

## Iran ease past Afghanistan in U23 Asian Cup qualifiers



AFC

### Sports Desk

Two goals in each half saw Iran beat Afghanistan 4-0 in Tashkent on Saturday – a second successive victory for Reza Enayati's side in the AFC U23 Asian Cup qualifiers.

Mohammad Qorbani glanced home to break the deadlock in the 29th minute before Hossein Goudarzi's header on a Mohammad-Javad Hosseinejad's set-piece doubled the lead nine minutes later.

Hull City striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh and Sepahan prodigy Hosseinejad were also on the score-sheet after the break as Iran moved level on six points with Uzbekistan, which thrashed Hong Kong by 10 unanswered goals, in Group E of the qualifiers.

Uzbekistan's superior goal difference means Iran will still have to beat the host – an Asian under-23 champion in 2018 and runner-up to Saudi Arabia last year – on Tuesday to progress to next year's finals as one of the 11 group winners.

The top four runners-up will also qualify for the tournament, starting April 15 in Qatar.

## Soltani eyeing glory on world stage



ISNA

### Sports Desk

Young Iranian weightlifter Hossein Soltani will bid for a podium finish when the men's 81kg Group A contests get underway at the IWF World Championships in Riyadh today.

Soltani, 23, will be looking to build on a glittering campaign in May's Asian Championships, where he captured the total and clean & jerk golds plus a snatch silver in Jinju, South Korea. The Iranian heads into the event with a second-best entry record of 358kg – two kilograms shy of the tally registered by Italian Oscar Reyes.

Kazakhstan's Yelaman Seitkazy, who beat Soltani to the snatch gold in Jinju, Bulgarian Bozhidar Andreev – a winner of three world -73kg medals in 2019 – as well as Uzbekistan's Mukhammadkodir Toshtemirov – a triple world junior gold medalist in 2021 – will also be in the mix for glory in the Saudi capital.



Germany head coach Hansi Flick reacts on the touchline during a 4-1 defeat against Japan in Wolfsburg, Germany, on September 9, 2023.  
● MARTIN MEISSNER/AP

AFP – Hansi Flick said he remained "convinced" he was the right man to lead Germany to Euro 2024, despite a 4-1 humiliation by Japan in a friendly in Wolfsburg on Saturday.

The loss, the side's fourth in their past five games, comes nine months out from next year's European championships, which Germany host. Flick told reporters after the match he believed he was the right man for the job, "even if that's difficult to see."

"We are preparing well, we are preparing well for each

opponent – there's nothing to be said about that.

"We are convinced of what we are doing and that's why I want to continue (as Germany coach)."

Germany conceded two goals in each half and were thoroughly outclassed by Japan, who also beat Germany at the 2022 World Cup.

Germany sporting director Rudi Voeller said after the match the German FA would avoid making any rash decisions on Flick's future, telling RTL: "I would suggest we collect ourselves

# Flick 'convinced' he is right man for German Job despite Japan humiliation

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and we sleep on it."

"We are all a little in shock...a defeat like that hurts.

"We should all do some soul searching and think about it. What happens next, we'll see."

Flick coached Germany to a disappointing group stage exit at the Qatar World Cup, where his side won just one of three matches.

Germany have now been eliminated at the group stage in the past two World Cups, lost to England in the round of 16 at the 2021

Euros and face a possible humiliation on home soil at the 2024 event.

Despite chants of "Flick out" from some sections of the crowd – and captain Ilkay Gundogan saying his side "need to ask questions of ourselves" – the coach backed his side to improve in Tuesday's clash with France in Dortmund.

"Everyone that was on the field today wants to show another face (against France)" Flick said, explaining "it's football, we have another chance and we're

looking forward to it." Flick said Germany needed to improve its youth development, pointing to Japan as an example from which the four-time world champions can learn.

"You can see how skilled they are, both offensive and defensive," Flick said of Japan. "You can see how much football has developed there."

Flick said Germany's problems had deep roots.

"We need to work on it," he said of his desire to employ more flair.

## Gauff 'ready' for the headiest levels of fame after US Open triumph



Coco Gauff poses with the U.S. Open trophy outside Arthur Ashe Stadium after beating Aryna Sabalenka in the final in Flushing Meadows, NY, US, on September 9, 2023.  
● GETTY IMAGES

THE NEW YORK TIMES – The first thing Coco Gauff did after leaving the court in Arthur Ashe Stadium, with her first Grand Slam trophy in hand, was don a sponsor's T-shirt proclaiming her as a champion. So it begins.

Gauff has been in the glaring lights of fame since she was a 15-year-old playing into the fourth-round at Wimbledon, but after winning the US Open singles title on Saturday, those lights could become blinding and the fame distracting. Additional endorsement offers will pour in – commercial shoots, appearance opportunities, business projects, investment offers and invitations to A-list social events will pile up in the near and long term future.

Gauff has demonstrated a composed maturity in her time in the public eye, and she declared herself up for the challenge of becoming even more famous and rich, even as she tries to keep winning important tournaments.

"I'm ready," Gauff said after she beat Aryna Sabalenka,



2-6, 6-3, 6-2. "I embrace it. I know how to keep my peace, but also embrace all of this around me."

The level of fame that comes with being an American teenager winning the US Open can be spellbinding and daunting for some. Gauff is the first since Serena Williams won in 1999 at the age of 17. Young athletes in every sport have been overwhelmed by early success, fame and money. They may lose focus, party too hard, tap out on the

hunger that drove them to their first championship, or became bigheaded.

That does not seem to be an issue for Gauff, so far. After accepting her check for \$3 million, Gauff casually thanked Billie Jean King, who was also on the stage, for fighting for equal pay for women, a gesture showcasing her perspective, humor and charm, all in one.

"She is so humble," said Pere Riba, her coach, after the match. "Her work ethic

is so strong, so professional and she has very good manners. Put all of that together and she will only get better. She can handle it all." Riba has only been working with Gauff, alongside Brad Gilbert, since June, right before Wimbledon. Gauff's father, Corey Gauff, asked Riba to be his daughter's coach this summer on a temporary basis that turned permanent. Coco Gauff said that her father recommended hiring Gilbert, too. But Corey Gauff

remains a steady influence and inspiration.

"The most important person for Coco on the team is the dad," Riba said. "The parents are really, really important for her."

In the next few days Gauff's schedule could be demanding. She will be asked to appear on national television programs and pose for photo shoots. She will be invited to parties and celebrities will reach out.

For players like Emma Raducanu, who won her first US Open at 18 two years ago, claiming a major trophy at an early age brought riches and fame but not yet consistent tennis success. But Gauff, whose career earnings before Saturday from singles and doubles topped \$8 million, was playing in her fifth US Open, and people have been pointing to her for years as the next great American champion. Success did not come in an instant.

"This is a big achievement," she said, "But I feel like I've been used to this since I was basically 15 years old. In high school, doing online school, just used to it."