

AFC Women's Asia Cup: Iran to face Australia, South Korea, Philippines in group phase

Sports Desk

Iran was drawn against Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines in Group A of the 2026 AFC Women's Asia Cup – starting March 1 in Australia.

The draw for the 21st edition of the flagship continental event took place at the Sydney Town Hall on Tuesday, where 12 teams were split into three groups.

Marzieh Jafari's girls will begin their campaign against South Korea on March 2, before taking on their formidable hosts in Gold Coast three days later.

The final round of the group phase will

see Iran face the Philippines on March 8.

The top two in each group will be joined by the two best third-place teams in the quarterfinals.

Iranian girls secured a second appearance in the finals in dramatic fashion earlier in July, defeating Jordan 2-1 in a must-win final game in Group A of the qualifiers to beat the host to the top spot of the table on head-to-head criteria.

Elsewhere in the draw, North Korea, China, Uzbekistan, and Bangladesh were drawn in Group B, with Japan, Vietnam, India, and the Chinese Taipei completing the lineup in Group C.



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No surprises as Iran names squad for Volleyball World Championship

Sports Desk

There were no surprise additions to the squad as Iran head coach Roberto Piazza named a provisional 25-man list for the upcoming Volleyball World Championship – starting September 12 in the Philippines.

All players will have to report for a first training session in Tehran ahead of the world event next Tuesday.

The World Championship will be a second major event for Iran under the Italian head coach following the recently-finished preliminary round of the Volleyball Nations League.

The majority of the list were part of the team when Iran won six in 12 outings to finish eighth in the 18-team table earlier in July and missed out on a spot in the VNL Finals.

In fact, an eighth-place finish would have been enough for Iran to progress, had China – second from bottom in the preliminary table – not automatically qualified as the host of the Finals, which start with the quarterfinals in Ningbo on Thursday.

Opposite-spiker Ali Hajipour, who missed all three weeks

of action in the VNL preliminaries, has been named in the squad, while former Iranian captain and opposite-spiker Milad Ebadipour is yet to receive a call-up by the Italian coach.

Iran will make an eighth appearance at the flagship international event of the sport, with its best result coming in the 2014 edition, when Team Melli finished sixth in Poland. Iran will begin its Pool A campaign at the World Championship against Egypt on September 14, before facing another African test in Tunisia two days later.

The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran take on the host at the SM Mall of Asia Arena in Pasey on September 18.

The top two in each of the eight groups will progress to the round of 16.

Despite failing to secure a first VNL last-eight spot since 2022, Piazza's team definitely did enough to win over Iranian fans again with some brilliant performances and results in the preliminary phase – following a dire run of results over the past couple of years that saw Team Melli finish in the bottom three of the VNL table on two occasions

and miss out on a berth for Paris Olympics last summer.

Star opposite Amin Esmailnejad and outside-hitter Morteza Sharifi will headline the Iranian squad in the World Championship, having enjoyed a prolific campaign in the VNL preliminaries.

Esmailnejad chipped in 158 points to stand 13th in the top scorers' chart, while Sharifi contributed with a remarkable 18 aces for a joint-third place in the best servers' table.

The following is the Iranian 25-man squad for the FIVB World Championship:

Setters: Javad Karimi, Arshia Behnejad, Ali Ramezani, Omran Kookjeili

Middle blockers: Mohammad Valizadeh, Mahdi Jelveh, Issa Naseri, Matin Ahmadi, Armin Qelichniazi, Yousef Kazemi

Outside hitters: Morteza Sharifi, Amirhossein Esfandiar, Ehsan Daneshdoost, Amir Aftab-Azari, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh, Amirhossein Sadati, Alireza Abdolhamidi, Ali Haqqarast

Outside hitters: Amin Esmailnejad, Bardia Sa'adat, Ali Hajipour, Pouya Ariakhah
Liberos: Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Arman Salehi, Mehran Tavana.

Asian Junior Wushu Championships:

Iranians steal the show with seven sanda golds

Sports Desk

Iranian boys and girls continued their prolific run at the Asian Junior Wushu Championships in Jiangyin, China, by collecting 10 medals, including a remarkable seven sanda golds, on the penultimate day of the competitions.

Ehsan Gohari (45kg) and Reza Khankeshi (56kg), Amirhesam Mohammadi (60kg), Ali Rezaei (65kg), and Amirreza Karimi (80kg) bagged five gold medals in the men's event, while Amirmahdi Shiridel settled for a silver in the 75kg after a setback against his Chinese opponent in the final showpiece.

Yekta Adibi (52kg) and Rezvan Mouchani (60kg), meanwhile, walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective classes in the women's competitions. There was further glory for the country in the taolu contests on Tuesday.



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Saba Ramian tallied 9.226 points to grab the gold in the girls' cadet nandao form – a second medal for the Iranian girl after a first-day bronze – while Ramtin Siahmoshtei settled for the bronze of the same form in the boys con-

tests, taking his personal tally to three medals in Jiangyin. Iranian boys Mohammad-Parsa Madadi and Younes Khodaei, meanwhile, teamed up to win a silver medal in the duilian competition.

Iran edges Russia in pre-Asia Cup friendly

Sports Desk

Iran's national basketball team walked away with a hard-fought 70-67 victory over Russia in a warmup game in Moscow on Monday.

The match was part of Iran's final training camp ahead of the FIBA Asia Cup – starting starting August 5 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Sina Vahedi led the way for Iran with 20 points, and two assists, registering an efficiency rating of 18.

The two teams will go head-to-head in a rematch in the Russian capital today.

Iran played three matches in a friendly tournament in Beirut before heading to Russia.

Team Melli suffered a 60-59 defeat against Egypt and then fell to a 105-89 setback against Lebanon, but defeated Jordan 70-61 in its final outing in Beirut on Friday.

Iran will begin its bid for a fourth Asian title with a game against

Guam in Group B on the opening day of the flagship continental event, before taking on Japan two days later – in a repeat of a group encounter between the two teams in the 2022 edition, which Iran won 88-76.

The final round of the group fixtures will see Greek head coach Sotirios Manolopoulos's men play Syria on Aug. 9.

The winners of the four groups in Jeddah will be handed direct qualification for the quarterfinals, with the second and third teams heading into a playoff round for a place in the last eight.

Australia will enter the flagship continental event as the defending champion after beating Lebanon in the 2022 final.



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