

Beiranvand to miss Al Nassr clash



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Sports Desk

Persepolis goalkeeper Ali-reza Beiranvand is ruled out of the upcoming AFC Champions League encounter against Saudi giant Al Nassr after suffering a groin injury while on international duty. The Persian Gulf Pro League champion will open its campaign in Group E – also featuring Qatar's Al Duhail and Istiklol of Tajikistan – of the Asian elite clubs competition against Cristiano Ronaldo and co. at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on September 19. The Iranian keeper felt the pain after a long throw during a 1-0 friendly victory over Bulgaria on Thursday and was replaced by Payam Niazmand midway through the first half.

"He has suffered a grade 2 strain in the groin area and will need two to three weeks to recover," club doctor, Ali-reza Haqiqat, said on Saturday, meaning Beiranvand will also be a doubt for the away game against Al Duhail on October 2 as well as the Paykan game and the Tehran derby against Esteghlal in the Iranian top flight. His absence will be a huge blow for Reds manager Yahya Golmohammadi, who will be left with academy keepers Amir-Reza Rafiei and Mehrshad Asadi – yet to make a senior appearance for the club – in the squad ahead of the massive games coming their way.

The injury is also a bitter disappointment for the high-profile keeper himself as he was eager for a second duel against Ronaldo after famously saving the Portuguese great's spot-kick in a 1-1 draw at the 2018 World Cup.

The Al Nassr game will be the first on home soil for an Iranian club against a Saudi side since 2016.

A political rift had seen the teams from the two countries square off in neutral venues for the past seven years, but a thaw in the Tehran-Riyadh relations in recent months convinced the Asian football governing body to give the go-ahead for all matches contested by the Iranian and Saudi national teams and clubs taking place on a home-and-away basis.

Sepahan will welcome Al Ittihad to Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium in Group C on Oct. 2, with Nassaji Mazandaran taking on Al Hilal at the Azadi Stadium in Group D a day later.



Asian Cadet Taekwondo Championships:

Gold rush on final day as Iran lifts girls trophy, finishes boys runner-up

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The Iranian girls and boys teams, their coaching staff, and the federation officials pose for a photo after a glorious campaign at the Asian Cadet Taekwondo Championships in Beirut, Lebanon, on September 8, 2023.

taekwondo.ir

A medal-laden campaign at the Asian Cadet Taekwondo Championships saw Iran claim the girls' title while settling for the runner-up spot in the boys' event in Beirut, Lebanon.

On Friday, five Iranians brought the curtain down on a glorious run for the country in the Lebanese capital by capturing the ultimate prize of their respective classes. It was a head-to-head battle between Iran and South Korea in the girls' competitions on the final day as all three showdowns were contested by the athletes from the two continental powerhouses.

Rojan Heydari outclassed Park Soyoun for the -172cm gold, with Niayesh Ali-Asgari coming out on top against Lee Cheaeun in the -176cm final.

Hasti Khalaji completed a clean sweep of final triumphs for Iran with a straight-round victory in the +176cm contest.

Friday's medals took Iran's tally to a remarkable five golds, two silvers, and a single bronze as Mahboubeh Mohammadnejad's team beat Kazakhstan to the girls' crown, with South Korea in the third place.

Narina Khayat (-164cm) and Fatemeh Zahra Baqeri (-148cm) had bagged a couple of golds, with the former enjoying further

glory in the awarding ceremony as she was named the female MVP of the competitions after cruising to the top podium of her category without conceding a single round.

Mohammadnejad, meanwhile, took the best female coach award. The team trophy rounded off a glittering run for the Iranian girls at the international age-group competitions over the past 10 days as the world cadet title in Sarajevo had been followed by the Asian juniors' crown earlier in Beirut.

Elsewhere on Friday, Iliya Allahverani defeated Mongolian Belgutei Bat-Erdene 2-0 for the +180cm gold, with his fellow

Iranian Abolfazl Najafi beating South Korean Kim Geunwoo in the final showpiece of the -180cm category – taking the country's gold count to three in the boys' event, after Seyyed Mohammad Abdollahi had triumphed in the -152cm class on Day 1. The Iranian boys also grabbed double silvers and bronzes apiece to finish second to South Korea, while Jordan stood third.

Fatemeh Hassanzadeh, Pinar Lotfizadeh, Pouya Kiaheyrti, and Amir-Abbas Nasiri were the Iranian silver medalists in the tournament, with Asma Khorrami, Mohammad-Hossein Montazeri, and Armin Masoumi leaving Lebanon with three bronze medals.

Need to raise game against Djokovic, says Medvedev ahead of US Open final

REUTERS – Daniil Medvedev expects Novak Djokovic to be in top form in tonight's US Open final, but the third-seeded Russian adds that he will try to produce his "best-ever version" to beat the record-23-time Grand Slam champion.

Medvedev prevailed 7-6(3) 6-1 3-6 6-3 in a fascinating encounter that ended top seed Carlos Alcaraz's reign as Flushing Meadows champion, with the 27-year-old setting up a rematch of his triumphant 2021 finale against Djokovic.

Djokovic, 36, is hunting a fourth US Open title that would see him equal Margaret Court's record haul of 24 Grand Slams and a good measure of revenge on Medvedev. "He (Djokovic) is always better than the previous time he plays. For example, I beat him in the US Open final, he beat me in Bercy (Paris Masters) in a great match. Carlos beat him in Wimbledon, he beat him in Cincinnati," Medvedev told reporters.

"Novak is going to be his best version on Sunday, and I have to be the best-ever version of myself if I want to try to beat him. "Novak, when he loses, he's



Daniil Medvedev hits a return during his U.S. Open last-four victory over Carlos Alcaraz in Flushing Meadows, NY, US, on September 8, 2023.

MANU FERNANDEZ/AP

never the same after... It's just a different mentality... So, I have to use it knowing that he's going to be 10 times better than he was that day. And I have to be, if I want to still beat him, 10 times

better than I was that day." Medvedev, however, said he would stick to his pre-match routine before facing Djokovic. "I'm going to do all the same. It's just the mental preparation

where... you want to fight till the end, you want to win, and that's how you should be in the final of a Grand Slam," he said. Medvedev said the win against Alcaraz was a confidence boost

but acknowledged that he would be "hell-disappointed" if he were to lose the final despite a successful run at New York.

"To know I'm capable of doing it on the big stage every time you do it one more time brings more confidence," Medvedev added. "You know you can do it again. You want to do it again. You want to feel this. And at the same time, what is most important is to kind of use it but forget about it and go for the next one." Meanwhile, said he would put the landmark out of his mind against Medvedev.

The Serb battled past American Ben Shelton in straight sets on Friday to set up a rematch with the Russian, who denied him a rare calendar Grand Slam two years ago. "(I don't) think about the history too much in this sense, you know, because when I did that in the past, like, '21 finals here I was maybe overwhelmed with the occasion and the opportunity and I underperformed," said Djokovic. "So I don't want this to happen again, and I'll try to, you know, just focus on what needs to be done and tactically prepare myself for that match."