

Volleyball Nations League:

Iran names 16-man squad for Week 1



Iranian national team players are pictured in a training session in Tehran, Iran, on May 21, 2025.
● SEPIDE ABDOLHAY/volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza announced Iran's 16-man squad for the first week of action at the 2025 Volleyball Men's Nations League – starting June 11 in Rio de Janeiro.

Having signed a two-year contract – with the option for a two-year extension – with the Iranian Volleyball Federation, the Italian coach arrived in Tehran last week to embark on what he described as “a new project”, with the ultimate goal of qualifying for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Having enjoyed an impressive 12 months with Foolad Sirjan, opposite-spiker Ali Hajipour is the surprise absentee in Piazza's list as the Iranian Premier League MVP was named in the country's Team B for the upcoming CAVA Men's Nations League, which will kick off in Fergana, Uzbekistan, on Thursday.

Opposite-spiker Amin Esmailnejad, who had a prolific season with Skra Belchatow in the Polish PlusLiga, will again be the man to watch in the rejuvenated Iranian squad, while setter and team captain Javad Karimi and outside-hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh are also expected to play a essential role after impressive seasons with Brazil's Minas Tênis Clube and Lube in the Italian Serie A, respectively.

Iran will begin its VNL campaign with formidable tests against volleyball heavyweights Brazil and USA.

Piazza's men will take on the host on June 11 and then face the United States at the Maracanãzinho venue the following day.

A third game for Iran in Rio de Janeiro will come against last year's semi-finalist Slovenia on June 13.

Iran will conclude the first week of the preliminaries against debutant Ukraine on June 15, before heading to Belgrade for Week 2.

The top eight of the 16-team table after three weeks will progress to the VNL Finals – starting with the quarterfinals on July 30 in the Chinese city of Ningbo. The following is Iran's full squad for the VNL Week 1:

Setters: Javad Karimi (captain), Arshia Behnejad

Opposite spikers: Amin Esmailnejad, Bardia Sa'adat, Pouya Aryakhah

Outside hitters: Morteza Sharifi, Amirhossein Esfandiar, Ehsan Danehdoust, Ali Haqqarast, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh

Middle blockers: Mohammad Valizadeh, Yousef Kazemi, Seyyed Issa Naseri, Matin Ahmadi

Liberos: Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Arman Salehi

Sports Desk

Freestyle wrestler Kamaran Qasempour secured the 86kg spot in the Iranian 10-man squad for September's World Championships in Zagreb, thanks to a 3-1 victory over Abolfazl Rahmani at Tehran's Ebrahim Hadi Hall on Tuesday.

An early passivity point was followed by Qasempour's trademark single-leg take-down 10 seconds before the interval as the two-time world champion took a 3-0 lead at the break.

A world under-20 bronze medalist last year, Rahmani desperately pushed to reduce the deficit in the second period but only settled for a single passivity point in the closing stages of the contest.

Qasempour had been ruled out of the International Takhti Cup earlier in May – part of the Iranian world trials – with a positive coronavirus test, but was given a second chance by the Iranian Wrestling Federation in Tuesday's domestic head-to-head against the

Takhti Cup gold medalist.

Once the dominant force of the 92kg class with back-to-back world golds in 2021 and 2022, Qasempour moved up to the Olympic 97kg category ahead of last summer's Paris Games, but ultimately missed out on a spot in the Iranian freestyle team in the French capital.

Qasempour switched weight class again in a bid to compete in the 86kg contests at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

The 28-year-old Iranian is the sixth freestyle wrestler to book a ticket of Croatian capital.

Reigning world champion and Olympic silver medalist Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) and Ali Mo'meni (57kg) won the gold medal in their respective events at the Takhti Cup to secure the world spot, joining Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan, Rahman Amouzad, and Amirhossein Firouzpour. Mohammadnejad-Javan will be the Iranian 61kg wrestler, thanks to a gold-winning run at February's Zagreb Open, as well as an

Asian bronze in March. Olympic silver winner Amouzad will chase a second world 65kg gold after domestic rivals Yassin Rezaei and Ali Khorramdel had below-par runs at the Ranking Series season-opener in the Croatian capital, while Firouzpour's gold-winning runs at the Asian Championships and Zagreb Open, convinced the Iranian coaching staff to pick him for the world 92kg contests.

The 70kg, 74kg, 79kg, and 97kg slots remain up for grabs and will be decided through the international events and the domestic trials in the coming months, starting with the third Ranking Series event of the year, which kicks off in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Thursday.



Iranian freestyle 86kg wrestler Kamaran Qasempour (L) has his hand raised as the winner after beating Abolfazl Rahmani in a World Championships trial in Tehran, Iran, on May 27, 2025.

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Qasempour defeats Rahmani to book world 86kg spot



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Asian Athletics Championships:

Iran's Taftian into men's 100m semifinals

Sports Desk

The second day of the Asian Athletics Championships saw Iranian sprinter Hassan Taftian progress to the men's 100m semifinals in Gumi, South Korea. An Asian gold medalist in 2017, Taftian clocked 10.47 seconds to finish third in Tuesday's qualification race – behind Oman's Malham Al Balushi and China's Wang Shengjie, with fourth-place Malaysian Jonathan Nyepa also advancing to the next round.

Taftian – also a 2023 bronze winner at the competition – will continue his quest for a third Asian medal in today's semifinal race at the Gumi Civic Stadium.

Meanwhile, Iran's Ali Amirian and Seyyed Amir Zamanpour secured a place in the men's 1500 final, thanks to third-place finishes in their respective semifinal races. Amirian crossed the finish line in 3:51.73 minutes, following the host's Jaeung Lee (3:50.33) and Japanese Kazuto Iizawa (3:50.35), while Zamanpour registered a time of 3:47.97 minutes to finish

behind Nanami Arai (3:46.92) of Japan and Indian Yoonus Shah (3:46.96).

The Iranian duo will compete in the final showdown today.

Melika Norouzi was the only Iranian girl in action on Tuesday and settled for a ninth-place finish in the hammer throw final with a 59.18 effort.

China's Ji Li grabbed the gold with a best throw of 72.98m, with her compatriot Li Jiangyan (69.13) and Ya Chien Yu (64.25) of the Chinese Taipei winning the silver and bronze medals.