

Women's Volleyball Premier League: Saipa defeats Paykan, crowned Iranian champion



Sports Desk

Saipa was crowned the Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League champion, thanks to a 3-1 victory over Paykan in Tehran.

Having won the first game of the best-of-three series in four sets on Tuesday, Saipa repeated the scoreline on Thursday to defend its title.

Saipa had to bounce backs from a 27-25 loss in the first set to come out victorious 25-20, 25-17, and 25-19 and lift third top-flight crown under head coach Samira Imani.

The triumph also secured a place for Imani's girls at the inaugural AVC Women's Champions League – starting April in Pasig, Philippines.

Saipa will be drawn in Group C of the 12-team tournament alongside China's Beijing BAIC Motor and Vietnamese champion VTV Binh Dien Long An.

Saipa had registered a remarkable 16 victories – conceding a single defeat – to finish atop the league table and then rallied

from behind to beat Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan in the last-four best of three series.

Foolad and the Iranian under-20 side jointly finished on the third podium.

There was further glory for Saipa girls in the awarding ceremony, as Mahsa Saberi was named the Most Valuable Player at the 24th edition of the competition, while sharing the Best Outside Hitter prize with teammate Mahsa Kadkhoda.

Saipa's Soudabeh Baqerpour and Paykan's Zahra Karimi were the joint Best Middle Blockers, with Sepinoud Dast-Barjen of the Iranian under-20 team taking the award for Best Opposite. Saipa's Shabnam Alikhani won the Best Setter award and Paykan's Negar Kiani taking the Best Libero prize.

Saipa players celebrate after a 3-1 victory over Paykan in the second game of the Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League final in Tehran, Iran, on March 13, 2025.

● VOLLEYBALL.IR

Persian Gulf Pro League: Sepahan held at Nassaji, suffers blow in title race

Sports Desk

Sepahan was dealt a massive blow in its bid for a first Persian Gulf Pro League title in a decade after sharing the spoils in a 1-1 stalemate at Nassaji Mazandaran on Thursday. Reza Shekari gave the visitors a 43rd-minute lead at the Vatan Stadium, tapping in from close range on a Kaveh Rezai's low cross, before Kevin Yamga drew Nassaji level in the seventh minute of added time in the first half.

Nassaji was given a penalty after Sepahan defender Siavash Yazdani was deemed to have fouled Aref Rostami in the box

following a VAR review. The Frenchman had his spot-kick saved by Sepahan keeper Payam Niazmand but found the net on the rebound.

A fifth draw in six top-flight outings – third on the bounce – saw Sepahan go one point clear of Tractor on top of the table – before third-place Persepolis's home game against Malavan on Friday – but the Tabriz-based club, having two games in hand, could move back on top when taking on Golgozar Sirjan at home on Sunday.

Nassaji is second from bottom in the 16-team table with 20 points.

Elsewhere, Khaybar de-

feated Chadormalou 2-0 at home to sit six points clear of the relegation zone. Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi converted a spot kick in the 37th minute before Amirhossein Jeddi doubled Khaybar's lead three minutes later.

Shams Azar also claimed a massive victory in its survival battle, defeating bottom-club Havadar 3-2 in Tehran.

Goals from Hومان Rabi-zadeh and Mojtaba Fakhri-an inside four minutes saw the visiting side take a two-goal lead at halftime. Australian Matthew Millar pulled one back for the home side in the 57th minute but

Abbas Habibi restored the two-goal cushion for Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati's side 12 minutes later.

Mojtaba Haqdoust's 77th-minute strike proved to be just a consolation for Havadar, as Shams Azar moved up to 13th with 24 points.



Nassaji Mazandaran midfielder Siamak Nemati (1) challenges Sepahan's Bryan Dabo during a 1-1 draw in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Shahid Vatan Stadium, Qaemshahr, Iran, on March 13, 2025.

● MOHAMMAD MAHDIZADEH/ FOOTBALL.NET



Curry becomes first in NBA history to make 4,000 3-pointers

AP – Stephen Curry's shooting range and accuracy from way back have long stood alone – whether with a defender or two in his face or when letting it fly from the logo.

Now, the NBA's career leader in 3-pointers has reached new territory from beyond the arc: Golden State's star guard is the first player in league history to reach 4,000 3s.

He did it a day before his 37th birthday, as the Warriors extended their winning streak to a season-best six games with a 130-104 victory over the Sacramento Kings in San Francisco. His 4,000th came from the right wing and under pres-

sure off a pass from Moses Moody with 8:19 left in the third quarter, on his fourth attempt of the night.

Fans jumped to their feet and roared when Curry made it, and a tribute played on the big screen during a timeout shortly after. It included a congratulatory message from former Warriors big man Andris Biedrins of Latvia who dished out the assist on Curry's first 3.

The two-time NBA MVP needed two more from deep coming into Thursday night's game at Chase Center. He hit his first from the left wing with 5:35 remaining in the opening quarter. Smothered by Keegan Mur-

ray or DeMar DeRozan, Curry missed on his second attempt from near the top of the arc — after teammate Draymond Green scored the first six points on a pair of 3s and 7-footer Quinten Post also had two 3s.

Curry hit the front rim with his next try, a 30-footer four minutes before halftime. He could sense how everybody in the building couldn't wait.

"I could feel the energy and the buzz from the beginning of the game after I made my first 3, even the second one I shot and missed it was an adrenaline rush, and they were with me every moment of the game tonight," Curry said.



Warriors guard Stephen Curry celebrates his 4,000th career 3-point basket during an NBA win against the Sacramento Kings in San Francisco, CA, US, on March 13, 2025. D.

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