

Iran to host Angola in September friendly



IRNA

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Iran will face Angola in a friendly fixture at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on September 12, the Iranian Football Federation announced.

The game will be a second outing for the Asian side in the upcoming FIFA international break, coming five days after a friendly against Bulgaria at the Hristo Botev Stadium in Plovdiv.

Iranian head coach Amir Qalenoee, who replaced Portuguese Carlos Queiroz following last year's World Cup in Qatar, is tasked with steering his team in next January's AFC Asian Cup – also to be held in Qatar – where the three-time champion will be chasing a first title since 1976.

Iran is drawn alongside the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, and Palestine in Group C of the continent's flagship international event.

Russians 'unlikely' to be at Paris Olympics: World Athletics

BBC – Russian and Belarusian track and field athletes are "unlikely" to be able to compete at the 2024 Olympics, says World Athletics president Lord Coe.

World Athletics has banned competitors from the two countries from its events, including under a neutral flag, because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The International Olympics Committee (IOC) has said athletes should be able to compete as neutrals.

However, Lord Coe said World Athletics' position was "very clear".

When World Athletics announced its ban in March, Lord Coe said "unprecedented sanctions" on Russia and Belarus by "countries and industries" are the "only way to restore peace".

Speaking on Thursday, Lord Coe added: "I don't have a crystal ball, I follow world events in the same way that you all do."

"We have risk committees, we have working groups that will always be wanting to be across that and what might the circumstances look like if there's any shift in the situation but I have to say that looks unlikely at the moment with where we are with events in Ukraine."

Persian Gulf Pro League roundup: Title favorites relishing perfect start to new campaign



Esteghlal centerback Mohammad-Hossein Moradmand (2nd R) celebrates with teammates after scoring the winner in a 1-0 victory over Malavan FC in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on August 17, 2023.

● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



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There will surely be a lot of twists and turns until the end of the new season but Persepolis, Sepahan, Esteghlal seem to have already established a three-horse race for the Persian Gulf Pro League crown.

The top three from the previous campaign walked away with a second victory in as many games while Tractor, which had high hopes of an impressive start after last season's fourth-spot finish as well as a busy transfer window, appears to be far from a finished article.

In the highly-anticipated fixture in Tabriz, another howler by new Tractor goalkeeper Hossein Pourhamidi

– following the blunder in the 3-1 defeat at Sepahan – left Saeed Sadeqi facing an empty net before the Persepolis winger rolled home to silence the crowd at the full-packed Yadegar-e Imam Stadium late in the first half. Both sides hit the woodwork in the second period but the result remained intact as the defending champion left Tabriz with a massive 1-0 triumph on Wednesday.

Yahya Golmohammadi's Reds are yet to drop points in the league since the home defeat against Sepahan in March, enjoying a remarkable run of 12 successive league and cup wins.

Later in the day, second-half strikes by Morteza Asadi and Shahriyar Moghanlou

steered Sepahan to a 2-0 win at Zob Ahan in the Isfahan derby.

Having joined from Tractor in the summer, Asadi got Sepahan off the mark from the spot in the 52nd minute after Moghanlou went down in the box by Arash Qaderi. Moghanlou then rounded off a sublime counterattack when his curling effort from the edge of the box found the bottom corner.

Sepahan fans, who saw their team miss out on the title by a single point last term, will be desperate to celebrate a first league trophy since 2015 come the end of the season. On Thursday, Esteghlal had to wait 80 minutes to break the deadlock against Mehdi Tartar's brave Malavan side in Tehran's Azadi Stadium

when center-back Mohammad-Hossein Moradmand headed home Mehdi Mehdi-dipour's corner kick.

New manager Javad Nekounam had skipper Hossein Hosseini to thank for keeping him on a winning start to life on the Blues bench as Esteghlal keeper denied Mehran Ahmadi an opener from the spot with seven minutes into the contest. Elsewhere in the league, Paykan and Golgozar Sirjan shared the spoils in a goalless stalemate in Tehran on Tuesday, while Mehran Mousavi's header with nine minutes left on the clock secured a 1-0 home victory for Iralco against newly-promoted Esteghlal Khuzestan.

Shams Azar, which also won

promotion last season, left the pitch empty-handed in a first top-flight home game in the history of the club in Qazvin, falling to 2-1 defeat against Havadar.

Former Esteghlal players Babak Moradi and Amin Qasseminejad were on the scoresheet for the visiting side before Rahman Jafari bagged a late consolation for the host.

Mes Rafsanjan and Nassaji Mazandaran played to a 1-1 draw in Rafsanjan, with Mohammadreza Azadi's first-half goal for Nassaji cancelled out by Hassan Jafari four minutes after the interval.

The pressure is on for Foolad Khuzestan manager Alireza Mansourian after his side suffered a second consecu-

tive defeat in the new season – a 2-1 loss to San'at Naft Abadan at the Foolad Arena. San'at skipper Taleb Rikani gave his side the lead with a trademark left-foot effort from behind the box in the 14th minute.

Things went from bad to worse for Foolad when Sina Shah-Abbasi was shown his marching orders for a second bookable offense right before the break and Hossein Shanani's composed finish doubled the lead for San'at in the 50th minute.

Mohammad Abbaszadeh pulled one back for the home side with five minutes from normal time but it proved to be too little too late as Abdollah Veisi's men came out on top in the southern Iranian derby.

Head coach Ataei names Iran's 14-man squad for Asian Volleyball Championship



● volleyball.ir

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Iran head coach Behrouz Ataei announced his 14-man squad for the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship – starting today in Urmia, northwest Iran.

Middle blocker Mehdi Jelveh was the last player to be dropped for the continent's flagship volleyball event before Iran gets its title defense underway with a game against Hong Kong in Pool A – also featuring Iraq – on Sunday. Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi, Milad Ebadi-pour, Mohammad Valizadeh, Pouria Hossein Khanzadeh, Meysam Salehi, Shahrouz Hodayounfarmanesh, Mobin Nasri,

Amin Esmailnejad, Saber Kazemi, Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Arman Salehi, Mohammad-Taher Vadi, Javad Karimi, and Mohammad Fallah will represent the Asian powerhouse at the 22nd edition of the competition.

Having endured a disastrous campaign at the Volleyball Nations League in July, which saw Ataei's men lose 10 in 12 outings and finish third from bottom in the 16-team table of the preliminary round, Iran will be eager to bounce back when chasing a fifth Asian trophy ahead of late September's qualifiers for the Paris Olympics. The outcome of the Asian event will contribute to the

teams' status in the FIVB World Ranking – a decisive factor in the qualification process for next year's Games in the French capital. That is what convinced Japan, which stunned the world of volleyball by claiming the bronze medal at the VNL Finals, to name a full-strength squad for the Asian Championship. On Thursday, Ataei's side walked away with a morale-boosting victory over Japan in a friendly game behind closed doors in Urmia, rallying from behind to win 3-1 (23-25, 27-25, 25-21, 25-21). Japan will begin its Pool B campaign today against Thailand before facing Uzbekistan on Sunday.