

World Taekwondo Junior Championships: Iranian girls grab double golds on Day 1

Sports Desk

Iran got off to a flying start at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, as Parnian Nouri and Aynaz Nasiri bagged a couple of gold medals in the girls' competitions.

Nouri overcame China's Yinuo Xu in an intriguing -52kg final to become the first junior world champion crowned in Chuncheon.

It took until just over 10 seconds remaining of the first round for Nouri to find the breakthrough with a push kick which yielded double two-pointers, as she went on to close it out 4-1.

The Iranian delivered an impressive display throughout the second round, aided by a head kick awarded after a video replay request. Xu put up a strong fight despite falling 11-1 behind, but it was Nouri who prevailed 15-8 to seal a straight-round victory.

Nouri only dropped one round on her way to the final, that coming against Thailand's Panbua Moramat in the round of 16.

Nasiri doubled the country's gold haul thanks to a straight-round triumph over Kazakhstan's Nuray Kaznabek in the -59kg showdown. The two delivered a gripping match

until the end of both rounds, but it was the Iranian who emerged victorious in the end. Nasiri enjoyed a 17cm height advantage over her opponent, but for much of the first round there was only a gam-jeom from Kaznabek which separated the pair. Nasiri finished strongly with a push kick to the body and resulting gam-jeom for Kaznabek which gave her a 4-0 win.

The Iranian girl looked to have control of the second round as she led 3-0, before a stunning head kick by Kaznabek brought her level. However, it was to be Nasiri's day, as she took the second round 5-4 to secure a perfect outcome for the country on the first day of the competition.

It was a remarkable journey to victory for Nasiri, who had to come from behind twice to win her quarterfinal against Serbia's Vanja Rankov and the last-four encounter against Croatian Marija Uglešić.



Iran's Parnian Nouri (red) is seen in action against China's Yinuo Xu in the women's -52kg final at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, on October 1, 2024.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO



AFC Champions League Elite:

Insipid Reds frustrated by home draw; Blues boss Nekounam walks out after defeat

Sports Desk

A night to forget for both Tehran archrivals at the AFC Champions League Elite saw a drab Persepolis side share the points with Pakhtakor in a 1-1 draw at home, with Esteghlal falling to a 2-0 defeat to Al Sadd in Doha on Monday.

The result in the Shahr-e Qods Stadium left Persepolis, having lost to Al Ahli Saudi on the opening day of the competition, still searching for a first continental win since the home victory over Istiklol FC in October last year.

Esteghlal head coach Javad Nekounam, meanwhile, went on to announce his second resignation in five days after the game, bringing an end to weeks of chaos and uncertainty swirling around the Blues bench.

Lackluster Reds

Fresh from last week's win against the city rival in the Iranian league, Persepolis couldn't have asked for a brighter start against the Uzbek opponent when Ali Alipour's fine finish put the home side in front with 40 seconds into the game.

Skipper Vahid Amiri flicked Farshad Ahmadzadeh's corner into the path of Alipour who fired home into the roof of the net from inside the six-yard box to join legendary striker Farshad Piyous as the club's leading marksmen across the Asian club competitions with 11 goals.

However, Persepolis, which looked to be still basking in the euphoric derby triumph, was quick to take foot off the gas as the first half wore on and was lucky to retain the lead at the break after the visitors failed to capitalize on several clear-cut chances.

Pakhtakor's pressure paid off in the second half, with Serbian captain's bagging the equalizer with a sublime curling effort from the edge of the box right before the hour mark.

The introduction of star winger Oston Urunov as well as Issa Alekasir and Angolan striker Lucas João did little to turn things around for the Reds, with the visiting side looking more likely to find a second goal on the counter attacks.

The frustrating draw kept

Persepolis outside the knockout spots of the West Zone's 12-team table ahead of the visit to Al Sadd in three weeks' time.

Blues in limbo

The writing had already been on the wall for Nekounam even before the latest setback.

Having seen a significant portion of the supporters turn against him for his defensive approach to the Tehran Derby as well as his never-ending feud with the club hierarchy, Nekou-

nam handed his resignation on Thursday, only to see his decision rejected with the Al Sadd game looming.

The game at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium could have served as last-ditch attempt to change the fortunes for the manager or, at least, a decent finale to his 15-month spell in charge, during which his team went on a 29-game unbeaten run in the domestic league and narrowly missed out on the top-flight crown last season.

The fulltime whistle, however, put a lid on yet another disappointing performance for the Blues, who have now won just two of their seven games in all competitions this season, losing three - more than they conceded across the entire previous campaign.

Esteghlal skipper Seyyed Hossein Hosseini made a horrific howler to give the home side the lead five minutes before the interval, punching the ball into back of his own net when trying to clear a corner-kick.

The Iranian international keeper still produced some brilliant saves to keep his team in the game, but Akram Afif's spot-kick doubled the advantage for Felix Sanchez's side in the 68th minute, after the Qatari star was brought down in the box by Rouzbeh Cheshmi.

"We knew it would be a tough game against a very strong opponent. Al Sadd is a top team with top players. I had told the team that we couldn't afford to make any mistakes today but individual errors cost us dearly in the end," Nekounam said in the post-match press conference. Asked about his decision to part ways with Esteghlal, Nekounam said: "Now may not be the right time to talk about it. I had made up my mind after the Persepolis game. I'm sure it's for the best of the club." Esteghlal under-21 coach Khosro Heidari is expected to serve as the interim coach for the league game at Havadar on Saturday, with the club hoping to find a permanent replacement before Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr visits next in the Champions League on October 22.

The Portuguese superstar was on the scoresheet as Al Nassr defeated Al Rayyan of Qatar 2-1 in Riyadh for a first win in the ACL Elite campaign.

Riyadh Mahrez and Roger Ibañez scored in the first half to lead Al Ahli to a 2-0 victory over the UAE's Al Wasl in Dubai.



Persepolis center-back Giorgi Gvelesiani (30) goes up for a header during a 1-1 draw against Pakhtakor in the AFC Champions League in Shahr-e Qods Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on September 30, 2024.

● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

