

# Amini stars, Iran crushes India to seal FIBA Asia Cup spot



Iran's Mohammad Amini (6) goes up for a basket during a victory over India at the FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers in Tehran, Iran, on February 21, 2025.

## Sports Desk

Iran secured its place in August's FIBA Asia Cup in Jeddah thanks to a 106-55 hammering of India at home in Group E of the qualifiers on Friday night.

Eager to get the job done after being foiled by Qatar last November, Team Melli leaned on defense to generate their offense and broke the game wide open in a masterclass of a second quarter that the visitors could never recover.

Mohammad Amini was the star of the show for the home side at Tehran's Azadi Basketball Hall, contributing with a game-high 33 points and seven rebounds.

The 19-year-old winger, playing for French club SLUC Nancy Basket, shot an excellent 14-of-15

from the floor to set the most field goals made in an Asia Cup qualifiers game – two clear of the previous mark set by the trio of Ahmed Haji, Brian Halums, and Freddie Lish on separate occasions.

The young prodigy went a perfect 5-for-5 from beyond the arc as well, tying Karim Zeinoun for most three-pointers in a game without a miss which the Lebanese guard set during a victory over Bahrain in Zouk Mikael back in February 2020.

The former youth team standout was already bound for a big night when he fired 11 in the second period alone, outscoring the entire opposition as Iran went on an overwhelming 28-5 tear to build a commanding 46-20 lead at the half.

It would never get close since, with Amini and the rest of the squad continuing the onslaught to send their foes crashing back down to earth after pulling off a massive 88-69 upset of Kazakhstan in Chennai back in the November window.

Matin Aqajanjpour chipped in 18 points, while Hassan Akbari had 10 as the Asian powerhouse progressed to finals for the 10th straight time – 19th overall.

Veteran Arsalan Kazemi, meanwhile, finished with five points, 10 rebounds, and a pair of steals in an all-around effort.

Now at 4-1 in Group E, the three-time Asia Cup champion will be looking to finish its qualification campaign with a win against Kazakhstan in Astana on Monday.

## AFC U20 Asian Cup:

# World Cup ticket at stake as Iran, Japan square off in quarters

## Sports Desk

A place at September's FIFA U20 World Cup in Chile will be decided when Iran and Japan go head-to-head at the AFC U20 Asian Cup quarterfinals in Shenzhen, China, today.

Wednesday's 2-1 victory over Uzbekistan saw Iran make a clean sweep of three wins to beat the defending champion to the top spot in Group C.

Yousef Mazraeh gave Iran the lead seven minutes into the second half, before Esmail Qoilzadeh found the net for the spot 14 minutes later to join South Korean Kim Tae-won on top of the leading marksmen chart with three strikes, with Brentford loanee Mukhammadali Urinboev pulling one back for Uzbekistan nine minutes from normal time –

the first goal conceded by Iran in three matches.

Japan, meanwhile, has had a mixed campaign so far, as the Blue Samurai managed a single victory in the group phase – a 3-0 beating of Thailand in their opener – finishing runner-up to South Korea in Group D after a 1-1 stalemate against their familiar foe on Thursday.

However, Iran head coach Hossein Abdi will still be hoping to see his boys build on their solid defensive performance in China when taking on the 2016 champion and semifinalist in the previous two editions.

"There's little time left to make major changes or improvements. We've already done the work that needed to be done, and now we're fully focused on fighting through each match," said the

Iranian, whose team began its bid for a first Asian under-20 crown since 1976 with a 3-0 beating of Indonesia before routing Yemen 6-0.

"We're moving forward, adjusting our approach based on the strengths of our upcoming opponents, and preparing for the quarterfinal. But we're taking it one step at a time."

Abdi's opposite number on the Japanese bench, Yuzo Funakoshi, has full faith in his side despite a shaky group display.

"Iran will be a tough opponent, they are physically imposing, technically strong and dangerous in the air, especially with their long balls," said Funakoshi.

"It will be a challenging match, but we are focused on playing our way. We believe in our style, and we'll be aiming for the win."



Iranian players celebrate a goal during a 2-1 victory over Uzbekistan at the AFC U20 Asian Cup in Shenzhen, China, on February 20, 2025.

## 2025 Asia Cup:

# Iranian archer Bybordi wins compound bronze



## Sports Desk

Iranian archer Geesa Bybordi won a bronze medal at the 2025 Asia Cup – also serving as the World Ranking Tournament, Stage 1 – in Bangkok, Thailand, on Saturday.

The Iranian girl bounced back from a last-four setback (142-139) against South Korean Han Seung-yeon to

edge out Indian Chikitha Taniparthi 144-143 for a third-spot finish in the women's compound event.

The bronze medal saw the Iranian qualify for the 2025 World Games – starting August 7 in Chengdu, China.

Han, meanwhile, went on to defeat Kazakhstan's Roxana Yunussova 145-142 in the final showpiece.

## Karate1 Youth League:

# Jafarnejad grabs gold as Iran collects three junior medals

## Sports Desk

Fatemeh Jafarnejad spearheaded Iran's medal hunt on Day 2 of the Karate 1 Youth League series opener in Fujairah, UAE, by winning a kumite gold in the women's junior contests on Friday.

The Iranian girl came out on top against Russian Alina Arapova – participating as a neutral athlete – to walk away with the ultimate prize of the -48kg weight class.

In the men's junior competitions, Mohammad-Hossein Farahani settled for a silver medal after a loss to Armenian Suren Kosakyan in the 76kg final, while Abolfazl Lori Goueini finished his -61kg campaign with a joint

bronze alongside Dutch karateka Devon Lepez.

Friday's results medals came after the Iranians had nine kumite under-21 medals – including triple golds – on the preceding night in Fujairah.

Abolfazl Hamdamjou (men's -61kg), Fatemeh Yousefi (women's -55kg), Hannaneh Salehi (women's +68kg) were the Iranian gold medalists, with Paria Alizadeh taking the silver medal in the women's -61kg

event. Mohammad Shirsefat, Sepehr Arabi (men's -61kg), Mehrnegar Ahmadi (women's -61kg), Mohammad-Javad Safari and Siavash Dehqani (men's -75kg) added five bronzes to Iran's medal haul.

The inaugural Karate 1 Youth League will continue with the cadet competitions today, with the event returning with the second series in the Spanish city of Guadalajara on April 3.



Iranian girl Fatemeh Jafarnejad (2nd L) poses with her gold medal in the kumite -48kg contests at the Karate1 Youth League in Fujairah, UAE, on February 21, 2025.