

FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers:

Iran eases past Kazakhstan
in dead rubber to win group

Sports Desk

Iran marched to an 88-45 victory at Kazakhstan on Monday to clinch the top spot in Group E of the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup.

Sina Vahidi contributed with a game-high 20 points for Iran, plus 4 rebounds and assists apiece, while Matin Aqajanzadeh finished on 16 points, dropping half of the team's 8 three-pointers, as all players of Greek coach Sotirios Manolopoulos got on the scoresheet.

Mohammad Amini, the star of the show for Iran in Friday's victory over India, chipped in 13 points and 7 rebounds off the bench in a game that saw Team Melli shoot an excellent 55.1% from the floor, thanks to their 22 assists as a collective.

Iran finished the qualifiers with a 5-1 record after a clean sweep of double wins in the final window, with the three-time Asian champion's lone defeat coming against Qatar, and former Iran coach Hakan Demir, last November.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Demir's charges outperformed India 81-61 at home, with a third successive win helping the Qataris finish

runner-up to Iran in the group with a 4-2 record.

American-born Tyler Harris starred in the victory with 24 points, nailing his first seven shots from the field without a miss.

Ndoye Seydou went an efficient 6-of-8 from the floor and ended up with 15 points, while the debuting Donte Grantham came through with 11 points, 6 rebounds, and 6 assists. The Indians will still fancy their chances of a place in the finals in Jeddah, after a third-place finish in the group table – courtesy of head-to-head advantage against Kazakhstan – sent them into the six-team Final Qualifying Tournament.

Joining Iran and Qatar in August's main event are host Saudi Arabia, as well as two-time reigning champion Australia, Japan, Philippines, New Zealand, Lebanon, Jordan, South Korea, Syria, and China – the most decorated team in the continent's flagship international event with 16 titles – with four spots remaining up for grabs.

Iran, a back-to-back champion in 2007 and 2009, will be chasing a first Asian crown since 2013, having finished third in 2015 before the final defeat against Australia in the 2017 edition.



Iranian players are pictured ahead of the game against Kazakhstan in the FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers in Oskemen, Kazakhstan, on Feb. 24, 2025.



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ITTF Table Tennis World Ranking:
Iran's Faraji up by 20 spots,
sits seventh in U19 class

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Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji enjoyed a 20-spot jump to stand 166th in the latest ITTF World Ranking – released on Tuesday.

The remarkable rise came after the Iranian wunderkind, a world under-15 bronze medalist last year, walked away with the runner-up trophy at the WTT Youth Contender event in Cappadocia, Turkey, earlier in the month – courtesy of a 3-2 defeat against

the host's Gorkem Ocal.

Faraji, 17, still dropped by one place to sit 15th in the under-19 age class of the World Youth Ranking, while retaining the seventh place in the under-17 category with 4700 points.

Meanwhile, Noshad Alamiyan remained the highest-ranked Iranian in the men's standings, with a two-spot drop leaving him 55th. Alamiyan had a disappointing run in last week's ITTF-ATTU Asian Cup in Shenzhen, China, as defeats against Chinese world

No. 2 Wang Chuqin and Yukiya Uda of Japan, either side of a victory over Qatari Ahmed Korani, saw the Iranian crash out in the group stage.

Navid Shams is the second best among the Iranian men, standing 160th in the ranking, while Alamiyan's younger brother, Nima, stood in the 204th place. Nima Alamiyan also suffered three defeats against opponents from China, Japan, and South Korea to finish bottom in the group in Shenzhen.

Galatasaray accuse Mourinho of making 'racist statements'

BBC – Galatasaray said they would "initiate criminal proceedings" against Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho after claiming he made "racist statements" following the teams' 0-0 draw on Monday.

It was not clear which statements Galatasaray were referring to.

Speaking in the news conference after the Istanbul derby, Mourinho said the home bench had been "jumping like monkeys" and also repeated his criticism of Turkish referees, saying it would have been a "disaster" to use an official from the country.

Monday's match was refereed by Slovenian Slavko Vincic after both clubs requested a foreign official take charge of the fixture.

As well as the threat of legal action, Galatasaray said they would submit "official complaints" to football's governing bodies.

After the game Mourinho was asked about the performance of 19-year-old defender Yusuf Ak-

cicek and said: "I have to thank the referee. After the big dive in the first minute and their bench jumping like monkeys on the top of the kid... with a Turkish referee you would have a yellow card after one minute and after five minutes I would have to change him."

He added: "I went to the referee's dressing room after the game, of course the fourth official was there, a Turkish referee. I told him 'thank you for coming here, you come for a big match' and I turned myself to the fourth official and I said 'if you were a referee this match would be a disaster'."

In a statement, Galatasaray said: "Since the commencement of his managerial duties in Turkey, Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho has persistently issued derogatory statements directed towards the Turkish people. Today, his discourse has escalated beyond merely immoral comments into unequivocally inhumane rhetoric.

"We hereby formally declare our intention to initiate criminal proceedings concerning the racist statements made by Jose Mourinho, and shall accordingly submit official complaints to UEFA and FIFA.

"Furthermore, we shall diligently observe the stance adopted by Fenerbahce - an institution professing to uphold 'exemplary moral values' - in response to the reprehensible conduct exhibited by their manager."

Two-time Champions League winner Mourinho, 62, was appointed Fenerbahce manager last summer and was banned and fined earlier this season for condemning refereeing standards in Turkey.

Before Monday's game he had welcomed the decision to use a foreign official after previously describing the environment in the country as "toxic".

"I think it's important for the credibility, for the image of the match," Mourinho said.

