

FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup: Iran crashes out after last-eight heartbreak

Sports Desk

Iran was knocked out of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup after a last-eight 4-3 defeat against Belarus in Victoria, Seychelles, on Thursday. Having finished third in its last two appearances in the competition, the Asian champion took the lead through Mohammad Ma'soumi less than a minute before the first interval but Belarusian talisman Ihar Bryshtsel leveled the scoreline with a penalty midway through the second period at the Paradise Arena. Bryshtsel and Yahor Hardzetski scored two quick-fire goals in the early stages of the third period before Anatoliy Ryabko headed home to give Belarus a commanding lead with seven minutes remaining. Ma'soumi pulled one back for Iran and Movahed Mohammadpour cut the deficit to one with 37 seconds left on the clock but the late fight-back proved too little, too late as Belarus held on to avenge the 6-1 loss to Iran in the third-place contest in Dubai last year.

Belarus will take on Senegal for a place in the final showpiece today. Mamour Diagne scored with two seconds left in extra time as Senegal came from behind to stun last year's finalist Italy 4-3 on later on Thursday. Six-time champion Brazil, meanwhile, continued its title defense with an emphatic 6-0 victory over Spain. Rodrigo delivered yet another man-of-the-match performance with a couple of goals in the first period as the Seleção set a last-four date with Portugal. Having beaten Iran to the top spot in Group B, Portugal had a Jordan hat-trick and a last-gasp Miguel Pintado bicycle kick to thank for beating Japan 7-6 in a thrilling quarterfinal to remain on course for a third World Cup trophy.

Iranian skipper Mohammadali Mokhtari (L) makes a bicycle-kick effort during a 4-3 defeat against Belarus at the Beach Soccer World Cup quarterfinals in Victoria, Seychelles, on May 8, 2025. **TULLIO PUGLIA/FIFA**



AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup: Iran beat Hong Kong to progress



AFC – Defending champions Iran secured their place in the quarter-finals after defeating Hong Kong, China 3-1 in their AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup Group B tie in Hohhot, China, on Friday. The win took Iran to six points – level with Vietnam who also qualified – with the two to meet on Sunday to decide the group winners. Having opened their campaign with a hard-fought 1-0 win over the Philippines, Iran took time to find their rhythm, with Fatemeh Hosseini testing Hong Kong, China goalkeeper Ng Cheuk Wai in the fifth minute.

Iran's pressure came to fruition in the 10th minute after Fereshteh Karimi's effort rattled the left post with the rebound falling kindly for Elham Anafjeh to tap the ball home. Hong Kong, China, however, maintained their feisty demeanour to level the tie two minutes later after Nastaran Moghimi turned Tsang Lai Mae Halasan's effort into her own net. A 5-3 defeat to Vietnam in their opener meant Hong Kong, China needed the points to salvage their campaign but their efforts of the first half were undone by a costly mistake in the 26th minute.

A poor pass from Kung Yuet Charis to Chan Wing Sze was caught out by Mahtab Banaei, who powered her way through to fire past Ng. Iran piled on the pressure and put the game beyond Hong Kong, China's reach in the 37th minute after Maral Torkaman laid the ball for Anafjeh to drill a low shot into the bottom right corner to claim her second goal of the evening.

Iranian players celebrate a goal during a 3-1 win against Hong Kong, China at AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup in Hohhot, China, on May 9, 2025. **AFC**

Persian Gulf Pro League: Persepolis remains in ACL Elite contention; Nassaji relegated

Sports Desk

Oston Urunov scored a stoppage-time winner as Persepolis came from behind to beat Khaybar 2-1 in Khorramabad in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Thursday, keeping its hopes alive of booking a place in the AFC Champions League Elite next season. Nassaji Mazandaran, meanwhile, will have to start next campaign in the second-tier league after a 3-3 stalemate against newly-crowned champion Tractor secured a bottom-two finish for the northern Iranian side. Two points behind second-place Sepahan before the penultimate round of fixtures, Persepolis was stunned in the 25th minute when a Farid Amiri's flick-on header went past Algerian goalkeeper Alexis Guendouz, who was replaced by Amirreza Rafiei at halftime due to a muscle injury. Turkish head coach Ismail Kartal made several changes to the starting XI in the second half and it paid off as Farshad Ahmadzadeh headed home the equalizer in the 65th minute before teeing up

fellow-substitute Urunov for the last-gasp winner. The hard-fought victory saw the Tehran Reds move level on 57 points with Sepahan, which was held to a 1-1 draw at bottom-club Havadar. Kaveh Rezaei found the net for the visitors with 18 minutes from normal time to cancel out Karim Eslami's first-half strike. Sepahan still sits above Persepolis in the table – thanks to a superior head-to-head record – before welcoming Esteghlal on the final day, with the Reds, who will face relegated Havadar at home on Thursday, hoping for a favor from their archrivals to seal a spot in the Asian elite clubs' competition. Elsewhere, Amirhossein Samdaliri and Kevin Yamga were on the scoresheet as Nassaji rallied from behind twice to salvage a point in Tabriz, but it proved to be just a consolation for the visiting side. The result also means Tractor will miss out on the 70-point mark, though Dragan Skocic's side could still match the record 68-point tally – set by Esteghlal in 2022 and Persepolis last season

– with an away win against Esteghlal Khuzestan on the final day. Mes Rafsanjan, meanwhile, is guaranteed a place in the Iranian top flight next season despite suffering a 2-1 loss at Zob Ahan. Mahmaoud Qaed-Rahmati and Morteza Tabrizi scored for the home before Mohammad Akbari cut the deficit to one late in the first half. Mes is third from bottom in the 16-team table with 27 points – five clear of the safety zone before the dead-rubber at home against Khaybar on Thursday. Mohammadreza Soleimani bagged a brace inside seven minutes after the break to cancel out Shahin Tavakkoli's ninth-minute own goal and help Foolad beat Esteghlal Khuzestan in the Ahvaz derby. Esteghlal shared the spoils with Chadormalou in a goalless game at Tehran's Azadi Stadium, while Iralco and Malavan played to a 1-1 draw in Arak. Fifth-placed Golgozar Sirjan continued its impressive campaign with a 1-0 home victory over Shams Azar, courtesy of Ousmane Ndong's first-half goal.



Persepolis winger Oston Urunov (70) celebrates with teammates after scoring the winner in a 2-1 victory over Khaybar in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Khorramabad, Iran, on May 8, 2025. **VARZESH3.COM**

Asian Canoe Sprint Championships: Iranians collect double silver medals

Sports Desk

Iranians won three medals, including a couple of silvers, on Day 2 of the

Asian Canoe Sprint Championships in Nanchang, China. Representing the country in the men's K1 1000m event, Ali Aqamir-

zaei clocked 3:49.947 minutes in the final to settle for a runner-up finish behind the host's Zhang Dong – a gold medalist at the Asian Games on

home soil two years ago. Mohammad-Nabi Mirzaei also finished his men's C1 1000m campaign with a silver medal after finishing the final race in 4:19.026 minutes. In the women's competitions, Tania Kargarpour took the bronze in the K1 1000m event with 4:29.992 minutes

in the final. Meanwhile, the Iranian quadruple of Aqamirzaei, Kargarpour, Elnaz Shafieian, and Payman Qavidel missed out on the podium in the mixed K4 1000m event, clocking 1:35.729 minutes to finish fourth behind China, Japan, and Kazakhstan.