

Iran names 14-man squad for Futsal Asian Cup



Sports Desk

Head coach Vahid Shamsaei named Iran's 14-man squad for the upcoming AFC Futsal Asian Cup – starting Wednesday in Bangkok, Thailand. Prolific pivot Hossein Tayyebi will be the country's key absentee in Bangkok due to an injury, though his Mallorca Palma teammates Mohsen Oladqobad and Salar Aqapour were given the go-ahead by the Spanish Primera Division club to take part at the tournament, which is not part of the FIFA international calendar. Three-time Asian Futsal Player of the Year Aliasghar Hassanzadeh has again received a callout and will be back in the event after being snubbed by Shamsaei for the previous edition in 2022. Hassanzadeh, Oladqobad and Aqapour will be joined by goalkeeping duo Baqer Mohammadi and Saeid Mo'meni as well as Ali Khalilvand, Alireza Rafieipour, Mohammad-Hossein Derakhshani, Mohammadreza Sangsefidi, Saeid Ahmad-Abbasi, Mahdi Karimi, Ali Akrami, Masoud Yousef, and Behrouz Azimi in representing the most decorated Asian

side in Bangkok.

Having won the competition on eight occasions as a player, Shamsaei led his team to the final showpiece in Kuwait two years ago, but had to settle for a runner-up finish in his maiden tournament on Iran's bench after a shock 3-2 defeat against Japan.

Chasing a record-extending 13th trophy in the continent's flagship international futsal event, Iran will begin its campaign with a game against Afghanistan in Group D on Thursday. Shamsaei's men will take on Bahrain two days later before playing Kuwait on the final day of the group phase next Monday.

The top two of the four groups will progress to the last-eight round with the four semifinalists qualifying for the FIFA Futsal World Cup, starting mid-September in Uzbekistan.

Ranked sixth in the latest Futsal World Ranking, Iran will step into the Asian Cup on the back of a friendly tournament in Vietnam, where the Asian powerhouse fell to a 5-4 loss to Morocco but came out on top against the New Zealand (5-1), and Vietnam (3-1) to finish second to the African side.

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Taremi finds scoring touch in Porto draw

Sports Desk

Porto striker Mahdi Taremi bagged his first goal for the club in 112 days during a 2-2 home draw against Famalicão in Liga Portugal on Saturday.

Introduced as a halftime substitute at the Estádio do Dragão, Taremi tapped in from close range with eight minutes left on the clock to draw Porto level for the second time in the match – the Iranian's fourth goal in the Portuguese top flight this season. The stalemate left Porto third in the table on 59 points – 15 points adrift of league leader Sporting, which has a game in hand – with five matches to spare.

Taremi had last found the net for the

Dragons in a 2-1 victory over Leixões in the Portuguese League Cup in late December.

The Iranian missed eight matches for Porto in January and February due to AFC Asian Cup involvement and then fell down the pecking order after returning from international duty – not named in the matchday squad for five league outings – presumably following the reports of the Iranian's imminent move to Serie A giant Internazionale as a free agent in the summer.

Having joined from Rio Ave in July 2020, Taremi has been Porto's talisman over the past four seasons, scoring 87 goals, while providing his teammates with 53 assists, in 175 appearances across all competitions.

He is the club's third all-time top scorer after retired Brazilian Mário Jardel (138) and former Colombian international Jackson Martínez (92).

The Iranian, who will turn 32 in July, netted 22 strikes to finish as the leading marksman in the Portuguese league last season, but a below-par run, by his own standards, in the ongoing campaign has seen him bag only seven goals in 28 domestic and European appearances.



Porto striker Mahdi Taremi is seen in action during a 2-2 draw against Famalicão in Liga Portugal at the Estádio do Dragão, Porto, Portugal, on April 13, 2024.

GETTY IMAGES



Iranian girls learn fate in junior handball world event



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Sports Desk

Iran was pitted against Romania, Brazil, and the Netherlands in Group A of the preliminary round in the 2024 IHF Women's Junior (U20) World Championship – starting June 19 in North Macedonia.

The complete fixtures list is yet to be announced by the international governing body of the sport.

Iranian girls booked their place in the 24th edition of the tournament thanks to a fifth-place finish in last year's Asian

Junior Championship in Hong Kong, joining champion South Korea as well as China, Japan, and the Chinese Taipei. The top two of the eight groups will progress to the main round of the world event, with the bottom two sides heading into the President's Cup to decide the 17th-32nd spots.

In its maiden participation at the event in 2022, Iran stood bottom of the preliminary group with two defeats and a draw against Guinea, before a loss to Italy saw the country finish 30th in the final standing.

Djokovic 'not having great season' after Monte Carlo loss

BBC – Novak Djokovic says he is "not having a great season at all" after losing to Casper Ruud in the semi-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters.

The world number one's 6-4 1-6 6-4 loss to Norway's Ruud follows a third-round exit at Indian Wells and a semi-final loss at the Australian Open.

The 36-year-old Serb is still searching for his first title of the year.

"Not having a title is, compared to the last 15 years, not a great season at all," he said.

"There are positives to take away for sure, but I'm used to a really high standard in terms of expectations and results."

Djokovic, who has an 11-4 record this year, also lost while playing for Serbia in the quarter-finals of the United Cup in January.

He will hope to win a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title at next month's French Open.

Against Ruud in Monte Carlo he double-faulted on Ruud's match point to confirm the result and end

a nail-biting deciding set.

Ruud cruised to victory in the opening set, ensuring Djokovic dropped his first set of the tournament, but the top seed fought back well.

The third set swung back and forth but having got himself back into the game on serve at 5-4 down, Djokovic double-faulted to hand Ruud victory.



VALERY HACHE/AFP