

# FIVB Men's U21 World Championship: Iran salvages victory over Argentina, advances to last eight

## Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to beat Argentina 3-1 (22-25, 25-20, 25-16, 25-23) and progress to the last-eight round at the FIVB Men's U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, on Wednesday. Middle-blocker Armin Qelichniazi was the star of the show for Iran with a game-high 18 points. Prolific opposite Pouya Ariakhah added 15 points – including double aces – for the reigning champion, while opposite-spikers Matin Hosseini and Ariyan Mahmoudinejad chipped in 14 and 12 points, respectively. Mateo Gomez (13 points), Iñaki Ramos (12), Fausto Diaz (11), Emiliano Molini (11), and Leonardo Herb-

sommer (10) all finished in double figures for the South Americans. "We aimed to dictate the game with solid defense and well-executed passes at the net. However, we lost the first set due to poor serving, which allowed Argentina to outperform Iran in offense during that set," Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam said after the game. "Overall, we made some mistakes in this match, which is normal for players at this age level. Players need to make these errors in order to gain the necessary experience and maturity before playing for the senior national team," added the Iranian, whose team will Japan or China for a place in the semifinals. Wednesday's victory was Iran's

sixth in Jiangmen. Iran began its title defense in Jiangmen with a 3-1 win against Kazakhstan and then eased past Puerto Rico in straight sets, and edged out South Korea in a five-set thriller – in a repeat of last year's Asian under-20 final, which Iran had won in straight sets – before beating Canada 3-0. A 3-1 win against Poland on Tuesday had seen Iran finish atop the Pool B table.



Iranian players and coaching staff pose after a 3-1 victory over Argentina at the last-16 round of the FIVB Men's U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, on August 27, 2025.

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## Iran names 27-man squad for CAFA Nations Cup

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Head coach Amir Qalenoee named Iran's 27-man squad for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup – starting Friday in Hisor, Tajikistan. Defending champion Iran is in Group B of the eight-team tournament alongside Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and India. Team Melli will take on Afghanistan at the Hisor Central Stadium on the opening day of the competition, before playing India and Tajikistan on September 1 and 4, respectively. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Oman are in Group A – to be staged in Tashkent.

The winner of the group will advance to the final showpiece at Tashkent's Olympic City Stadium on Sept. 8, with the two runners-up squaring off in the third-place match. Shabab Al Ahli duo Sardar Azmoun and Saeid Ezzatollahi, as well as Mahdi Qayedi, Ali Qolizadeh, and Sepahan midfielder Mohammad Karimi have all missed the tournament due to injury, while first-choice goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is a serving a four-month suspension. Veteran fullback Ramin Rezaeian has earned a first international callup since the AFC Asian Cup in February 2024, following an impres-

sive season with Esteghlal in the Persian Gulf Pro League. Persepolis midfielder Mohammad Khodabandelou, Sepahan striker Majid Aliyari, and Mes Rafsanjan goalkeeper Nima Mirzazad are also among the surprise names in the list. The Following is Iran's full squad for the CAFA Nations Cup:

**Goalkeepers:** Payam Niazmand (Persepolis), Ahmad Gohari (Paykan), Nima Mirzazad (Mes Rafsanjan)

**Defenders:** Mohammad-Amin Hazbavi (Sepahan), Aref Aqasi (Esteghlal), Mohammadhossein Kan'anizadegan (Persepolis), Ali Ne'mati (Foolad

Khuzestan), Arya Yousefi (Sepahan), Ramin Rezaeian (Esteghlal), Omid Nourafkan (Sepahan), Mohammad Naderi (Tractor)

**Midfielders:** Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Mohammad Qorbani (Al Wahda), Samman Qoddous (Ittihad Kalba), Mohammad Khodabandelou (Persepolis), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (-), Mohammad Mohebbi (Rostov FC), Mahdi Hashemnejad (Tractor), Alireza Koushki (Esteghlal), Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi (Ittihad Kalba), Mahdi Tikdari (Tractor), Mehran Ahmadi (Esteghlal)

**Strikers:** Mahdi Taremi (Internazionale), Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (Tractor), Shahriar Moghanlou (Ittihad Kalba), Ali Alipour (Persepolis), Majid Aliyari (Sepahan).

## Persian Gulf Pro League: Rezaeian rescues point for Esteghlal; Tractor held at Mes

### Sports Desk

Esteghlal fullback Ramin Rezaeian scored a last-gasp equalizer as the Capital Blues overcame a two-goal deficit to salvage a point in a thrilling 3-3 draw against Zob Ahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Tuesday. Esteghlal stepped onto the pitch fresh off an opening-day 1-0 victory over Tractor but was stunned inside 14 minutes when Pouya Mokhtari gave the visitors, who were beaten by newly-promoted Paykan at home last week, a surprise lead with a half volley from outside the box. Hassan Shoushtari added to the Blues' misery midway through the first half before Alireza Koushki pulled one back for the home side with a superb curling effort from the edge of the area. Shoushtari, however, restored the two-goal cushion for Zob in the first-half added time, drilling a free kick into bottom corner. New Esteghlal signings Duckens Nazon and Jasir Asani were introduced for the start of the second half, and



Esteghlal fullback Ramin Rezaeian celebrates after scoring the equalizer during a 3-3 draw against Zob Ahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on August 26, 2025.

● AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

the duo combined to set up Koushki for his second of the night three minutes after the restart. Esteghlal supporters still had to wait until the fourth minute of stoppage time for an equalizer, when Rezaeian headed home Abolfazl Jalali's set-piece. Esteghlal will be desperate to get back in the winning ways when visiting Esteghlal Khuzestan after the international break, while Zob Ahan will be looking to build on the result at home against Mes Rafsanjan.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Tractor's formidable frontline was kept at bay as the defending champion was held to a goalless stalemate at Mes Rafsanjan. The result meant that Dragan Skocic's side remains without a win in its first two games and has yet to find the net ahead of the home game against Iralco on September 12. Newly-promoted Fajr Sepasi, which played to an impressive 1-1 draw against Persepolis last week, defeated Golgozar Sirjan 1-0 in its first

home game in the Iranian top flight in three years, thanks to Shervin Bozorg's spot kick 10 minutes into the second half at the Pars Shiraz Stadium. In Ahvaz, Mohammad Alinejad scored a 47th-minute winner against his former club as Malavan walk away with a massive 1-0 victory over Foolad Khuzestan. Shams Azar and Chadormalou shared the spoils in a rollercoaster 4-4 draw in Qazvin. Reza Dehqan and Ali Khodadadi put Chadormalou in front inside 11 minutes, before Mahdi Mamizadeh and Houman Rabizadeh's spot kick drew the home side level in the first half.

Rabizadeh again scored from the spot to give Shams Azar the lead for the first time in the game on the hour mark, but Dehqan bagged his second of the night four minutes later to restore parity. Ecuadorian substitute Renny Simisterra thought he had secured maximum points for the visitors when he scored with four minutes remaining, only to see his strike canceled out by Milad Sourgi's equalizer in the fourth minute of stoppage time.

## Iran unveils wushu lineups for world, ISG events

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The Wushu Federation of Iran announced the country's squads for the upcoming two major events. Iran will be represented by 13 contestants at the 17th edition of the World Championships – starting Sunday in Brasília, Brazil – with six Iranians vying for glory across the men's and women's sanda events at the sixth edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games, when the multi-sport event kicks off in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 7. Shoja Panahi (65kg), Erfan Moharrami (70kg), five-

time world champion Mohsen Mohammadseifi (75kg), Soheil Mousavi (80kg), and Mahdi Moradi (90kg) will participate in the men's sanda contests, as Iran will be back in the world showpiece for the first time since 2019, having missed out on the previous edition in Fort Worth, Texas after being denied entry visas by the United States. Shahin Banitalebi – a gold medalist at The World Games earlier in August – Mostafa Hasanzadeh, and Abolfazl Qarebaghi will compete across different men's taolu events in the Brazilian capital, with Asian

gold medalist Zahra Kiani and Helia Asadian part of the women's draw. Mansourian sisters, Sharbanou (75kg) and Soheila (70kg), will be joined by Sediqeh Daryaei (65kg) in the women's sanda in Brasilia. Meanwhile, Moharrami will be back in action in Riyadh, with Amirhossein Hemmati (60kg) and Farbod Taleshi (85kg) completing the Iranian three-man squad in the Saudi capital. Mansourian sisters will also chase glory in Riyadh, where Sara Shafiei will compete in the 56kg class.



Zahra Kiani will represent Iran in the women's taolu competitions at the World Wushu Championships in Brasilia.

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