

Esmaeilnejad, Karimi ruled out as Iran confirms roster for World Championships

Sports Desk

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza named Iran's 14-man squad for the upcoming FIVB Volleyball World Championship – starting Friday in the Philippines.

The Asian powerhouse was dealt a massive blow ahead of its eighth appearance at the flagship international event as two key Iranian players are ruled out of the competition with injury.

Star opposite Amin Esmaeilnejad, who was Iran's top scorer in the Volleyball Nations League preliminaries earlier in the summer, suffered a twisted ankle during a warmup victory over Qatar last Sunday and is expected to be sidelined for three to six weeks.

Iranian setter Mohammad-Javad Karimi will also miss the world event with a strained muscle in his leg.

Bardia Sa'adat received a late call-up by Piazza last week to replace Esmaeilnejad in the national team squad. Sa'adat was also part of Iran's VNL roster, contributing double figures in three outings – including a team-high 24 points during a five-set loss to Slovenia in Week 1 in Rio de Janeiro.

Iran will begin its campaign at the World Championship against Egypt in Pool B on September 14, and then faces another African test in Tunisia two days later, before taking on the host on Sept. 18. The top two of the group will progress to round of 16.

Iran will be looking to build on a decent run in the Nations League, during which Piazza's men won six out of 12 games to finish eighth in the preliminary table but ultimately missed out on a place in the quarterfinals, as China – second from bottom in the standings – automatically qualified as the host of the VNL Finals.

The following is the Iranian squad for the World Championship:

Setters: Arshia Behnejad, Ali Ramezani
Outside hitters: Morteza Sharifi, Amirhossein Esfandiar, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh, Ali Haqparast, Ehsan Daneshdoust

Middle Blockers: Mohammad Valizadeh, Yousef Kazemi, Isa Naseri
Opposite Spikers: Bardia Sa'adat, Ali Hajipour

Liberos: Arman Salehi, Mohammadreza Hazratpour.



● MOJTABA ZAKIZADEH/volleyball.ir

World Wushu Championships: Iran's Banitalebi wins taolu bronze



Iran's Shahin Banitalebi (2nd R) poses on the podium with his taolu bronze at the World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil, on September 4, 2025.
● iranwushufed.ir

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Iran's Shahin Banitalebi won a first medal for the country at the World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil, bagging a bronze in the men's taolu contests. Banitalebi scored 9.733 points to finish third in the nandao event on Thursday.

Lau Chi Lung of Hong Kong grabbed the gold with 9.763 points, while his compatriot Deng Longteng registered 9.740 points to settle for the silver. Mostafa Hassanzadeh was the other Iran participating at the nandao event, but missed out on the podium, finishing fifth

with 9.726 points.

This was a second medal-winning campaign for Banitalebi at a major event in less than a month after the Iranian had walked away with the nanquan/nangun at the Chengdu World Games in China in August. Elsewhere in the Brazilian capital, Iranians enjoyed a perfect run across different weight classes in the sanda competitions.

Shoja Panahi defeated Uzbekistan's Avazbek Muhammadjonov for a place in the men's 65kg quarterfinals, while Erfan Moharrami (70kg) and Soheil Mousavi (80kg) also progressed

to the last eight in their respective events.

Mahdi Moradi got off to an emphatic start in the 90kg class, knocking out Serdar Jorakulyev of Turkmenistan in less than 40 seconds.

In the women's draw, Seddiqeh Daryaei (65kg), Soheila Mansourian (70kg) – a bronze medalist at The World Games – and five-time world champion Shahrbanou Mansourian (75kg) advanced to the semifinals in their respective events.

The 17th edition of the World Championships will continue at the Ulysses Guimarães Convention Center until Sunday.

CAFA Nations Cup: Iran held by Tajikistan but advances to final showpiece

Sports Desk

Iran relinquished a two-goal in the second half to share the spoils with cohost Tajikistan in a 2-2 draw at the CAFA Nations Cup in Hisor on Thursday.

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after finishing third in the group

table – equal on four points with second-placed India, which played to a goalless draw with Afghanistan earlier in the day.

Ittihad Kalba winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi bagged a second goal in his third international cap, finding the net from close range on the rebound in the 38th minute.

Rostov striker Mohammad Mohebbi surged forward down the left flank before slotting home from inside the box to double Iran's advantage two minutes after the break.

A blunder by Payam Niazmand allowed Tajikistan to pull one back through Shahrom Samiev, whose tame effort slipped through the Iranian goalkeeper's hands and crossed the goal line in the 57th minute.

Zoir Dzurboyev drew the home side level 20 minutes later, heading home Parvizzhon Umarbayev's cross from the edge of the six-yard box.

"We made it to the final, but we were far from perfect. We wasted too many chances after scoring the second goal and our intensity dropped. We became complacent, and that's when we got punished by a single error. That incident turned the game on its head," said Irania head coach Amir Qalenoee, who also blamed his senior players, as well as Uzbek referee Akhrol Riskullaev, for "making too many mistakes."

Qalenoee still gave Niazmand his full support, saying: "Every great goalkeeper in the world makes mistakes. Tajikistan's keeper was also at fault for the first goal. Payam is one of our best keepers and a huge asset between the posts alongside Alireza Beiranvand, and Seyyed Hossein Hosseini."



● CAFA

FIBA U16 Asia Cup: Iran beaten by New Zealand, misses out on last four

Sports Desk

Iranian boys' run at the FIBA U16 Asia Cup came to an end in the quarterfinals after a 92-69 loss to New Zealand in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Friday.

Noah Duncan's 15 points, coupled with 10 rebounds, led the scoring chart for New Zealand, which saw five of its 10 players on the court,

finish in double figures.

The result took New Zealand to its fourth successive entry into the medal rounds and also secured a place for the country at next year's FIBA U17 World Cup in Turkey.

Alireza Rashid had a consolation game-high 23 points for Iran, who now have to be content aiming for a better finish than the sixth place

they achieved in Qatar two years ago.

Iran began its campaign with an 87-43 win against Saudi Arabia and then cruised past Kazakhstan (90-41) before suffering a 86-67 loss to Japan to finish runner-up in Group D and progress to the knockout playoffs, where Iran routed Malaysia 102-62 to head into the quarterfinals.



● CAFA