

Provisional candidates unveiled for Iranian Football Federation presidency

Sports Desk

Reigning president Mahdi Taj is joined by four ex-chiefs of the Iranian Football Federation in the provisional list of candidates for the elections of the national governing body of the sport.

The five-man shortlist may be reduced through a vetting process before the election day on March 1.

A vice-president to AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Taj first took the helm at the federation in 2016 but stepped down from his role three years later, for what he claimed to be a health issue.

He was reelected to the role in August 2022 and went on to replace then-Iran head coach Dragan Skocic by his Portuguese predecessor Carlos Queiroz for the World Cup finals in Qatar.

The most controversial name on the list is Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem, who first took the role in February 2021 but his reign came to a premature end as he was dismissed from his duties less than a year later due to lack of financial transparency, among other ethical misconducts, within the federation during his 11-month stint.

Ali Kaffashian, an ex-secretary general of Iran's National Olympic Committee, will be aiming at a third term at the federation, having been at the helm from March 2008 to May 2016.

A former vice-president to Taj, Kaffashian was in charge of the federation when embarked on his



eight-year spell on Iran bench in 2011, before steering Team Melli to back-to-back qualifications for the World Cup finals.

Former Persepolis CEO Amir Abedini, 76, is the oldest mem-

ber of the pack.

An ex-governor-general of Khorasan, Lorestan, and East Azarbaijan provinces in the 80s, Abedini will be looking to be back in the federation after three

decades, having served at the job on a six-month period in 1994.

Heidar Baharvand, who was the caretaker of the federation for a year after Taj walked out in 2019, is currently the head of the

Iranian League Organization but remains a long-shot candidate for the election day.

Skocic was first appointed to the job on Iran bench during Baharvand's interim stint.



L-R: Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem, Heidar Baharvand, Amir Abedini, Ali Kaffashian, and Mahdi Taj are the provisional candidates for the presidency of the Iranian Football Federation.
● football360.ir

2025 Karate 1-Series A:

Iranians continue impressive run with five more medals



Sports Desk

Iranians kept up the momentum on the second day of the opening Karate 1-Series A event by grabbing five more medals – including a couple of golds – in Tbilisi, Georgia.

On Saturday, former world bronze medalist Sara Bahmanyar came out on top against Turkish girl Rabia Çaliş for the top prize in the women's kumite -50kg contests.

Joining Bahmanyar on the podium was fellow-Iranian Yalda Naqi-Beiranvand, who bounced back from a last-four setback against the Turkish opponent to beat Tiphaine Bonnarde of France for a joint-bronze alongside Ukrainian Daria Pylypiuk.

Iranians won a fourth gold medal

in the Georgian capital through Morteza Karimi, who defeated Zholaman Bigabyl of Kazakhstan in the final showpiece of the men's -60kg contests.

There was further glory for the country in the team kata events, as the Iranian male tiro of Abolfazl Shahrjerdi, Milad Farazmehr, and Ali Zand was joined by the Iranian girls' team – comprising Sepideh Amini, Melika Ezzati, and Zeinab Hosseini – in taking the bronze medals of their respective categories.

Saturday's triumphs came after Iranians had bagged double gold medals and a silver on the preceding night in Tbilisi.

Four-time Asian bronze medalist Fatemeh Sadeqi defeated Lo Sum Man of Hong Kong (41.4-40) to walk

away with the ultimate prize in the women's kata event, while an all-Iranian final saw Mahmoud Ne'mati overcome Mohsen Safarnejad for the gold medal in the men's kumite +84kg weight class. More than 1100 karatekas from 87 countries took part in the three-day opening event of the international karate season.

The Karate 1-Series A will be back in Larnaca, Cyprus, on February 14, with Salzburg and Kuala Lumpur also hosting the series throughout the season.



Iran's Sara Bahmanyar won the women's kumite -50kg gold medal at the Karate 1-Series A event in Tbilisi, Georgia.
● IRNA

Iran's Safdarian wins speed gold in Ice Climbing World Cup

Sports Desk

Iranian ice climber Mohammadreza Safdarian won the men's speed gold in the first UIAA World Cup event of the year in Cheongsong, South Korea.

The Iranian clocked 13.27 seconds to beat Mongolian Kherlen Nyamdoo, who finished the final race in 20.93 seconds, to the top spot.

Safdarian's fellow-Iranian Mohsen Beheshti-Rad settled for the bronze, thanks

to a victory over the host's Kim Min Cheol, despite his time of 12.76 seconds in the third-place race being the fastest across all rounds of the competition.

A second medal for Safdarian came in the lead contest,

where the Iranian scored 30.00 points to finish runner-up to South Korean gold medalist Lee Younggeon (31.10), with Swiss climber Benjamin Bosshard taking the bronze on 28.00 points.

