

## Asian Cadet Junior & U21 Karate Championship: Iranians bag 18 medals on Day 2



Iranian girl Ghazal Fat'hi (2nd L) poses for a photo on the podium after winning the gold medal of the cadet kumite -47kg contests at the Asian Cadet Junior & U21 Championship in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on November 6, 2023.  
● WKF

### Sports Desk

Iranians collected 12 medals on the second day of the 21st Asian Cadet Junior & U21 Karate Championship to take the country's medal haul to 18 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. On Tuesday, the Iranian girls walked away with three precious golds in the junior kumite contests, with Yousef Nikravesh settling for the +76kg silver in the boys' event after a final loss to Hyoma Shimomura of Japan. Fatemeh Ja'farnejad came out on top against Thailand's Supichaya Teekwang for the ultimate prize of the -48kg weight class, while Hana Hosseinpour defeated Indonesian Almahyra Tilara Sandi to finish atop the -66kg contests. Zahra Rahimpour rounded

off a glittering day for Iran thanks to a 6-2 victory over Thai opponent Chanankan Khieokham in the +66kg final. Meanwhile, Matin Zare', representing the country in the male U21 event, and the Iranian female cadet and junior trio of Mobina Haddadzadeh, Sarina Dorri, and Sanza Mehri-Mahani took the kata silvers in their respective categories. Ghazal Fat'hi had won a first gold medal of Iran on the first day of the competitions, courtesy of a triumph over Japanese Miki Ito in the female cadet -47kg final. Ailin Bahari was also a silver medalist in Almaty, finishing second to Japan's Azusa Takata in the junior girls' kata final. More than 440 karatekas from 26 countries took part in the three-day event.

## AFC Champions League: Knockout berth jeopardized after Persepolis held by Istiklol



Persepolis fullback Ali Nemati (L) challenges Istiklol's Amadoni Kamolov during a 1-1 draw in the AFC Champions League in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on November 7, 2023.  
● AFC

### Sports Desk

Persepolis will have a tough job on its hand to progress to the knockout round of the AFC Champions League after a 1-1 away draw against Istiklol in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Iranian international winger Mahdi Torabi gave Tehran Reds the lead with a sublime free-kick on the half-hour mark, only to see his strike canceled out by Ivorian Senin Sebai 16 minutes from normal time. Having been hit with a flu sweeping the squad in the buildup to the game, Persepolis clearly looked off the pace in the closing stages of the

contest, but will still be frustrated with the two points dropped, which could eventually cost the Iranian top-flight champion – finalist in 2018 and 2020 – a place in the last-16 of the Asian elite clubs competition. The result left Persepolis second in the Group E table with seven points – five adrift of Saudi side Al Nassr, which walked away with a 3-2 victory over Al Duhail in Al Rayyan to all but secure a top-spot finish in the group with two games to spare. In the absence of prolific Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo, Brazilian Talisca bagged a hat-trick, with the host's Philippe Coutinho on the

scoresheet twice, as the visitors maintained their perfect start to the competition. With only three of the runner-up teams across the five West Zone groups qualifying to the knockout phase, Yahya Golmohammadi's men will face an uphill battle in the remaining two fixtures. Persepolis is fourth among the second-placed teams, standing behind Uzbekistan's Navbahor, which has 10 points in Group D, as well as fellow Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan and FC Nasaf, with both sides equal on seven points and enjoying a superior goal difference over the Reds.

Persepolis will take on Al Nassr in Riyadh in three weeks, before welcoming Al Duhail for the final day of the group fixtures on December 5. For now, the Iranian capital giant will have to shift focus to the domestic league action ahead of Sunday's highly-anticipated visit to Sepahan, as the Reds will be looking to end a run of three successive draws in all competitions. Beaten 3-2 by Malavan at home last time out in the Iranian league, Sepahan will step onto the pitch at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium fresh from Monday's 9-0 demolishing of AGMK in the AFC Champions League.

## Saudi champions Al Ittihad sack former Spurs boss Nuno



● REUTERS

BBC – Saudi Pro League champions Al Ittihad have sacked former Tottenham manager Nuno Espírito Santo following a run of poor results. They have won six of 12 league games this season and suffered a 2-0 defeat by Air Force Club of Iraq in the Asian Champions League on Monday. Nuno, 49, took over at Al Ittihad in July 2022 after being sacked by Tottenham eight months earlier. Assistant coach Hassan Khalifa will take interim charge of the team.

Portuguese Nuno enjoyed a successful spell at Wolves from 2017 to 2021 but lasted just four months at Spurs before being replaced by Antonio Conte after losing five of 10 Premier League matches. The former Porto coach guided Jeddah-based Al Ittihad to the Saudi title last season, but there were reports of a difficult relationship with former Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema, who joined the club in June this year as part of the influx of stars into the league.

In a statement on X, Al Ittihad said: "The club has announced the end of its contract with Portuguese coach Nuno Santo. "This decision comes after a comprehensive technical evaluation of the past phase during which he was in charge of coaching the first football team." Former Liverpool midfielder Fabinho and ex-Chelsea and Leicester player N'Golo Kante also play for Al Ittihad, who are sixth in the Saudi Pro League and will next play Abha on Friday.

## We helped Milan win crazy game: PSG coach Luis Enrique

TRIBAL FOOTBALL – PSG coach Luis Enrique admitted frustration with the manner of their Champions League defeat at AC Milan. PSG had the lead through Milan Skriniar, but Milan fought back through Rafael Leao and Olivier Giroud to win 2-1. "I liked the way we played, as we scored the first goal and had many other opportunities," said Luis Enrique in his press conference. "The only problem is that we helped the game become crazy. It was meant to be a foot-

ball match, not tennis. It was just end to end, attack against attack. I did not like that." "Kylian Mbappé was clear on goal two or three times, so was Ousmane Dembele. After they took the lead, Milan clammed up in defence and it became very difficult. It was a pretty balanced game. "I saw two fairly similar teams. I prefer more control of the initiative, but it was more end to end." On the home barracking of goalkeeper Gigio Donnarumma, Enrique also said: "He has

a lot of experience, a strong character. "Football is passion, the fans showed what their position was. The atmosphere can only be like that when there was affection for a player. He had a great game." "It's a pity for us, because if we had won, we'd be practically qualified." Elsewhere in Group F, Newcastle's hopes of reaching the knockout stages were dented as they fell to a 2-0 defeat against Borussia Dortmund in Germany.



● FRANCO ARLAND/GETTY IMAGES