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So are you saying no specific instructions were given for that particular match?  
Not at all.

Still, the silver lining for our national team in this tournament was securing a spot in the World Cup. Our team is now set to compete in the first-ever Women's Futsal World Cup against some of the world's best. In your opinion, how big is the gap between our level – and Asian futsal in general – and the global powerhouses of the sport?

The reality is that the level of competition at the World Cup is on a completely different level compared to Asian tournaments. Our South American and European opponents will undoubtedly be stronger than what we've faced in Asia. So if we truly want to have a decent run at this tournament, we need to start our training camps and preparation matches right away. With only five or six months left until the showpiece, we must follow a rigorous training program to ensure we can represent Iran and Asia as worthy competitors on the global stage.

As the Iranian captain, how likely do you think it is that you could actually lift the World Cup trophy in the Philippines?

Truth be told, winning the World Cup requires meticulous long-term planning. Of course, every team entering this competition dreams of reaching the final and lifting the trophy – especially our team, with two Asian titles under our belt, now aiming for greater glory on the world stage. But as I mentioned, achieving this demands years of strategy and hard work. That said, in these remaining five to six months before the World Cup, our immediate focus must be on delivering our absolute best performance and representing our nation with pride and distinction.

So are you actually thinking about reaching the World Cup



final and winning the tournament?  
Yes. We'll definitely fight for the ultimate prize.

One standout aspect of your play as a goalkeeper is that you're actually a goal-scoring keeper – you've netted some beautiful goals in many matches. Do you do special training for this, or is it part of futsal's philosophy that goalkeepers should also contribute to scoring?

Over the past six or seven seasons of our domestic league, I've scored 4-5 goals per season and provided over six assists. However, I hadn't scored in the international matches until this tournament, where I was finally able to find the net. The role of goalkeepers in modern futsal has evolved beyond just shot-stopping – playing with feet has become crucial. In futsal, the goalkeeper essentially becomes a fifth attacker, joining the offense to create numerical advantages. I believe our goalkeepers have this potential – I've personally demon-

strated this many times in the league, both scoring goals and providing assists.

To achieve greater success, we need to focus more on goalkeepers' offensive contributions. In most top-tier teams worldwide, the goalkeeper plays a vital role as a fifth player in building attacks and creating scoring opportunities. This attacking presence can give teams numerical superiority. Therefore, we must work harder on this aspect to make a stronger impact at the World Cup.

Given your age (39) and physical condition, are you considering playing abroad in foreign leagues?

Every player dreams of playing in the world's top leagues. If our team can deliver an outstanding performance at the World Cup, opportunities might open up for any of us. Personally, my national teammates and I remain optimistic about the future. Of course, if such an opportunity comes along, that would be great. But even if it doesn't, I hope

we can at least showcase our best performance at the World Cup and prove our highest potential.

Before we end this interview, is there anything else you'd like to add?

My only request to the Iranian media is to genuinely support our team. When we competed in the Asian Cup, many people stood behind us – though, of course, there were critics too. I believe constructive criticism at the right time can be helpful, but some of the negativity during the tournament felt misplaced. So, I'd urge the media to rally behind us now as we prepare for the World Cup. After all, we're representing Iran on the global stage. With six months left, this is the right time for analysis and criticism. Ultimately, I hope our team can make Iran and Iranian women proud at the World Cup in the Phil-

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