

Iran coach Shamsaei hails 'hard work' toward Asian futsal glory

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Vahid Shamsaei was full of praise for his players for their "hard work and sacrifice" in winning a record-extending 13th Futsal Asian Cup title. Mahdi Karimi, Saeid Ahamd-Abbasi, Ali-Asghar Hassanzadeh, and goalkeeper Baqer Mohammadi were all on the scoresheet, with Jirawat Sornwichian finding the net for Thailand, as Shamsaei's men walked away with a 4-1 victory over the host in Sunday's final in the Bangkok Arena. The triumph came as redemption for the Iranian futsal great Shamsaei, who lifted the Asian trophy as a player on eight occasions but had to settle for a runner-up finish in his maiden tournament on the national team bench after a defeat against Japan in 2022.

"I remember the day I lost the 2022 final against Japan. I had to apologize to everyone, especially to the Iranian fans. Today, I'm happy that they stayed patient with me and I want to dedicate this trophy to everyone back home, especially my late father, who did not see me win the trophy as a head coach," said Shamsaei.

"Reflecting on the previous tournament, despite scoring plenty of goals throughout, we ultimately lost in the final. This time, we maintained a high level of concentration," added the three-time Asian Player of the Year.

"I want to express my deep appreciation to all my players for their sacrifice and hard work, especially during the holiday



Iran head coach Vahid Shamsaei reacts to the fans after the victory over Thailand in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup final in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 28, 2024.

season when we chose to stay back and train.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the support from their families in allowing them to dedicate themselves to our shared goal. I firmly believe that it's these sacrifices

that have shaped our journey towards becoming champions of Asia."

The Iranian coach insisted a balanced and experienced squad was key to the latest success for the Asian powerhouse.

"Changing a generation is very difficult. We started this tournament without our best player, Hossein Tayyebi, who was the top scorer in the previous edition, where we only had four players with Asian Cup experi-

ence. For this tournament, however, we only had five players with no experience in the competition," said Shamsaei.

Next for the newly-crowned Asian champion is September's Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan

and Shamsaei believes it takes far more effort to succeed in the global showpiece.

"We will now shift our focus to the World Cup. The preparations for that will be different, and we need decent support from the federation. I have had plenty of support from my team of advisors and assistant coaches," Shamsaei added.

Meanwhile, prolific pivot Ahmad-Abbasi was thrilled to win the Most Valuable Player and Top Scorer awards in the event.

"I'm really grateful for being named the MVP and winning the top scorer award. The main reason behind these honors is our collective journey towards the championship trophy. From day one, we were united in pursuit of excellence and now that we've achieved it, I couldn't be happier," said Ahmad-Abbasi, whose goal against Thailand was his eighth in six outings in Bangkok.

"Scoring goals is just one aspect of the game for me. I do it for the team, not to chase individual targets. Contributing to my team's success makes me happy and I want to dedicate these awards to the supporters here and back home who fueled our journey with their energy. These awards are also dedicated to my family.

"We have a mix of experienced and young players, we are ready to move forward and deliver at the World Cup."

There was further individual success for the Iranian players in the awarding ceremony as Mohammadi was handed the Best Goalkeeper award.

Iranian girls lift CAFA U18 trophy



Iranian girls celebrate with the CAFA U18 Women's Championship trophy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on April 28, 2024.

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A one-all draw against the Kyrgyz Republic saw Iran retain the CAFA U18 Women's Championship in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Parnia Rahmani found the net for Maryam Jahan-Nejati's girls midway through the second half, only to see her goal canceled out by Ayana Karataeva's 92nd-minute equalizer.

The Stalemate was still enough for Iran to finish atop the table in the five-team round-robin tournament, organized by the Central Asian Football Association.

Iran collected 10 points – courtesy of successive victories over Uzbekistan (4-2), Turkmenistan (7-0), and Tajikistan (5-0) before Sunday's draw – with Uzbekistan finishing second on nine.

Iranian boys crowned world school volleyball champion



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The Iranian boys team rounded off a dominant run in the ISF World School Volleyball Championship with a straight-set victory over Germany in Sunday's final in Belgrade, Serbia.

The Iranian students marched to 25-21 and 25-18 wins in the first two sets before coming out on top in the third with a 26-24 scoreline.

This was a second victory over the European side in Belgrade for Arash Sadeqiani's boys, who also defeated Uganda, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and the Chinese Taipei en route to the final showpiece.

World Shooting Para Sport World Cup: Javanmardi shatters world record as Iran wins mixed 50m pistol gold



TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES

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Para shooting sensation Sareh Javanmardi set a new world record in the WSPS World Cup to inspire Iran to the P4 mixed 50m pistol SH1 title in Changwon, South Korea.

The three-time Paralympic gold medalist tallied 556 points in Sunday's qualification round as the Iranian team – also featuring Nasrin Shahi and Mohammadreza Mirshafiei – walked away with the ultimate prize thanks to an overall 1614 points, with South Korea (1606pts) and India (1580pts) in the following spots.

However, Javanmardi had to settle for a sixth-place finish in the individual final on 142.5 points as South Korean Jo Jeongdu grabbed the gold with 225.6 points – 0.3 points clear of Ukrainian silver medalist Oleksii Denysiuk while Nihal Singh of India scored 203.4 points for the bronze.

Sunday's team gold was a second medal for Javanmardi in Changwon, following the bronze-winning campaign in the P2 women's 10m air pistol SH1 event. Shahi had won the gold in Saturday's contest with 239.7 points, with Indian Bhakti Sharma tak-

ing the silver.

Shahi had also teamed up with Mirshafiei for the silver in the mixed 10m air pistol SH1 final. A second silver medal for Mirshafiei came in the men's 10m air pistol SH1 event where he registered 234.8 points to finish behind Indian shooter Sanjeev Kumar Giri.

A total of 125 shooters from 27 countries have been competing in the season's second World Cup, which will finish on Wednesday, in part of their preparation for the 2024 Paralympics – starting August 28 in Paris.