

Iran's U-20 volleyball team cruises to 3rd straight Asian title

Sports Desk

Iran's youth volleyball team defeated South Korea on Tuesday to claim their third consecutive title at the Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship in Indonesia.

Going into the final day of the tournament with six straight wins, Iran faced South Korea for the cup match and managed to sweep them 3-0 to secure the top spot in Asian volleyball.

Coached by Gholamreza Momeni-Moqaddam, the Iranian youngsters went down in history with a hat-trick of championships.

In the first set, Iran's solid defense shut down South Korea, as the young Iranian volleyballers

cruised to a commanding 25-12 win, establishing a 13-point lead. South Koreans, determined to salvage their reputation, put up a better fight in the second set but still fell short against Asia's top team, losing 25-18.

Iran's diverse offense shone in the second set, with 16 attack points, three points from blocks, and another three from aces, outperforming their opponents in every aspect.

The third set saw a more resilient South Korea, who even led at times, but Iranian players prevailed 25-22 to clinch the match and lift the 22nd Asian men's championship trophy.

Iran's starting lineup included Emran Koukajili, Armin Qelich-Niazi, Pouya Ariakhah, Matin Hos-

seini, Arian Mahmoudinejad, and Morteza Tabataba'i. Players Shayan Mehrabi, Matin Saghali, Abolfazl Mehdian, Taha Behboudnia, Morteza Narimani, and Ali Eshqinour also contributed to Iran's win.

In the third-place playoff, Japan faced off against the hosts, Indonesia, who emerged victorious with a 3-1 win to grab the bronze medal.

It was Iran's 18th appearance in the Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship. In the previous editions, Iran had won seven golds, three silvers, and two bronzes. With this year's triumph, they bring home another trophy to become eight-time champions in this age group in Asia.



IRNA

Daei tips 'best Asian striker' Taremi to excel at Inter



inter.it

Sports Desk

Iranian football great Ali Daei says his compatriot Mahdi Taremi has what it takes to succeed in his debut season for Serie A giant Internazionale.

Taremi, 31, joined the Nerazzurri as a free agent from Portuguese heavyweight Porto earlier in the month, on a contract that could keep him at the Italian champion until June 2027.

The Iranian spent four glorious seasons in the Porto shirt, bagging 91 strikes in 182 appearances to become the Dragons' third all-time leading marksman.

It has been a decade since Taremi's introduction to the Iranian top flight, when ex-Persepolis boss Daei signed him for the Tehran Reds from second-tier club Iranjavan Bushehr.

And now his former coach is confident Taremi is set for another success story once he embarks on the new chapter of his career.

"Taremi possesses all the at-

tributes of a real striker. He is literally the best Asian center forward," Daei said in an interview with Italian newspaper La Gazzetta dello Sport, adding: "His best quality is his footballing intelligence. Watch him carefully: He might make few touches on the ball throughout the game, but he can still find the net. He moves well all over the pitch and wins every duel." Daei believes Taremi's contract is "a true bargain" for Inter.

"Just look at the great job he has done over the past four years. He scored 90-plus goals at Porto, some decisive ones in the Champions League, and won several trophies with the club. Signing him as a free agent was an incredible deal for Inter," said the former Bayern Munich and Hertha Berlin striker, who is third in the all-time international scoring chart with 108 goals. Taremi has already made a case for a place in Inter's starting XI in the upcoming campaign, making the most of extended vacations for first-choice strikers

Lautaro Martinez and Marcus Thuram – due to their involvement in Copa America and Euro 2024 – by scoring three in five preseason friendlies.

Daei says Taremi's versatility could help him instantly fit into head coach Simone Inzaghi's gameplans.

"Taremi knows how to adapt to any situation, be it a first or second striker, playing as a pure No. 9 or in a deeper role," said Daei. "Taremi moves a lot, which is why he always surprises the defenders. He is also a physical player and rarely loses duels against the opposition. It's not easy to get the ball off his feet, not to mention he is a player with great dribbling skills in the finishing phase, which could cost problems for any defender." Describing Taremi's overhead strike against Chelsea in the 2021 Champions League last eight, which brought him a Puskas Award nomination, as his best-ever goal, Daei said: "He has shown he can score even in the most unexpected situations. He knows how to position his body to evade man-marking. He is a very underrated striker, but if you're not good enough you don't get to score 50 goals for the national team."

Making a prediction of Taremi's goal tally in the new season, Daei said: "I would say at least 15. Serie A is much more difficult than the Portuguese league, but when a striker knows how to score, he always manages to find the net at every level."

Asked if he has any tips for Taremi's new coach, Daei said: "I think Inzaghi already knows all about him, so he won't need my advice. I can only say that Mahdi preforms better alongside an-



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other striker. He communicates well with his frontline partner, provides assists and exploits the flanks."

Daei went on to heap praise on Taremi for always being "so humble, respectful, and with certain values" off the pitch. "He has never forgotten where he has come from. He has a great personality. I'm sure he'll do well and, above all, score goals. Inter fans can rest assured."

Nadal to decide on future 'after Olympics'

AFP – Rafael Nadal said he will make a decision on his future in tennis "after the Olympics" in the aftermath of a shattering straight-sets defeat to old rival Novak Djokovic at the Paris Games on Monday.

"When this tournament is over, I will take the necessary decisions based on my feelings and desire," said Nadal, after losing 6-1, 6-4 in his 60th career meeting with Djokovic.

Nadal, playing in just his seventh tournament of the year after another campaign disrupted by injuries, admitted that at 38 he did not "have the legs of 20 years ago". The Spaniard, a gold medalist at the Olympics in singles in 2008 and doubles at Rio eight years later, won the last of his 22 Grand Slam titles when he captured a 14th French Open in Paris in 2022.

His ranking, which once stood proudly at number one, has slumped to 161 in the world. In May, he suffered his first ever opening-round loss at the French Open and then skipped Wimbledon to focus on the Olympics.

"For many people it makes little sense, I have been suffering for two years," added Nadal who described Monday's loss as "tough". "If I feel that I am not competitive

I will make the decision to stop. I just try my best every single day, trying to enjoy a thing that I have been enjoying for so much time.

"I have been suffering a lot of injuries the last two years. So if I feel that I am not competitive enough to keep going or physically I'm not ready to keep going I will stop and let you know."

Despite his defeat, Nadal still has hopes of a gold medal in the men's doubles where he is playing alongside Carlos Alcaraz. Monday's win was 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic's 31st in a rivalry which began on the same Roland Garros clay courts in 2006.

Nadal was largely outclassed in the much-anticipated encounter, only coming briefly to life when he won four games in a row in the second set.

"I'm very relieved," said Djokovic after the second-round win.

"Back in 2006, I don't think we would have thought we would be playing against each other on the same court at the Olympics."

Nadal conceded that Djokovic was the better player throughout the contest.

"Playing against Novak, without creating damage to him and without having the legs of, 20 years ago is, is almost impossible now."



Rafael Nadal (R) and Novak Djokovic greet each other at the net after their match at the Paris Olympics in Roland Garros Stadium, Paris, France, on July 29, 2024.
● ANDY CHEUNG/GETTY IMAGES

Napoli open to Osimhen deal with Chelsea in push to land Lukaku

THE GUARDIAN – Napoli are open to including Romelu Lukaku in discussions with Chelsea over Victor Osimhen, with the Serie A side keen to wrap up a move for the Belgium striker.

Lukaku is due to return to

training at Chelsea's base in Cobham this week having spent two seasons on loan at Inter and Roma.

Lukaku has two years of his contract remaining after re-signing for a club record £97.5m in 2021 and has re-

portedly agreed a three-year deal with Napoli. However, Chelsea are believed to be holding out for about £30m and remain in negotiations with the Italian club, who must sell Osimhen to fund moves in the market.

Paris Saint-Germain had been considered the frontrunners to sign the Nigeria striker but talks with Napoli are believed to have stalled. Napoli's president, Aurelio De Laurentiis, has set a release clause of about €130m (£110m) for Osimhen,

who has been training separately from the rest of Antonio Conte's squad and is yet to feature in their pre-season games. Chelsea have a longstanding interest in the 25-year-old after he helped Napoli end their 33-year wait to become Ital-

ian champions in 2023. Club sources have previously indicated they would not be willing to pay his release clause, but the opportunity to offload Lukaku from their wage bill could potentially help finance a move for Osimhen.