

World Cup Asian qualifiers:

Taremi on target as lackluster Iran edges out Kyrgyzstan

Sports Desk

On a day of shock results across the World Cup Asian qualifiers, Iran delivered a drab display but still managed to beat Kyrgyzstan 1-0 at home on Thursday.

Wearing the armband for the day, Mahdi Taremi scored in the first half to lead Team Melli to a winning start to its Group A campaign.

Omid Nourafkan's effort from outside the box was parried by Kyrgyz keeper Erzhan Tokotaev into the path of Inter striker, who tapped in from close range 11 minutes before the break.

Clear-cut chances were few and far between for Iran against a solid opposition backline, though Nourafkan came within inches of an all-important second goal right before the hour mark, only to see his left-footed strike come off the post.

Routed 5-1 by Iran on home soil in last year's CAFA Nations Cup, Kyrgyzstan, which sat deep with numbers for the best part of the game, found the courage to push forward in the closing stages.

The home side had goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand to thank for making a superb save to deny Joel Kojo an equalizer five minutes from normal time as the Asian powerhouse staved off a

late surge from the minnow visitors in what had been tipped to be the easiest of the 10 games in the group for Amir Qalenei's men.

The Iranian manager, however, was left with plenty to think about ahead of Tuesday's visit to the UAE, which came from behind in the second half to walk away with a 3-1 win against reigning Asian Cup champion Qatar in Al Rayyan.

"We had a decent ball circulation in the second half. The team created chances and hit the woodwork. I have to admit the overall performance should have been much better though it was normal for the first game, as you saw Australia lost to Bahrain at home while South Korea could only manage a draw against Palestine," Qalenei said after the game.

Harry Souttar scored an 89th-minute own goal as Australia, down to 10 men in the 77th minute, suffered a shock 1-0 defeat against Bahrain in Group C, with South Korea – favorites in Group B – held to a goalless stalemate by Palestine in Seoul.

"Four or five players were far from their best form today and the frontline substitutions didn't quite work out. We will try to show better quality in the

next game," added the Iranian coach. Meanwhile, Taremi, complaining about the pitch quality in the Fooladshahr Stadium playing a significant part in his side's insipid performance, was fu-

rious with some of the criticism the Iranian players received from the stands after the final whistle.

"We will have both good and bad days in every



tournament and today's game doesn't mean we are the worst team in Asia...

We qualified for the World Cup on three successive occasions and that's what we're going to do again," said the Iranian striker, whose netted his 51st international goal to become the third all-time top scorer for the country.

Elsewhere in Group A, Esteghlal midfielder Jaloliddin Masharipov scored midway through the first half as Uzbekistan came out on top against North Korea 1-0 in Tashkent.

Asian Cup finalist Jordan and Kuwait played to a 1-1 draw in Amman in Group B, while Aymen Hussein's first-half strike helped Iraq defeat Oman 1-0 at the Basra International Stadium.

Japan got off to flying start in Group C, inflicting a 7-0 humiliation on Branko Ivankovic's China, while Roberto Mancini's Saudi Arabia salvaged a point in a 1-1 draw against Indonesia in Jeddah.

Iranian players celebrate the winner in a 1-0 victory over Kyrgyzstan in the World Cup Asian qualifiers at the Fooladshahr Stadium, Isfahan, Iran, on September 5, 2024.
● FFIRI

Paris Paralympics:

Iran's Pirouj 'disappointed' with javelin silver



Sports Desk

Iranian Ali Pirouj said he was "disappointed" to settle for a silver medal in the men's javelin throw F13 contests at the Paris Paralympics.

Pirouj registered a personal-best record of 69.74m in his third attempt, though it eventually proved not enough for the Iranian to improve on his silver medal in Tokyo three years ago, as Briton Dan Pembroke threw 74.49m with his fourth effort to smash the world record and retain his Paralympic title.

His throw bettered the previous record – set by Aleksandr Svechnikov of Uzbekistan in 2017 – by 3.48m.

Pembroke had already broken Svechnikov's mark with an effort of 71.15m from his third throw. Ulicer Aguilera of Cuba took the bronze with 62.51m.

"It was such a high-level event. The British athlete was brilliant today, though I didn't back off and made my best-ever throw," Pirouj said after the

final.

"Pembroke broke the world record twice but I gave it my all till the end and am so disappointed to end my campaign with the silver," added the Iranian, who also settled for back-to-back runner-up finishes to Pembroke in the past two World Championships.

Pirouj's silver was a 10th para athletics medal for Iran in Paris.

Elsewhere at Stade de France on Thursday, Hassan Bajoulvand took the silver in the men's discus throw F11 class, courtesy of a 41.75m effort – 17 centimeters adrift of Italian gold medalist Oney Tapia – with Spanish Alvaro del Amo Cano finishing on 39.60m for the bronze.

In the men's shot put, Aliasghar Javanmardi grabbed the bronze in the F35 class with a best effort of 15.84m.

Uzbekistan's Khusniddin Norbekov set a new Paralympic record of 16.82m to win the gold, with Hernan Emanuel Urrea of Argentina throwing 16.11m for the runner-up spot.

'Unique milestone' as Ronaldo reaches 900 career goals

BBC – Cristiano Ronaldo reached a significant milestone on Thursday by scoring the 900th goal of his illustrious career.

The 39-year-old struck for Portugal in their Nations League game against Croatia, putting them 2-0 up.

It prompted an emotional celebration by the forward, as he dropped to his knees by the corner flag in tears.

The goal was his 131st for his country, while he has also scored at club level for Sporting Lisbon, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus and current club Al-Nassr.

"It was emotional because it's a milestone," Ronaldo said. "It seems like any other milestone but only I know, and the people around me, how hard it is to work every day, to be physically and psychologically fit, to score 900 goals."

"It's a unique milestone in my career."

Such is Ronaldo's longevity that if someone was born when he scored the first competitive goal of his career they would now be 21.

He struck a double for Portugal's Sporting on 7 October 2002 at the age of 17 years, eight months and three days in a 3-0 win against Moreirense.

He then moved to Manchester United, scoring 118 goals in 293 games for the Red Devils before joining Real Madrid in 2009 for a then world record 94m euros (£80m).

In nine years at the Spanish giants, he scored 450 goals in just 438 games before making the move to Italy to join Juventus.

He added another 101 goals to his tally during his three years with the Italian club before returning to United, where he would score 27 goals in 54 games.

But a return to the Red Devils did not have a fairytale ending – and in 2023 he made the move to Saudi Arabia with Al-Nassr, where he has got 68 goals and counting.

Incredibly, almost half of Ronaldo's goals (437) have been scored since he turned 30 in February 2015.



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates his 900th career goal in a 2-1 victory over Croatia in the UEFA Nations League in Lisbon, Portugal, on September 5, 2024.
● JOSE SENA GOU-LAO/EPA