

FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup:

Iran holds off Mauritania fightback to win opener

Sports Desk

Iran had to survive a spirited comeback from Mauritania to edge out the African newcomers 5-4 in their Group B opener at the 2025 Beach Soccer World Cup in Victoria, Seychelles.

Bicycle kicks from Reza Amirizadeh and Movahed Mohammadpour put Iran, which finished third in the previous World Cup edition in Dubai last year, in the driver's seat at the Paradise Arena.

Cheikh Belkheir pulled one back for the Northwest African side, but Mahdi Shirmohammadi's sublime volley restored the two-goal cushion for Ali Naderi's men, before Mohammadali Mokhtari made it 4-1 with nine seconds remaining in the first period. When Mokhtari netted his second goal of the day less

than four minutes after the restart, the reigning Asian champion thought it was headed for a comfortable opening-day victory but the Mauritania had other ideas.

Belkheir rounded off his man-of-the-match performance with two more goals either side of an Ahmedou Bilal's strike, forcing Iran to hold on late in the third period to avoid a first major upset of the tournament.

Iranian scorer Mohammadpour blamed the unfamiliar circumstances for his side's shaky start in the event, saying: "The first match of each tournament is so hard. We have to adapt to things because we are not familiar with the sand, so we tried to improve our teamwork. Mauritania started to pressure our defense and pressed us man to man, which took up

a lot of energy and made it difficult for us."

Mokhtari, meanwhile, said he and his teammates would have "to learn from our mistakes [against Mauritania] to improve for our future outings in the tournament."

Next for Iran is a game against Paraguay today, before Naderi's man square off against Portugal on the final day of the group fixtures on Monday.

A 20-goal thriller later on Thursday saw Miguel Pinatado and Be Martins score a hat-trick apiece to help two-time champion Portugal beat Paraguay 11-9 and move atop the group table.



Reza Amirizadeh (1) scores Iran's first goal during a 5-4 victory over Mauritania at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Victoria, Seychelles, on May 1, 2025.

● FIFA



Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships:

Under-17 Iranians finish with seven medals

Sports Desk

Iranian young guns enjoyed an impressive run at the inaugural Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships in Amman, Jordan, by collecting seven medals across different under-17 categories. Amir-Ali Mehrabi was the sole Iranian gold medalist in the Jordanian capital, walking away with the ultimate prize of the boys' 60kg contests – thanks to victories

over opponents from Iraq, India, Japan, and Uzbekistan. Representing the country in the 48kg class, Zobeir Isazehi beat boxers from the Chinese Taipei, and India to reach the final showpiece, before a setback against the Uzbek fighter saw the Iranian boy settle for a silver medal. Navid Rezaei added a second silver to Iran's medal haul following a final defeat – also against an Uzbek opponent – in the boys' 63kg final.

Amir-Mahdi Ezzati (70kg) and Farhoud Qorbani (+80kg) also finished their campaigns with double silver medals, while Amir-Mahdi Akbari (46kg) and Ehsan Zolfi (57kg) took a couple of consolation bronzes in their respective categories.

Parsa Motevallian was the only member of the Iranian eight-man squad to miss out on a medal in Amman, following a first-round loss to Indian Udham Singh.

Iran had bagged a silver medal and three bronzes in the under-15 contests earlier in Amman.

Morteza Rahimi settled for a runner-up finish in the boys' 49kg event after a final defeat against the Kazakh boxer, with Aref Zivdar (46kg), Mohammadreza Zare' Atabaki (52kg), and Mohammad-Taha Najafi (55kg) standing on the third podium of their respective weight classes.



● iranaiba.ir

Knicks see off Pistons to set up Celtics semi-final

BBC – Jalen Brunson scored 40 points – including a game-winning three-pointer – as the New York Knicks sealed a 4-2 series win against the Detroit Pistons.

The 28-year-old, who last week was named the Clutch Player of the Year, found the bucket with 4.3 seconds left on the clock to give the Knicks a 116-113 victory in game six.

The victory means the Knicks will face 18-time Championship winners and defending champions the Boston Celtics in the NBA Eastern Conference semi-final play-offs.

"I stay poised and I rely on the trust and the composure that my team-mates give me," Brunson said. "None of this happens without them."

Brunson finished with four rebounds and seven assists alongside his 40-point haul, with Mikal Bridges scoring 25 points and OG Anunoby adding 22 at Little Caesars Arena

in Detroit.

Elsewhere, James Harden recorded 28 points as the Los Angeles Clippers took their play-off against the Denver Nuggets to game seven with a 111-105 victory in Inglewood, California.

The Clippers needed to win in game six to keep their play-off hopes alive

but they struggled against a fine display from Nikola Jokic, who weighed in with 25 points, eight assists and seven rebounds for Denver.

But Harden stole the show, adding eight assists and six rebounds as the Clippers aim for their first NBA Championship.

"James did a great job set-

ting the tone early, scoring the basketball and getting downhill and making the right play," Clippers coach Tyronn Lue said.

"Norman [Powell] made some big shots at the end and Kawhi [Leonard] was steady throughout the game. I thought those guys really stepped up and came ready to play."



● NBA

Malavan legend Bahman Salehnia dies at 86

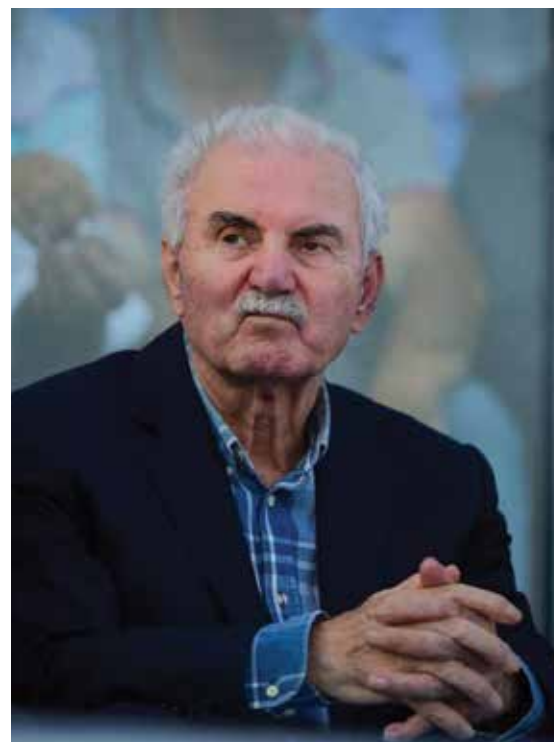
Sports Desk

Bahman Salehnia, a cult hero among the fans of Persian Gulf Pro League club Malavan FC, passed away at the age of 86 in the early hours of Thursday.

Salehnia founded the northern Iranian club in his hometown of Bandar Anzali in 1968 and went on to serve as the head coach until 1997. He returned to Malavan bench for a second spell from 2002 to 2004.

An assistant to former Iran head coach Frank O'Farrell in the 70s, Salehnia steered Malavan to six Iranian cup finals – a record for any head coach in the history of the competition – lifting the trophy on three occasions in 1976, 1987, and 1991.

Malavan's best-ever finish in the Iranian top flight also came under



● AMIR GOLRIZ/PHOTOAMAN

Salehnia, when he guided the club to the third place in the Takht Jam-

shid League table at the end of the 1977-78 season.