

Qalenoei names Iran's squad for World Cup qualifiers



Sports Desk

Iran's head coach Amir Qalenoei named a 28-man squad for the upcoming fixtures against North Korea and the Kyrgyz Republic in the World Cup Asian qualifiers. Team Melli takes on North Korea in Vientiane, Laos, on Thursday, before playing away to Kyrgyzstan at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek the following Tuesday. Having beaten Qatar 4-1 last time out in the third round of the qualifiers, Iran is top of Group A with 10 points – equal on points with Uzbekistan and six points clear of third-placed UAE – after

four games.

With a top-two finish securing direct qualification for the 2026 finals, maximum points against the bottom two sides of the group will put Iran on the verge of punching ticket for showpiece in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Persepolis center-back Hossein Kan'anizadegan is back in the squad after missing the games against Uzbekistan and Qatar in October with an injury, while Esteghlal midfielder Rouzbeh Cheshmi has received a first international call-up since the AFC Asian Cup in February. Young striker Saeid Saharkhizan

has also been rewarded with a place in the list, thanks to an impressive form with FC Orenburg, which has seen the 21-year-old bag seven goals in 17 games across all competitions since joining the Russian top-flight side from Golgozar Sirjan in July. Elsewhere in Group A on Thursday, reigning Asian champion Qatar – trailing the top two by six points – will host Uzbekistan in Doha's Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, with the United Arab Emirates and the Kyrgyz Republic squaring off in Abu Dhabi. Paulo Bento's UAE will play Qatar at home on Nov. 19, while North

Korea will be back in Vientiane's Lao National Stadium KM16 to face Uzbekistan. The following is Iran's full squad for the double-header:

Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiranvand (Tractor), Payam Niazmand (Sepahan), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Mohammadreza Akhbari (Golgozar Sirjan)

Defenders: Hossein Kan'anizadegan (Persepolis), Ali Ne'mati (Foolad Khuzestan), Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Mohammad-Amin Hazbavi (Sepahan), Mohammad-Mahdi Zare' (Golgozar Sirjan), Milad Mohammadi (Persepolis), Omid Nourafkan (Malavan), Arya

Yousefi (Sepahan), Saleh Hardani (Sepahan)

Midfielders: Saeed Ezzatollahi (Shabab Al Ahli), Mohammad Karimi (Sepahan), Mohammad Qorbani (FC Orenburg), Saman Qoddous (Ittihad Kalba), Mohammad Mohebbi (FC Rostov), Mahdi Qayedi (Ittihad Kalba), Ali Qolizadeh (Lech Poznan), Mohammad-Javad Hosseinnajad (Dinamo Makhachkala), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (SC Heerenveen)

Strikers: Mahdi Taremi (Internazionale), Sardar Azmoun (Shabab Al Ahli), Shahriar Moghanlou (Ittihad Kalba), Saeid Saharkhizan (FC Orenburg), Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (Tractor).

Persian Gulf Pro League: Persepolis back to winning ways as Esteghlal snaps losing streak

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Tehran archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal claimed 1-0 victories over Golgozar Sirjan and Mes Rafsanjan respectively in two rescheduled fixtures from matchday four of the Persian Gulf Pro League. Sepahan, meanwhile, salvaged a point in a 1-1 home draw against Nassaji Mazandaran to go one point clear of Persepolis on top of the table. Beaten 1-0 by Esteghlal Khuzestan last time out in the Iranian top flight, Persepolis had veteran skipper Vahid Amiri's composed finish the second

half to thank for walking away with a massive win in the battle of the league's two teams with the best defensive record.

The result saw Juan Carlos Garrido's men overtake Sepahan in the standings on goal difference and would have finished the day in the first place, had it not been for Steven Nzonzi's last-gasp equalizer against Nassaji later on Saturday. Mersad Seifi's sizzling strike from 25 yards out found the bottom corner to give Nassaji a 27-minute lead in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium.

The visitors, who are rock-bottom in

the table after 10 games, were minutes away from a first win of the campaign before the French midfielder headed home Mohammad Karimi's set piece in the second minute of added time to rescue a point for the home side. This was a final game in charge for Sepahan's interim coach Hugo Almeida, who had taken over from fellow-Portuguese Jose Morais last week and led the club to a much-needed 3-1 victory over Sharjah FC in the AFC Champions League Two.

In Tehran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium, Esteghlal ended a miserable run of five successive defeats across all competitions, while South African head coach Pitso Mosimane – appointed to role in late October – celebrated a first win in his fourth game on the Blues bench. Making only a second start in Esteghlal colors to fill in for injured Ramin Rezaeian, academy fullback and Iran under-20 international Abolfazl Zamani vindicated Mosimane's faith by scoring the match winner, slotting home Milad Zakipour low cross on the far post 10 minutes into the game.

The third league win of the season lifted Mosimane's men to the 10th place in the table with 11 points – 10 adrift of the top – while Mes Rafsanjan was left struggling in 14th spot, with just two points separating Masoud Shojaei's side and relegation-threatened Havadar.



Persepolis skipper Vahid Amiri (1) celebrates after scoring the winner in the 1-0 victory over Golgozar Sirjan in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Sirjan, Iran, on Nov. 9, 2024.
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Iran lines up star-studded teams for wrestling double-header with Russia

Sports Desk

The Wrestling Federation of Iran named the country's freestyle and Greco-Roman squads for a friendly double-header against wrestling powerhouse Russia in Moscow on November 22-23.

Newly-crowned world 82kg champion Mohammadali Geraei will spearhead the Iranian Greco-Roman squad in the Russian capital, with his younger brother Mohammadreza competing in the 72kg contest.

The two will be joined by Iranian prodigy Saeid Esmaeili, who won the 67kg gold at the Paris Olympics in August, with world under-20 champion Ahmadreza Mohsennejad also in contention for the weight class.

Pouya Dadmarz, a silver medalist at the World Championships two weeks ago, will be the Iranian 55kg wrestler in Moscow. Alireza Mohmadi (87kg) and reigning world super-heavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) will make a first appearance since winning an



Olympic silver and bronze respectively.

Ali Ahmadi-Vafa (60kg), Iman Mohammadi (63kg), Ali Oskou (77kg), Mahdi Bali and Shayan Habib-Zare' (97kg) complete the Iranian Greco-Roman lineup.

The Iranian freestyle team will be headlined by two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour (92kg) and Olympic silver medalist Amirhossein Zare' (125kg), while Amirmohammad Yazdani (74kg) will be back in action after missing the

World Championships with injury.

Rahman Amouzad will also be back on the mat for the first time since a 65kg final defeat against Japanese Kotaro Kiyooka in the Paris Games.

Other weight classes will feature Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Reza Mo'meni (61kg), Sina Khalili (70kg), Mahdi Yousefi (79kg), Abolfazl Rahmani (86kg) and Amirhossein Firouzpour (97kg) in thrilling bouts against the Russian opposition.