



Iran's Hossein Tayebi celebrates with teammates after scoring during a 9-4 victory over Guatemala in the FIFA Futsal World Cup in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, on September 19, 2024.
● MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI

FIFA Futsal World Cup: Iran eyeing top spot in the group against France

Sports Desk

The top spot in Group F will be on the line when Iran and France square off in the FIFA

Futsal World Cup in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, today.

Both sides will step onto the court on the back of successive wins in the group – also featuring Venezuela and Guatemala – with Iran sitting atop the table thanks to a superior goal difference and a draw will be enough to send Vahid Shamsaei's men through as the group winners.

Having beaten Venezuela 7-1 in their group opener, the Asian powerhouse came from behind to defeat Guatemala 9-4 on Thursday.

Prolific Saeid Ahmad-Abbasi bagged a hat-trick, with Hossein Tayebi and Player of the Match Salar Aghapour contributing with two goals apiece, while Behrouz Azimi and Mahdi also found the net as Iran recorded its best scoring tally in a single World Cup game since

the 10-6 beating of Paraguay in 1992. Iranian head coach Shamsaei, however, was not impressed by the scoreline, saying: "We won the game, but my face shows what I thought about our performance. I don't like to think about what has happened here."

"I felt my players are thinking they are above the game, and there is no place in my team for that. This is my fault. But at least we won and we are qualified," added Iran's all-time international top scorer, whose team conceded the first goal of the game

against the Central Americans and was held to a 3-3 draw at halftime. France, meanwhile, continued its impressive debut in the global showpiece with a 7-3 victory over the Venezuelans, following the 6-3 triumph against Guatemala on the opening day.

The winner of Group F will play defending champion Portugal or African heavyweight Morocco, which will go head-to-head earlier today in Tashkent, in the round 16 on Thursday, while the runner-up will face Thailand – runner-up to Brazil in Group B – in the knockouts.

Asian Karate Championships:

Double kata bronzes for Iran as Khodabakhshi, Abazari head into finals

Sports Desk

The second day of the Asian Karate Championships in Hangzhou, China, saw Iranian men and women bag a couple of team kata bronze medals, while Mahdi Khodabakhshi and Saleh Abazari headed into the final showpiece of their respective weight classes.

Sepideh Amini, Melika Ezzati, and Zeinab Hosseini bounced back from a last-four loss (40.4-39) to Japan to come out on top against the Philippines (38.5-37.1) and share the third podium of the women's team kata contests with China.

In the men's draw, Ali Zand, Abolfazl Shahrjerdi, and Milad Farazmehr defeated Cambodia and Iraq but were beaten by just a 0.3-point margin against Kuwait – silver medalist in the previous edition – in the semifinals, before a 37.9-34.7 victory over Saudi Arabia clinched a third successive Asian bronze for the Irania trio, which now has five AKF Senior Championships medals

– including a 2021 silver – under its belt.

Meanwhile, Khodabakhshi – a back-to-back Asian team kumite champion with Iran – remained on course for a first individual glory in the competitions thanks to a 6-4 victory over two-time defending champion Mohammad al-Jafari of Jordan in a thrilling men's -84kg semifinal.

Awaiting Khodabakhshi in today's showdown will be Japan's Rikito Shimada, who was beaten by the Jordanian in last year's final.

Today's second Iranian-Japanese kumite final will feature Abazari and Kyo Hirata – Asian champion in 2022 – in the men's +84kg event.

Chasing a second individual gold in Hangzhou, Abazari came out victorious against Muhammad Awais of Pakistan and Uzbekistan's Islombek Ismatullayev and then beat Thailand's Teerawat Kangtong 10-7 for a place in the final.

Iranians will be seeking further kumite medals today as six karatekas will be in action in the third-place bouts of

their respective events.

Taravat Khaksar (-55kg), Atousa Golshadnejad (-61kg) – a gold medalist last year – Mobina Heidari (-68kg), and Shima Al-e Sa'di (+68kg) will be looking for a consolation bronze in the women's competitions, with Behnam Dehghanzadeh – also a 2023 Asian champion – and former world champion Bahman Askari heading into the third-spot deciders in the men's -55kg and -75kg events respectively.

Para karate glory

A total of five medals, including three golds, saw Iran claim the title in the 3rd Asian Para Karate Championships in Hangzhou.

Negar Vasheghani defeated an opponent from Hong Kong for the gold medal in the women's K22 class, with Hafez Hafezikia (K21) and Farzad Safari winning the ultimate prize in the men's competitions.

A second women's medal for Iran came courtesy of Ma'soumeh Iji's silver in the K21 contests, with Rahim Golmohammadi grabbing the bronze in the blind participants' K10 class.

Iran's Zeinab Hosseini (C), Melika Ezzati (R), and Sepideh Amini teamed up for a women's team kata bronze medal at the Asian Karate Championships in Hangzhou, China.
● ikfir



Persian Gulf Pro League:

Alipour off the mark on Reds return; Esteghlal held at Nassaji



Persepolis striker Ali Alipour (red) dribbles past goalkeeper Mohammad Khalifeh to score in a 2-0 win against Iralco in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Tehran, Iran, on September 20, 2024.
● FARSNEWS

Sports Desk

Ali Alipour bagged his first goal on his return to Persepolis as the Tehran Reds defeated Iralco 2-0 in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Friday.

Persepolis archrival Esteghlal, meanwhile, had to come from behind twice to salvage a point in a 2-2 draw at Nassaji Mazandaran. Looking for a perfect response after a 1-0 loss to Al Ahli Saudi in their AFC Champions League Elite opener on Monday, Persepolis got off to flying start at home, finding the net five minutes into game,

thanks to a coolly-taken penalty after Alipour was brought down in the box by Iralco defender Milad Badragheh.

The reigning champion had to wait until the 70th minute to double its lead, when Alipour intercepted a back pass by Iralco's Bahram Goudarzi and then dribbled past young keeper Mohammad Khalifeh before putting it away – a 57th league goal in the Reds shirt for the club's leading marksman in the top-flight history.

The bad news for Persepolis and Spanish head coach Juan Carlos Garrido is that Uzbek winger Oston

Urunov will be a doubt for Wednesday's Tehran derby against Esteghlal after being forced out injured right before the break.

In Qaemshahr's Vatan Stadium, Javad Nekounam's Blues, flying high after a 3-0 beating of Al Gharafa in the ACL Elite, enjoyed more of the ball possession in the first half but trialed by one goal at the break, after French fullback Kevin Yamga sent former teammate Hossein Hosseini the wrong way from the spot.

Ramin Rezaeian continued the impressive start to his Esteghlal career, drawing the visitors level with

a second VAR-awarded penalty of the match in the 63rd minute.

Ex-Persepolis striker Hamed Pakdel restored the lead for Nassaji with a flick-on effort 17 minutes from normal time, but the home side's jubilation was short-lived as substitute Abolfazl Jalali headed home the equalizer for Nekounam's side two minutes later.

A VAR review convinced referee Ali Safaei to show Esteghlal defender Rouzbeh Cheshmi a straight red for denying Nassaji a clear goal opportunity in the stoppage time, a massive blow for the Blues ahead of Wednesday's derby.