

Sport Olympic Games Tokyo 2020

SHOOTING SAEED AL-MUTAIRI

Date of Birth: 1968

The oldest member of the Saudi delegation to Tokyo, Saeed Al-Mutairi won a gold medal at the Asian Games 1994 in Hiroshima, the first ever by a Saudi in the competition.

In 2004, he claimed gold at the Asian Shooting Championship in Kuala Lumpur. Al-Mutairi proved his remarkable longevity with golds at the 2007 Pan Arab games and Islamic Solidarity Games a full 10 years later in Baku.

TABLE TENNIS ALI AL-KHADRAWI

Date of Birth: 31/05/1997

Following in the footsteps of his father and older brother, Ali Al-Khadrawi took up table tennis 10 years ago, and rose to represent his country within five years.

His first showing in Saudi colors came at the 2016 World Top 16 Championship in India. He earned a silver two years later at the U21 West Asian Championship in Jordan.

WEIGHTLIFTING MAHMOUD AL-AHMEED

Date of Birth: 1993

Mahmoud Al-Ahmeed's journey to the Olympics started by chance in 2008 when he joined a weightlifter friend at a session, and a watching coach gave him his big break.

Career highpoints include becoming Gulf champion in 2013, Arab Champion in 2015 and a gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

JUDO TAHANI AL-QAHTANI

Date of Birth: 2000

Tahani Al-Qahtani took up judo while studying at King Saud University in Riyadh, and represented her country soon after. She won silver at the Saudi Women's Championship 2019 and gold a year later. In June, Al-Qahtani took part in the World Judo Championships Hungary 2021.

ATHLETICS, 100M YASMINE AL-DABBAGH

Date of Birth: 22/09/1997

Already skilled at several sports, Yasmine Al-Dabbagh decided running was her calling while studying at Columbia University in New York. On her return home, she was strongly backed by the Saudi Athletics Federation. Eventually she was trained by British Olympic 100m gold medal winner Linford Christie. In her first ever 100m race in the Kingdom she broke the existing Saudi record and qualification for Tokyo 2020 followed.

OLYMPIC GAMES TOKYO 2020

THE SAUDI ARABIAN OLYMPIANS

Long wait over as Kingdom's footballers kick off Tokyo 2020

FOOTBALL U-23 FOOTBALL TEAM

This will be only Saudi's third Olympic football tournament, and the second with the U-23 squad.

At Los Angeles 1984, the senior national team lost all three matches; At Atlanta 1996, the U-23s lost their opener 1-0 to Spain, followed by 2-1 defeats to Australia and France.

Coach Saad Al-Shehri will hope to claim Saudi's first points in a group that includes Ivory Coast, Germany and Brazil.

Ali Khaled Dubai

The wait is almost over. For 33 Saudi athletes, and thousands from around the world, what is normally a tough, four-year road to the Olympics Games turned into a five-year one for Tokyo 2020. And it is finally at an end.

For some, the delay disrupted a carefully planned schedule to peak at the right moment. For others, it proved an unexpected blessing in reaching a tournament they could not have expected to take part in a year earlier.

All have adapted to the devastating consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, and though the Olympics will take place without fans, Tokyo 2020 will be the pinnacle of their careers.

Saudi Arabia will have its largest ever representation, with 11 individuals and the 22-man football squad taking part in nine sports, surpassing the record of six at Athens 2004.

On Thursday, a day before the official opening of the games, the Saudi U-23 football team kicks off the Kingdom's action by taking on Ivory Coast at Yokohama International Stadium.

Tough tasks await them against Rio 2016 silver medalists Germany on Sunday, July 25, and reigning champions Brazil three days later.

The official opening day of the tournament, Friday, July 23, sees rower Husein Alireza grace the new Sea Forest Waterway in the men's singles sculls.

The following morning, Youssef Bouarish takes the plunge in swimming's 100m butterfly heats, and on the same day Ali Al-Khadrawi begins his quest for table tennis success.

Weightlifters Siraj Al-Saleem, in the 61 kilogram category, and Mahmud Al-Ahmeed (73 kilograms), enter the fray on July 25 and 28, respectively, while Tahani Al-Qahtani, the last Saudi

to qualify, takes part in the Judo competition from July 24.

Saeed Al-Mutairi, the oldest Saudi participant in Tokyo, enters the skeet shooting competition on July 25 and Sulaiman Hammad's second Olympics takes to the mat in the men's Judo 73 kilogram category on July 26.

Yasmine Al-Dabbagh runs the 100m heats on Friday, July 30, and two days later Mazen Al-Yassin takes on the world's best short distance runners in the 400m heats.

Finally on Aug. 6, Tarek Hamdi will begin his quest for a medal in the Karate 75 kilogram category.

Several of the other Saudi athletes will be hoping that even by then, two days before Tokyo 2020's closing ceremony, their dreams of Olympic glory have not yet been extinguished. Whatever happens over the next 18 days, it will be a journey that they will never forget.

ATHLETICS, 400M MAZEN AL-YASSIN

Date of Birth: 08/07/1996

Mazen Al-Yassin first ran the 400m in Saudi colours at the 2013 World Youth Championships in Ukraine, and that same year he won silver at the Asian Junior Games in Taiwan.

In 2017, Al-Yassin won silver in the individual 400m race at the Arab Championships in Tunisia, and bronze in the relay.

KARATE TAREK HAMDI

Date of Birth: 29/07/1998

Tarek Hamdi heads to Tokyo 2020 as the Saudi delegation's most decorated athlete, having collected seven gold medals representing the Kingdom.

He also became the first Saudi to win gold in a Karate World Championship, at Jakarta in 2015.

Following a successful 2017, he earned the title of world's most promising Karate athlete for the year. Hamdi secured qualification to the Olympics with a first place at the Karate Tokyo 2020 Qualifiers held in France earlier this year.

JUDO SULAIMAN HAMMAD

Date of Birth: 1994

Sulaiman Hammad is returning for a second Olympics having represented Saudi at Rio 2016. His first medal in the Kingdom's colours came in 2011 when he won bronze at the Asian Judo Championship in the UAE. In 2017, he won bronze at the Second World Police Games in Abu Dhabi, and finished in fifth place at the Asian Open in Taipei.

In 2021, he reached the last 16 at the World Championship which took place in Budapest.

SWIMMING YOUSSEF BOUARISH

Date of Birth: 25/11/2000

At five, Youssef Bouarish almost drowned on a trip to the seaside. His father suggested swimming lessons, and his journey to the 100m butterfly at Tokyo 2020 had begun.

He won three golds at the 2016 GCC Championship in Dammam; a bronze in the 50m Butterfly at the 2017 Arab Youth Championship, and another bronze came at the Arab Championship in 2018.

ROWING HUSEIN ALIREZA

Date of Birth: 27/08/1993

Husein Alireza started rowing while studying for a master's degree at Cambridge University in 2017, and after graduation, two Saudi Indoor Rowing Championship golds made him the Kingdom's premier rower.

In 2019, he won bronze at the Asian Indoor Rowing Championships in Thailand. Earlier this year he won gold at the Asian Continental Qualifiers for the 2021 World Indoor Rowing Championships. He recently recovered from a shoulder injury to confirm he will be taking part in Tokyo 2020.

WEIGHTLIFTING SIRAJ AL-SALEEM

Date of Birth: 1996

Siraj Al-Saleem was inspired to take up weightlifting by watching his brother take part in local competitions in Dammam. He made his mark internationally in 2016 when he won the West Asian Championship and Afro-Asian Championship, both held in Jordan.

He continued his run of success with another gold at the International Solidarity Championships 2020 in Uzbekistan, and two silvers at the Asian Senior Championships 2021.

OLYMPIANS IN-FOCUS

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