



## Volleyball Nations League:

# Iran will have to 'take lessons' from Week 1 setback, Ebadipour says

### Sports Desk

Iranian captain Milad Ebadipour says his young teammates will have to "take lessons" from their mistakes in Week 1 of the Volleyball Nations League. Mauricio Motta Paes's side suffered 3-1 defeats against Serbia and Cuba either side of a straight-set loss to reigning world champion Italy before signing off in the first week of action with a five-set setback against Argentina in Rio de Janeiro. The result left Iran bottom of the 16-team table, with the Asian powerhouse drifting further away from an Olympic berth through the FIVB Men's Ranking by the end of the preliminary round.

The Iranian squad is in Fukuoka, Japan, for Week 2 of the annual event – starting with a game against the formidable host on Tuesday. "I believe we did enough to claim at least two victories in week one. They were decisive matches for us and we could have closed the gap on the Olympic berth. Unfortunately, that did not happen but we have to move on," said the Iranian outside-hitter, who tops the league's best-receivers list with 29 successful attempts. "We have eight crucial games ahead of us and could still finish on a high," added Ebadipour. "I can only say that I was pretty satisfied with the way each and every player pre-

formed in the first week as they gave it their all and that's the important thing for the team. "Mistakes are part of this game but we can't afford to repeat the schoolboy errors that cost us in the first four matches and our younger players will have to take lessons from those mistakes for the rest of the way. Those tiny errors can decide the final outcome of a game when you play the big national teams," said Ebadipour. When asked about the first match in Week 2 against Japan, which beat Iran in the previous two meetings between the two Asian foes, Ebadipour said: "It is definitely going to be a tough contest against the Japanese home crowd. Japan

has made huge progress over the past few years and came out on top against some of the best teams in the world. "Our team also showed signs of improvement in the final two games in the first week. I believe more important the result for us will be to avoid making costly errors." Brazil will come Iran's way on Thursday with the games against Bulgaria and VNL debutant Turkey also on the fixtures list for Paes's side. Ebadipour hopes the Iranian players will use the experience of playing Brazil in three friendlies before Week 1 to their advantage when facing the South American heavyweight in Fukuoka, though it will still be a gigantic task against the

"most decorated team in the world." "We're talking about Brazil here – a winner of numerous Olympic golds and silvers. They can change their game-plan for each rally throughout the game. It will be a grueling test for us but I'm confident our team will come up with a better performance than the previous outings," Ebadipour said. Many believe the games against Bulgaria and Turkey, which won a single game between them in Week 1, will be easy contests for Iran, but Ebadipour has other ideas. "Nothing is predictable in sports. We still have to be on our best form and put in all our efforts to secure victories against those opponents."

## West Asian Athletics Championships: Girls headline Iran's medal-laden run in Basra

### Sports Desk

Iranian girls bagged six medals on Day 3 of the West Asian Athletics Championships in Basra, Iraq. Parisa Arab clocked a new national record of 16:37.80 minutes to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 5,000m final – a second gold for the Iranian girl after her 10,000m triumph on Day 1. Nazanin Fatemeh Eidian led Iran's one-two in the women's 400m hurdles final with 1:00.99 minutes, followed by Shahla Mahmoudi, who crossed the line in 1:01.51 minutes. This was the latest success for Iranian prodigy Eidian – also the women's 400m champion in Basra – in a glorious 2024 campaign, following double silvers in February's Asian Indoor Championships in Theran and the 400m hurdles gold in the Asian under-20 event in April. In the field contests, Mana Hosseini dominated the women's javelin throw event with a remarkable 50.57m attempt, beating Omani and Qatari contestants to the gold medal. Asal Ali-Qoli and Mahya Naeimi, meanwhile, won the women's high jump silver and bronze respectively, both registering a best attempt of 1.70m. Iranians had won eight golds and six silvers on Day 2 in the southern Iraqi city, with Fatemeh Zahra Qalenoeei (women's 5km walk), Mohammadreza

Tayyebi (men's shot put), Masoud Kamran (men's 110m hurdles), Reihaneh Mobini (women's long jump), Toktam Dastarbandan (women's 800m), Melika Norouzi (women's hammer throw), and Hadiseh Raouf (women's 300m hurdles) all finishing on the top podium in their respective disciplines. The first day of the competitions had seen Hamidreza Zouravand (men's 10km walk), Mahsa Mirza Tabibi (women's pole vault), and Elham Hashemi (women's shot put) come out on top across different contests as Iran won four golds and silvers apiece.



● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

## Protester chains himself to goalposts at Scotland v Israel match



● SNS

BBC – A protester chained himself to the goalposts before Scotland's Women's Euro 2025 qualifier against Israel at Glasgow's Hampden Park. The match, played behind closed doors, was delayed after the man used a heavy duty lock to secure himself to the posts in protest at Israel's military operation in Gaza. The game eventually kicked off 45 minutes later than planned, with Scotland running out 4-1 winners. Several hundred people, some carrying small coffins and Palestinian flags, had gathered outside the doors of the main stand. The protester who gained entry to the national stadium was earlier wearing a hi-vis vest, so he may have been mistaken for a steward. He was cut free from the posts and led from the pitch by police. Players were seen discussing a second warm-up and whether it was safe to return to the pitch shortly before the match got under way. The match kicked off to the sound of demonstrators outside booing, blowing whistles and setting off fireworks. A handful of counter-protesters also demonstrat-

ed before the group B2 game. Last week, the SFA said it had been left with "no option" but to bar supporters from attending "following extensive security consultations with all key parties". Public demonstrations against Israel's military operation in Gaza have been happening regularly across the UK. One group – the Gaza Genocide Emergency Committee – arranged a protest before the game at Hampden and called for the matches to be cancelled. Police Scotland said: "Appropriate policing plans are in place to maintain public safety and minimise any disruption to the community." Israel was banned from hosting any football matches by UEFA for security reasons in the aftermath of the 7 October attack by Hamas and the Israeli government's military response. Instead, the Israeli national side and its club teams have played fixtures at neutral venues in Hungary. Tuesday's return game between Scotland and Israel in Budapest will also be played behind closed doors.