

## FIBA Asia Cup:

## Iran close strong to stun Japan in Group B thriller

**FIBA** – Iran finished with a furious flourish, holding Japan scoreless in the final three minutes to claim a 78-70 victory in a tense FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Group B clash on Friday at the King Abdullah Sports City.

Mohammad Amini powered the win with 24 points, 8 rebounds, 3 steals and 2 blocks, wreaking havoc at both ends in the decisive fourth quarter. Sina Vahedi provided the perimeter spark, drilling four triples on his way to 22 points, including the go-ahead basket that triggered Iran's closing run.

Japan had looked poised to take the game before the momentum turned sharply. Joshua Hawkinson posted a massive double-double of 20 points and 17 rebounds, while Keisei Tominaga lit up the scoreboard with 22 points and five triples (all in the first half) before fouling out late.

Iran came out with energy, disrupting Japan's rhythm early with tight pressure and

quick rotations. Forcing five turnovers in the opening seven minutes, Team Melli built an 11-5 lead and held the edge 16-13 after a Vahedi buzzer-beater from deep.

Japan found their footing in the second quarter, leaning on Tominaga's hot hand. A flurry of long-range hits from Tominaga, Hawkinson and Akira Jacobs spurred a 10-1 run for a 31-24 lead. Iran struck back before halftime, with Amini's drives and Vahedi's steady scoring pulling them level at 34-all by the break.

The third quarter was a tug-of-war, neither side leading by more than six. Japan briefly surged ahead through free throws from Hawkinson and a big three from Yudai Baba, but Amini's fearless attacks inside and Kazemi's hustle plays kept Iran locked in. Jacobs' late free throws were answered by another Amini drive, tying it again at 58 heading into the final ten minutes.

Early in the fourth, Amini's

transition layup and Vahedi's aggressive penetration gave Iran a 63-60 edge, but Baba's and-one finish swung momentum back to Japan at 68-65. The Akatsuki Japan looked in control after an 8-2 run, yet Iran refused to fade, eventually tying the game again at 70 thanks to a Matin Aghajpour triple with about three minutes to go.

Jacobs' emphatic block on Amini afterwards only delayed the inevitable. Vahedi buried a triple to push Iran ahead 73-70, then drew charge on Tominaga for his final foul. Mobin Sheikhi followed with another three, and Amini's steal-and-slam punctuated an 8-0 closing burst. Japan could not score again after Tominaga's floater at the 3:58 mark.

The win moves Iran to 2-0, firmly in the mix to top Group B, while Japan drop to 1-1 ahead of their next assignment against Guam. Iran will face Syria with momentum on their side.



Iranian guard Sina Vahedi (3) goes up for a basket during a 78-70 victory over Japan at the FIBA Asia Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on August 8, 2025. ● FIBA

## Chengdu 2025 World Games:

## Iranians win karate, wushu golds on Day 3



Iran's Sara Bahmanyar (1) and Shahin Banitalebi are pictured with their gold medal at the World Games in Chengdu, China, on August 8, 2025. ● theworldgames2025.com

## Sports Desk

The third day of action at the 2025 World Games saw Iranians bag a couple of gold medals in the karate and wushu events in Chengdu, China.

Sara Bahmanyar overcame some high-profile karatekas – including reigning world champion Moldir Zhangbyrbay of Kazakhstan in the final – to walk away with the ultimate prize in the women's kumite -50kg event.

Former world bronze medalist Bahmanyar began her campaign with a 4:0 victory over back-to-back European champion Ema Sgardelli of Croatia and then came out on top against Canada's Yamina Lahyanssa (5:4) and Italian world silver medalist Erminia Peretto (11:3) to finish atop Pool A and progress to the semifinals.

The Iranian girl defeated two-time African gold medalist Cylia Ouikene 4:3 for a place in the final showpiece, and was then awarded the win against Zhangbyrbay by hantei (judges' decision) after it finished 0:0. Later on Friday, Shahin Banitalebi added a second gold to Iran's medal haul, thanks to an impressive run in the men's taolu.

Representing the country in the men's nanquan/nangun event, Banitalebi scored 9.710 points to stand third in nanquan table, before a 9.756-point performance in nangun saw the Iranian beat Brunei's Mohammad Adi Salihin, who tallied 19.456 points in total, to the combined gold, while Liu Chang-min of the Chinese Taipei settled for the bronze with 19.430 points. Iranian girl Helia Asadian was also in action at the wushu

competitions on Friday but was unlucky to finish her campaign empty-handed in a closely-contested nanquan/nandao showdown.

Asadian scored 19.343 points to finish fifth, with Malaysian Cheon Min Tan (19.479), Uzbekistan's Darya Latisheva (19.433), and Ong Cassandra (19.386) of Singapore grabbing the medals.

The 12th edition of the World Games, featuring 34 sports and 60 disciplines that are not contested at the Olympic Games, will continue in Chengdu until next Sunday.

## Iranian boxers settle for four Asian U19 bronzes

## Sports Desk

Four members of the Iranian under-19 squad had to settle for a bronze medal on the first day of the U22 & U19 Asian Boxing Championships in Bangkok, Thailand.

Meanwhile, Ali Chehreqani defeated opponents from Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates before outmuscling the host's boxer in emphatic fashion to progress to the men's 60kg final and will fight for the ultimate prize today. Mahdi Rouzbehani beat Saudi and Sri Lankan boxers but fell short against his Filipino opponent in the semifinals to finish joint-third in the men's 50kg event.

Ashkan Hashemi was beaten by Indian Mausam Suhag in the 65kg semifinals to finish his 65kg campaign with a bronze medal, with Mohammad-Saleh Mesbahi suffering a controversial last-four

setback against the Uzbek boxer – a world champion last year – in the 70kg event.

A fourth bronze medal for the country came in the men's +90kg class as Abbas Garshasbi also fell short against his Uzbek opponent in the last-four bout.

Amirreza Soltani (-55kg) and Arvin

Shahbabaei (90kg) finished empty-handed after first-round defeats in their respective weight classes.

More than 390 boxers will represent 26 countries across different men's and women's weight categories and age-groups in the Thai capital for 13 days.



● ISNA

## Man United sign RB Leipzig striker Sesko for £73.7m

**BBC** – Manchester United have completed the signing of RB Leipzig striker Benjamin Sesko in a move worth £73.7m.

The deal for the Slovenia international, who has joined on a five-year contract, includes a guaranteed payment of £66.3m, with the remainder in add-ons.

He is United's third major signing in attack following the arrivals of Matheus Cunha for £62.5m and Bryan Mbeumo for £65m with £6m in add-ons.

Sesko, 22, was also a target for Newcastle United but has chosen to join Ruben Amorim's side.

United finished 15th in the Premier League last season, while the Magpies were fifth and qualified for the Champions League in a campaign in which they also won the EFL Cup.

"The history of Manchester United is obviously very special but what really excites me is the future," said Sesko.

"When we discussed the project, it was clear that everything is in place for this team to continue to grow and compete for the biggest trophies again soon.

"From the moment that I arrived, I could feel



● MANCHESTER UNITED

the positive energy and family environment that the club has created. It is clearly the perfect place to reach my maximum level and fulfil all of my ambitions.

"I cannot wait to start learning from Ruben and connecting with my team-mates to achieve the success that we all know we are capable of together."