuke Aoyagi



Milad Valizadeh

The 57kg weight remains an open one with returning silver medalist **Milad VALIZADEH** (IRI) hoping to upgrade his medal. He will be the favorite to be crowned champion.

The field also has Zagreb Open bronze medalist **Fuga SASAKI** (JPN), **ANKUSH** (IND) and **Meray BAZARBAYEV** (KAZ).

Returning bronze medalist **Munkh Erdene BATKHUYAG** (MGL) and former U23 world silver medalist **Abdymalik KARACHOV** (KGZ) are also in the mix to win medals.



**OLYMPIC
BRONZE
MEDALISTS
COLLIDE
AT 61KG**





Gulomjon Abdullaev

Aman

Paris Olympic bronze medalists **Gulomjon ABDULLAEV** (UZB) and **AMAN** (IND) are likely to clash at 61kg.

ABDULLAEV, who also won world bronze, has struggled with conditioning in recent times and a bout against **AMAN** will test him. **AMAN**, who won the 61kg gold medal in Zagreb and a former Asian champion at 57kg, will also need to find a way to win a second Asian title.

World silver medalist **Ahmad JAVAN** (IRI) will challenge them both in the bracket along with former U23 world champion **Toshihiro HASEGAWA** (JPN), who last wrestled when he won gold at the 19th Asian Games in 2023.





Bekzat Almaz Uulu

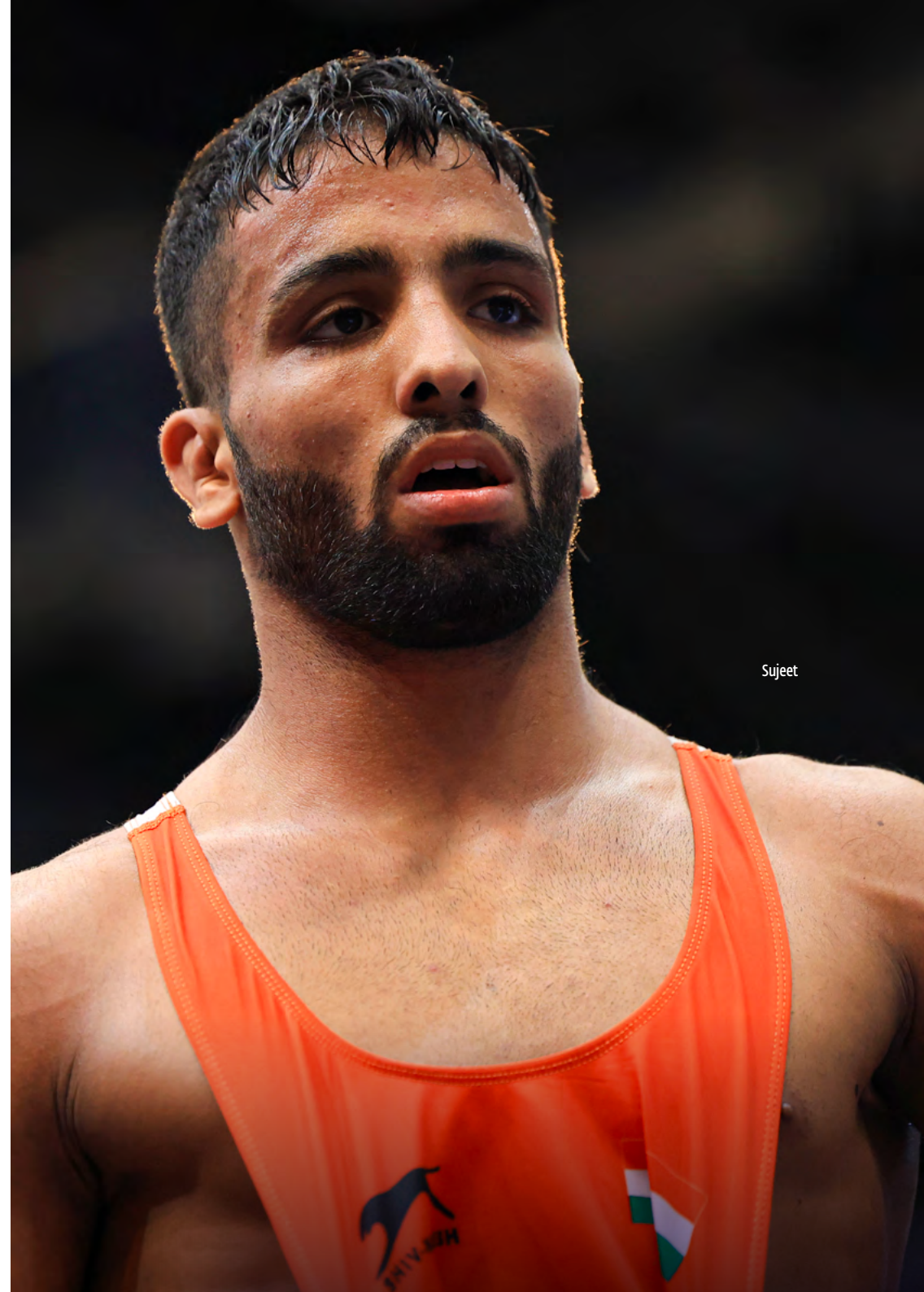
Bekzat ALMAZ UULU (KGZ), world silver medalist at 57kg, will be at 61kg and wrestling in front of home fans which makes him one of the favorites to win gold.



**WILL
SUJEET
BREAK-
THROUGH?**

India's last Asian champion, in a weight class not 57kg, was crowned in 2019 when **Bajrang PUNIA** (IND) won the 65kg gold in a comeback for ages in Xi'an, China.

Now, **SUJEET** (IND) will like to end that drought and also look to give India an Asian title in three years.



Sujeet



Umidjon JALALOV

Sujeet

The two gold medals to start the season, in Zagreb and Tirana, put **SUJEET** in the top position to win gold at 65kg. He will have a familiar foe in **Umidjon JALALOV** (UZB) in the weight class.

When a match between **SUJEET** and **JALALOV** has taken place, the Indian has won all four times and the Uzbekistan wrestler will be keen on getting one back to the Indian.

Last year's 61kg Asian champion **Takara SUDA** (JPN) will be at 65kg in Bishkek and a challenge for **SUJEET**.





02 GRECO-ROMAN

67 KG

Saeid Morad Gholi Esmaeili Leivesi (IRI)
defeats Nozimjon Boykuziev (UZB)



THE GRECO-ROMAN FIELD AT THE ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BISHKEK WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED WITH OLYMPIC AND WORLD CHAMPIONS. BUT A STANDOUT STORY WILL BE THAT OF KAISEI TANABE (JPN). THE 65KG ASIAN CHAMPION IN FREESTYLE, IS ATTEMPTING TO WIN THE GRECO GOLD AT 63KG THIS YEAR.



Kasei Tanabe

TANABE switching the styles of wrestling was not forced. He tried making the Japan team for both Freestyle and Greco but failed to win the qualifying tournament in the former.

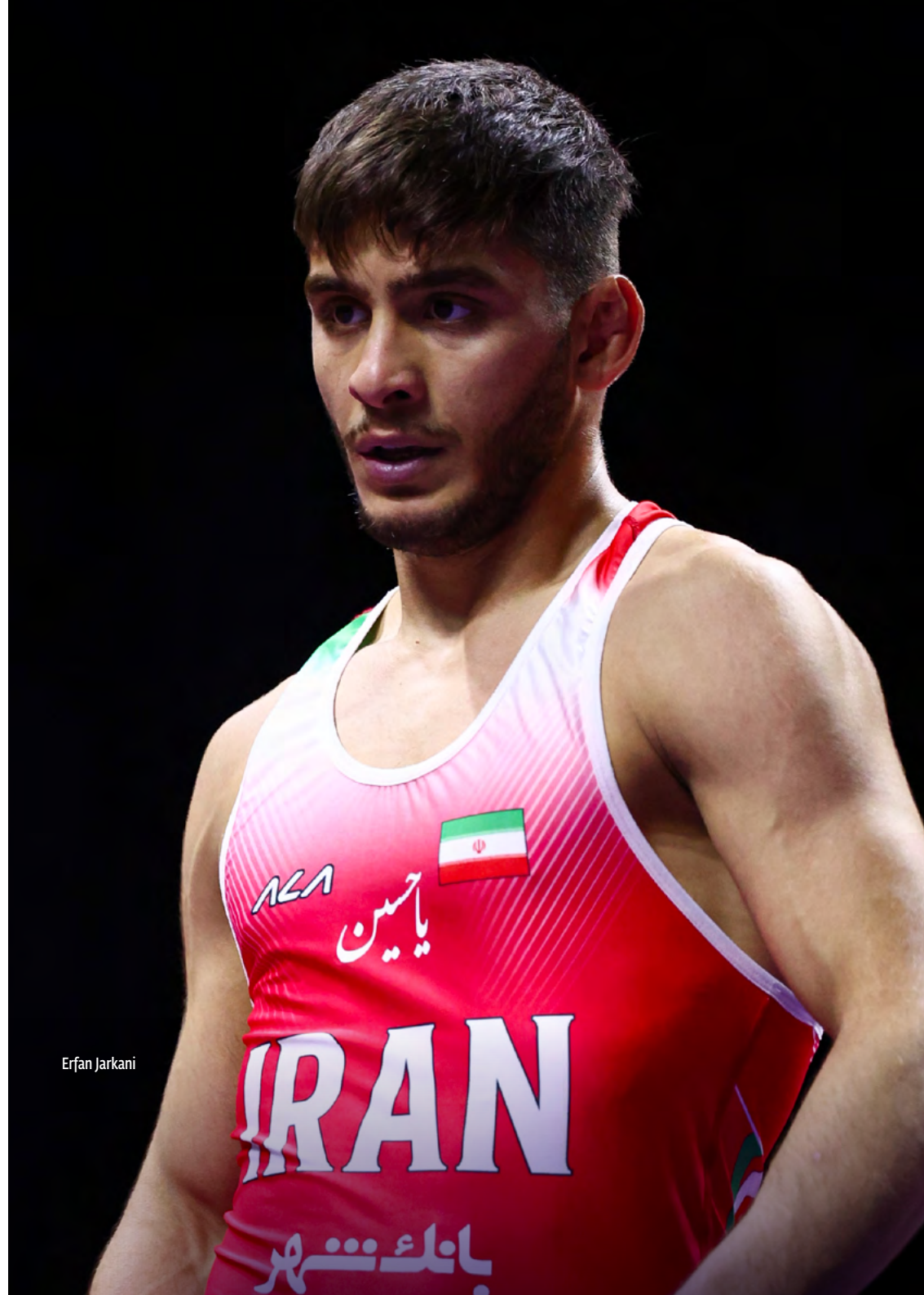
A step ahead of **TANABE** is his compatriot **Taishi NARIKUNI** (JPN), a Freestyle world and Asian champion, who is entered in both styles for Bishkek. He will try to regain his Asian 70kg title and also win gold at Greco 72kg.

A win in Japan at 63kg does make **TANABE** a threat but competition in Bishkek will be tough.

Erfan JARKANI (IRI), the Zagreb Open champion this year, will be the biggest test for **TANABE** as Iran usually brings a style that depends both on strong par terre and conditioning.

Another potential challenger is **Islomjon BAKHRAMOV** (UZB), a former Asian champion in search of another Asian medal since 2021. Despite his lack of form in recent years, **BAKHRAMOV** brings a tough style.

Erfan Jarkani





Javad Rezaei

NARIKUNI's path at 72kg is similar with **Javad REZAEI** (IRI), former U23 world champion and Muhamet Malo Ranking Series champion last month, being a favorite to win. **NARIKUNI** has an exceptional record in Freestyle but his Greco international debut at the Zagreb World Championships ended in a first-round loss.

Paris Olympic fifth-placer **Amantur ISMAILOV** (KGZ) can stop **NARIKUNI** in his quest as well. **ISMAILOV** will be wrestling in front of his home crowd, giving another advantage.

Uzbekistan is going with newbie **Shakhzod KUCHKOROV** (UZB), who won the bronze medal at the Zagreb Open Ranking Series.

IRAN'S CHAMPIONS



Iran still remains the team to beat in Asia and once again the country is bringing a solid squad. Olympic champion **Hadi SARAVI** (IRI) leads at 97kg along with world champion **Amin MIRZAZADEH** (IRI) at 130kg.

SARAVI seems to be a notch above the field right now and should have no trouble winning gold. **MIRZAZADEH** too has an upper hand at the highest weight class and will be a clear favorite to win.





Islam Yevloyev

Former U20 world champion and Zagreb Open silver medalist **Islam YEVLOYEV** (KAZ) has moved up to 97kg with his debut coming in Zagreb.

Last year's silver medalist **Yuri NAKAZATO** (JPN) and bronze medalist **NITESH** (IND) are expected to repeat as medalists.

The breakout star of 2025 **Gholamreza FAROKHI** (IRI) will take on the 87kg field. He became the world champion at 82kg in Zagreb, then moved up to 87kg and won the U23 world title a month later.

He starts as the favorite at 87kg but experienced wrestler **Nursultan TURSYNOV** (KAZ) and world bronze medalist **Asan ZHANYSHOV** (KGZ) can make his path trickier.



Gholamreza Farokhi



UZBEKISTAN **WITH HOPES**



Alisher Ganiev

This may be the best chance for the ever-improving Uzbekistan team to clear Iran at the Asian level. Despite missing its star **Aytjan KHALMANOV** (UZB), Uzbekistan is still bringing a good team to Bishkek.

World silver medalist **Alisher GANIEV** (UZB) has a chance to win his first Asian title at 60kg. He lost four of the five finals last year but with lessons from World Championships, in which he put himself under undue pressure, **GANIEV** is a strong favorite.

Olympic bronze medalist **Se Ung Ri** (PRK) will be one of the opponents he needs to get past. **Ri** has proven to be an extremely strong wrestler, winning bronze at the Asian Games and Paris.

Former U20 world champion **Ali AHMADI VAFA** (IRI) will try to establish himself at the senior level, a feat he failed to do at the World Championships. A medal in Bishkek can boost his confidence and make him Iran's first choice at 60kg.





Yu Shiotani

Japan's big-throwing **Yu SHIOTANI** (JPN) will also hope for a medal. He lost to **GANIEV** at the Ranking Series in Zagreb but will get a chance to avenge that loss.

Another hopeful for Uzbekistan will be Asian champion **Aram VARDANYAN** (UZB), who is now jumping from 77kg to 82kg. **VARDANYAN** won the gold medal last year with a buzzer-beating throw in the final and will hope to use it as motivation.

Former Asian champion and veteran **Ibragim MAGOMADOV** (KAZ) will look to challenge **VARDANYAN**, both being perhaps the most experienced wrestlers in the field.

Then comes **Amin HOSSEINI** (IRI) who made his international debut in Tirana and won the 82kg gold medal at the Muhamet Malo Ranking Series.

Shahin BADAGHIMOFRAD (QAT) has a good chance to improve on his bronze medal he won last year and claim another historic medal, perhaps gold, for Qatar.



Amin Hosseini

MAKHMUDOV AT HOME





Akzhol Makhmudov

Akzhol MAKHMUDOV (KGZ) returned to competition at the Islamic Solidarity Games last year and won gold at 77kg. He also wrestled at 82kg in Tirana in February but went home without a medal.

But the Paris bronze medalist returns to the Asian Championships in Bishkek as the favorite at 77kg with fans eager to watch him perform at home.

Last time **MAKHMUDOV** wrestled in Bishkek, he lost to **Nau KUSAKA** (JPN) at 77kg but with **KUSAKA** not in the field, **MAKHMUDOV** should find it smooth sailing to gold.

Iran is betting on Zagreb Open Ranking Series winner **Ali OSKOU** (IRI). His run in Zagreb was impressive and he will be confident going into the Asian Championships of winning a gold medal.





Doniyorkhon Nakibov

Doniyorkhon NAKIBOV (UZB) can prove to be a dark horse as he replaces world bronze medalist **Abdullo ALIEV** (UZB) in the line-up at 77kg.



CHUNG'S CHANCE

After bringing a long-awaited medal at the World Championships for Korea in Zagreb, **Hanjae CHUNG** (KOR) can win more silverware for Korea.

CHUNG won silver in Zagreb at 63kg but is moving up to the Olympic weight class of 67kg for the Asian Championships.





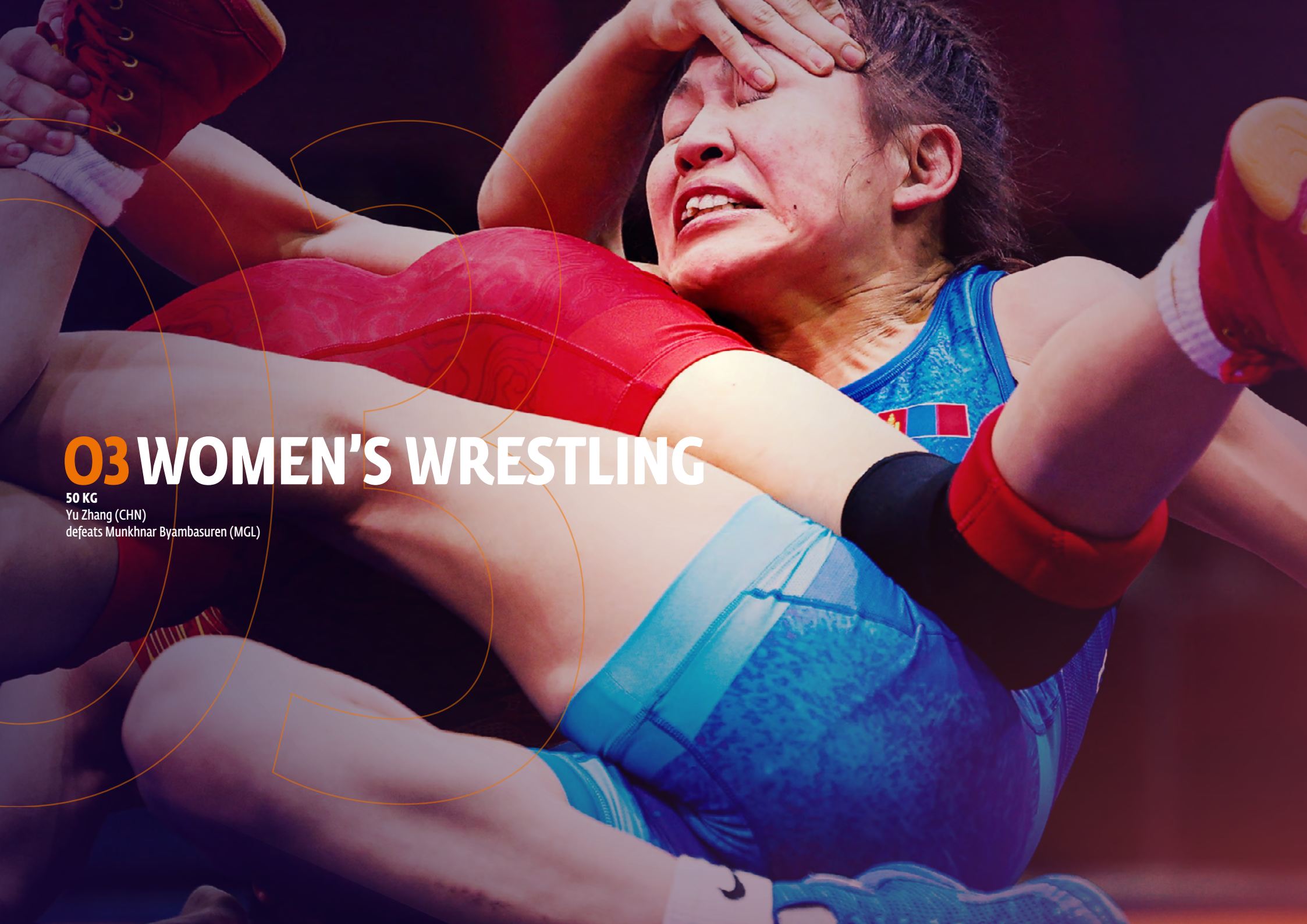
Ahmadreza Mohsen Nezhad

Former U20 world champion **Ahmadreza MOHSEN NEZHAD** (IRI) will be a tough opponent along with returning silver medalist **Razzak BEISHEKEEV** (KGZ). The change in weight class may hurt **CHUNG**'s chances rather than improving them.

Others at this weight class include **Kensuke SHIMIZU** (JPN), a world bronze medalist from 2022, U23 Asian champion **Bagdat SABAZ** (KAZ) and returning bronze medalist **Man Gwang SON** (PRK).

At 55kg, Zagreb Open finalists **Mohammad HOSSEINVAND** (IRI) and **Ikhtiyor BOTIROV** (UZB) are likely to reach the final in Bishkek as well. **BOTIROV** lost the final in Zagreb to **HOSSEINVAND** but will look to avenge that loss if the two meet in Bishkek.





03 WOMEN'S WRESTLING

50 KG

Yu Zhang (CHN)

defeats Munkhnar Byambasuren (MGL)



AKARI FUJINAMI (JPN) PULLED OUT OF THE ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS AFTER AN INJURY. DESPITE HER ABSENCE, THE FAVORITE AT 57KG IS STILL A JAPANESE, FUJINAMI'S REPLACEMENT SARA NATAMI (JPN).



Miwa Morikawa

The depth of the Japanese team will be on display once again at the Asian Championships as the country looks to dominate.

Apart from **NATAMI** being the favorite to win as defending champion, world champion **Miwa MORIKAWA** (JPN), former world and Olympic champion **Yui SUSAKI** (JPN), who is returning to competition for the first time since Paris Olympics, and two former world champions **Moe KIYOOKA** (JPN) and **Nonoka OZAKI** (JPN) are also in the squad.

For **NATAMI** to defend her title and win her third Asian gold she will have to go past Olympic bronze medalist **Kexin HONG** (CHN) in her field. **NATAMI** had pinned **HONG** last year on her way to the gold.

Asian champion at 62kg **MANISHA** (IND) made a drastic step to drop to 57kg and she began the season with gold at the Zagreb Open.

Asian Championships, however, will be a different test.



Kexin Hong



Nethmi Poruthotage

Big-throwing and Sri Lanka's history-maker **Nethmi PORUTHOTAGE** (SRI), former world 53kg silver medalist **Khulan BATKHUYAG** (MGL) and former Asian silver medalist **Laylokhon SOBIROVA** (UZB) will have a chance to put themselves on the podium.

SUSAKI 2.0



SUSAKI's return will be at 50kg as she prepares for another Olympic cycle after suffering a shock and first international loss at the 2024 Paris Games.

The Asian Championships should be a good test for **SUSAKI**, who incidentally wrestled her last Asian Championships in Bishkek in 2024 in which she won gold. **SUSAKI** will face some familiar foes at the weight class including fellow Paris Olympic bronze medalist **Ziqi FENG** (CHN).

The Chinese star almost pinned **SUSAKI** in the final of the Asian Championships in 2024 before the Japanese managed to comeback and win the gold medal. **FENG** would look to finally get a win over her.





Son Hyang Kim

Son Hyang KIM (PRK), who has wrestled **SUSAKI** three times, will look to get one back against the three-time world champion.

The two first met at the 2017 Asian Championships and **SUSAKI** blanked her en route to her first Asian gold as an 18-year-old.

Aktenge KEUNIMJAEVA (UZB), who has four bronze medals to her name, will have her eyes on reaching the final this time.

NEELAM (IND), a returning bronze medalist, can be among the medalists.





**MORIKAWA
EYES
HAT-TRICK**



Meerim Zhumanazarova

MORIKAWA has a perfect record at Asian Championships, winning two golds in as many attempts. But Bishkek will be different as those came at 65kg.

Now at 68kg, it presents a tougher challenge with Olympic silver medalist and home favorite **Meerim ZHUMANAZAROVA** (KGZ) as the biggest one. **ZHUMANAZAROVA** has previously shown her mettle on quite a few occasions and with the home fans behind her, **ZHUMANAZAROVA** can upset **MORIKAWA**.

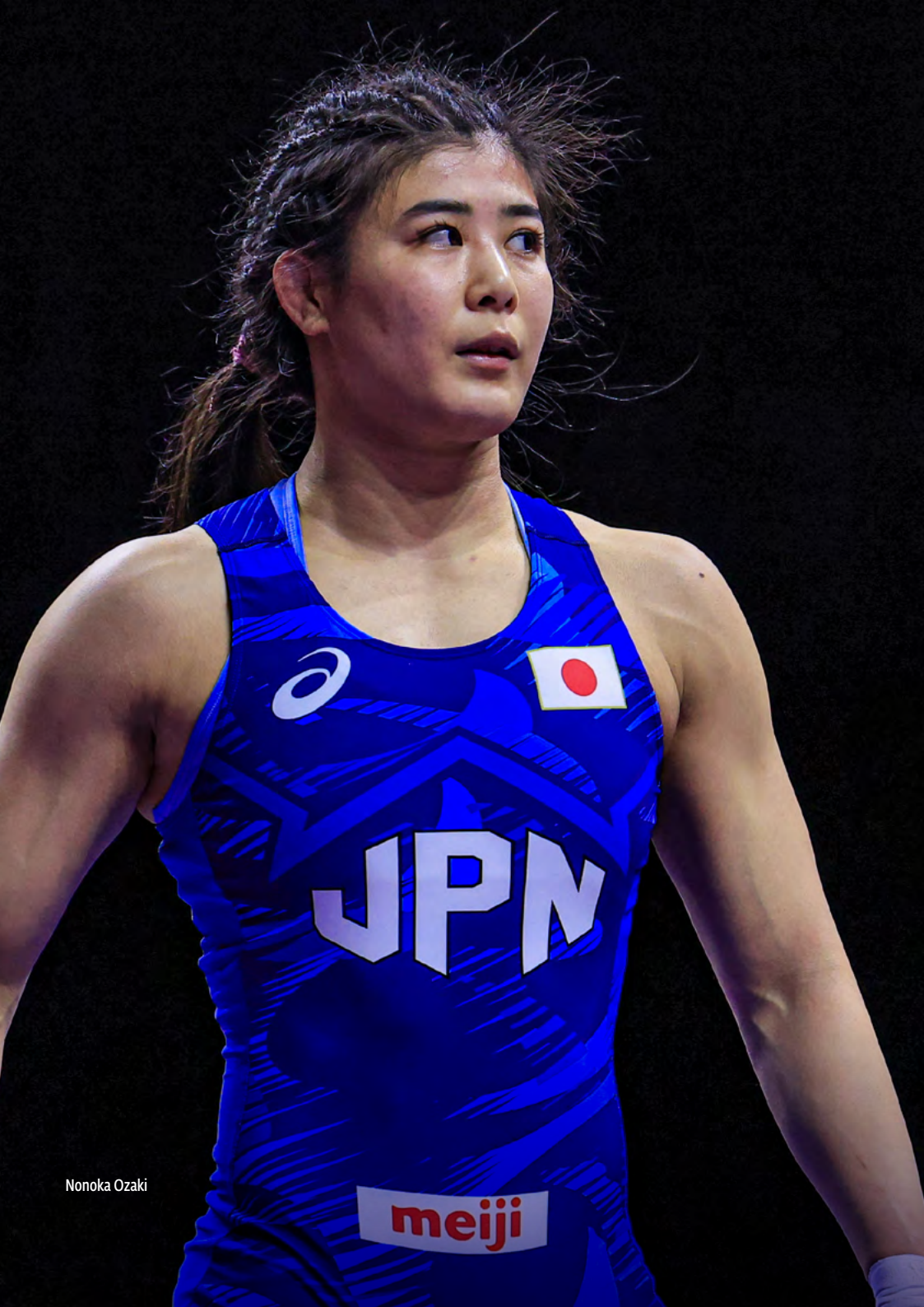
Defending champion **Zelu Li** (CHN) will be another strong contender. **Li** won bronze at the World Championships at 72kg but is now back to 68kg.

Former world silver medalist **Delgermaa ENKHTSAIKHAN** (MGL) and young star **Mansi LATHER** (IND), a 72kg silver medalist at Zagreb Open, also have a chance to stand on the podium.



**OZAKI
BACK
AT 62KG**





Nonoka Ozaki

After a whirlwind journey from 62kg to 65kg and then to 68kg which saw her win the world title and Olympic bronze, **OZAKI** is back to 62kg. She won gold at the Zagreb Open and now starts as the favorite for the Asian Championships.

She would also hope to avenge a loss. At the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, **OZAKI** was leading the final against **Hyon Gyong MUN** (PRK) when the latter used an arm-throw to clinch a 6-6 criteria win. **MUN** will be in Bishkek, giving an opportunity to **OZAKI** to avenge that loss.

Two former world champions are also in the fray – **Qi ZHANG** (CHN) and **Tserenchimed SUKHEE** (MGL). Both will be in line for medals if not the gold along with world bronze medalist **Nigina SABIROVA** (UZB).

At 53kg, **KIYOOKA** will hope to regain the Asian title she lost last year. In a one-sided final, **Hyo Gyong CHOE** (PRK) defeated her 12-1 at 53kg. With **CHOE** not in the field, **KIYOOKA** will be keen to win the gold medal.

She will still have to deal with former U20 world champion and senior silver medalist **Jin ZHANG** (CHN) and **MEENAKSHI** (IND) among others.





Nana Ikehata

Japan will also hope that two youngsters can win gold medals in Bishkek.

Zagreb Open champion **Nana IKEHATA** (JPN) at 65kg and **Sowaka UCHIDA** (JPN) have a great chance to add to Japan's gold tally. While **IKEHATA** doesn't have a deep field at 65kg, world fifth-placer **Sowaka UCHIDA** (JPN) will have to face returning silver medalist **Yuxuan LI** (CHN) at 55kg. **LI** remains the favorite to win the title, despite not wrestling internationally since.

U23 world champion **Shugyla OMIRBEK** (KAZ) is also in the mix as she wrestles in her first senior level continental event.



HOME STAR **MEDET KYZY**

Kyrgyzstan will witness world silver medalist **Aiperi MEDET KYZY** (KGZ) wrestling at home when she steps on the mat to defend her 76kg title. **MEDET KYZY** is a huge favorite to win gold, unless U20 world champion **KAJAL** (IND) can spring a surprise.

Another young star India can bet on is **NEHA** (IND) at 59kg. In an impressive performance, she managed to win silver at the Muhamet Malo Ranking Series in February.



Aiperi Medet Kyzdy





Sena Nagamoto

Asian Championships debutant **Sena NAGAMOTO** (JPN), winner at the Zagreb Open, certainly rates higher than **NEHA**.

Returning bronze medalist **Mengyu XIE** (CHN) will like to change the color of her medal and given the depth (or lack of it) at 59kg, she can certainly hope for gold.

**STARS
MERGE
AT 72KG**



A few stars have merged at 72kg.

The weight class has former 65kg world champion **Jia LONG** (CHN), world silver medalist and Asian champion **Zhamila BAKBERGENOVA** (KAZ), world bronze medalist **Nurzat NURTAEVA** (KGZ), former Asian champion **Mahiro YOSHITAKE** (JPN) and former silver medalist **HARSHITA** (IND), who defeated **BAKBERGENOVA** last year in Budapest.





Zhamila Bakbergenova

LONG won bronze at 68kg at the World Championships but is looking for an Asian title at 72kg. But going through **BAKBERGENOVA**, a legend at 72kg, will be difficult.

U23 world champion **NURTAEVA** is searching for her first Asian medal and wrestling at home may well be the motivation she needs.



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