

2026 World Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo Expected to Set Standards for the Olympic Cycle

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On January 28, Mohammed Jalood, president of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), led a delegation to the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center for an on-site inspection of preparations for the 2026 World Weightlifting Championships. He was joined by IWF Secretary General José Quiñones and executive board member Matthew Curtain.

"Across venues, hospitality and organizational experience, Ningbo stands out," Jalood said after the visit, praising the city's readiness.

The World Weightlifting Championships, organized by the IWF, represent the sport's highest-level standalone competition. At an IWF executive board meeting in Doha in December 2023, Ningbo won the right to host the 2026 edition, scheduled for late October at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center. It will mark the first time the championships return to China since Guangzhou hosted in 1995.

Beyond its prestige, the Ningbo championships will carry added significance: they will serve as the first qualifying event for weightlifting at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Athletes from more than 100 countries and regions are expected to compete.

The event will also unfold amid major changes to Olympic weight classes. In September, the International Olympic Committee approved the addition of two weightlifting categories for Los Angeles — one each for men and women — bringing the total to six per gender while keeping athlete quotas unchanged at 120 (60 men and 60 women).

In November, the IWF announced the new Olympic categories. For men: 65kg, 75kg, 85kg, 95kg, 110kg and over 110kg. For women: 53kg, 61kg, 69kg, 77kg, 86kg and over 86kg.

At the same time, the IWF revised the weight classes for world championships. Beginning Aug. 1, 2026, men will compete in eight categories (60kg, 65kg, 70kg, 75kg, 85kg, 95kg, 110kg and over 110kg), as will women (49kg, 53kg, 57kg, 61kg, 69kg, 77kg, 86kg



International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) President Mohammed Jalood (front right), Secretary General José Quiñones (front center), and Executive Board Member Matthew Curtain (front left) inspect the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center.

and over 86kg). The Ningbo championships will be the first major test of the new system, forcing athletes to adapt quickly.

After Ningbo secured hosting rights, Jalood visited the city in April 2024 to sign the official agreement with the Chinese Weightlifting Association. He again praised Ningbo's blend of deep cultural roots, modern urban character, proven experience in staging major events and comprehensive sports infrastructure, calling it fully qualified to host the world championships.

Since then, he has repeatedly highlighted Ningbo in public appearances. During the 2025 World Championships in Norway last October, Jalood told Xinhua News Agency that the Ningbo event would be "a crucial qualifying competition on the road to Los Angeles," adding, "I am confident the Ningbo championships will set a high standard for the entire Olympic cycle."

He reiterated that view in November while attending China's 15th National Games weightlifting competition, emphasizing the contrast with the 2025 Norway championships. As the first Olympic qualifier, he said, Ningbo would represent "the critical first step" toward Los Angeles. "Even a world champion," he noted, "cannot reach the

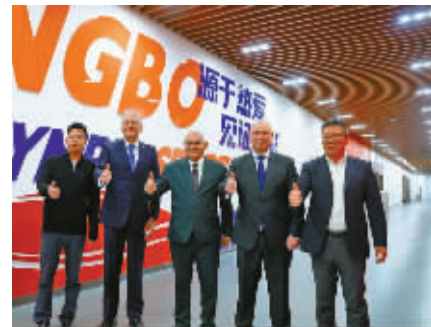
Olympics without qualifying."

"The IWF places great importance on cooperation with China," Jalood said. "That is why I came with the secretary general and an executive board member — to work closely with the organizing committee and with Ningbo to make this one of the best Olympic qualifying events." He also expressed confidence in Chinese athletes, calling China a traditional weightlifting powerhouse and saying he looked forward to strong performances in Ningbo and at the 2028 Olympics.

José Quiñones echoed that confidence. Recalling the opening ceremony of the 15th National Games, which he said rivaled the Olympics in scale, he described Ningbo's venues and professional teams as exceptional. The championships, he said, could become "one of the most successful ever — and a benchmark for Olympic qualifiers."

Matthew Curtain likewise praised China's event-hosting capabilities, saying the inspection reinforced his belief that Ningbo is fully committed to delivering a successful event.

During the visit, the IWF delegation toured competition and warm-up areas, athlete support spaces and spectator seating, offering guidance on event flow, technical support and emer-



During the inspection.

gency planning. Jalood paid particular attention to athlete services, including transport times from official hotels, shuttle schedules, accommodation and catering — details that drew repeated approval from the delegation.

Ningbo is no stranger to major competition. The city hosted the Asian Weightlifting Championships in 1919, setting a participation record, and in recent years has staged top-tier events such as Olympic volleyball qualifiers and ISSF World Cup competitions. Known as a "city of Olympic champions," Ningbo has deep ties to the sport — from Shi Zhiyong's breakthrough gold medal at the Rio Games to the city's five golds at Tokyo.

Preparations for the 2026 World Weightlifting Championships have now entered a phase of full implementation and refinement. Following IWF guidance, organizers say they will further strengthen venue operations, hospitality, anti-doping measures and global promotion, with the goal of delivering a world-class event worthy of its Olympic significance.

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