

# FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship: Iran edge Philippines in epic five-set thriller to progress to last 16

Iran survived six match points for host in the nerve-wracking ending of their crucial match to advance to the round of 16 at the 2025 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship in the Philippines.

The epic five-setter finally went the way of the Iranians to place them second in the final Pool A standings and send them against the Pool H winners Serbia in Tuesday's first knockout round, while disappointing the home crowd that filled the stands in Pasay City on Thursday.

In this do-or-die battle, the Philippines were well in control of sets one and three and managed to step a set ahead twice in the match. Iran leveled up twice and pushed the game to a fifth set. The home team managed to recover from a 10-6 Iranian lead in the tie-breaker and was the first to reach match point. However, the much higher ranked Iranian team denied them as many as six opportunities to close the match.

To turn up the drama in Pasay City, when everyone thought that the sixth match point was finally converted to a 20-18 win and the Filipino victory party had already started, a successful net touch challenge by Iran brought every-



*Iranian players celebrate after the five-set victory over the Philippines at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship in Pasay City, Philippines, on September 18, 2025.*

● [MOJTABA ZAKIZADEH/volleyball.ir](https://www.mojtaba-zakizadeh.com/volleyball.ir)

fourth set, and also during the tie-breaker, when we lost some really easy balls, just because we were afraid to play those balls. We do not have a lot of experience because we changed a lot from last season, but experience cannot just be the reason," Iran's Italian coach Roberto Piazza told VBT after the game.

"Winning was really important and the only positive, because I know that we didn't play at our level at this tournament until now."

Philippines' outside and captain Bryan Bagunas also finished with 22 points. He spiked 18 points at a 60% success rate and added three blocks and an ace to his match-high tally. 22-year-old opposite Leo Ordiales scored 19 points in offense at 66% success to sign off with 21 total. The other outside, Marck Jesus Espejo, and middle blocker Kim Malabunga also reached the double digits with 15 and 10 points, respectively.

one back to square zero.

With the psychological advantage now to their side, the Iranians took control and triumphed with a 3-2 (21-25, 25-21, 17-25, 25-23, 22-20) victory on a monster block by 22-year-old middle Yousef Ka-

zemi at their second match point. In this nip-and-tuck five-set saga, Iran slightly edged the Philippines in attack by 63-62 in spike kills, and in serving by 6-5 in aces. Three players shared the top scorer honors with 22 points

each, and two of them were Iranian. 21-year-old outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh hit 19 points in offense at a 66% success rate and fired three aces. Opposite Ali Hajipour also produced 19 attacking points, at a

53% success rate, and put up three kill blocks.

"When you are playing with fear, it is difficult to play, because you are not able to analyze the situation. This is what I felt in the third set and in some moments of the

## National squad drops to 21st in FIFA Men's World Ranking



● [MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI](https://www.mohsen-davoudi.com/ffiri)

### Sports Desk

The Iranian national football team dropped by one spot to stand 21st in the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking – released by the international governing body of the sport on Thursday.

Team Melli collected 1622.61 points to remain second in the list of the AFC member states, following Japan, which fell down to 19th in the global ranking after a 2-0 friendly defeat against USA and a goalless draw against Mexico in September's international break.

Following Japan and Iran in the AFC standing are South Korea (23rd), Australia (25th), Qatar (53rd), and Uzbekistan (54th). Iran settled for a runner-up finish at the CAF Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan earlier in the month – courtesy of an extra-time 1-0 loss to Uzbekistan in the final showpiece in Tashkent.

A mediocre campaign saw Iran beat Afghanistan (3-1) and India (3-0) before and then gave away a two-goal lead to share the spoils with another minnow opponent in Tajikistan in a 2-2 draw in

Group B of the competition and progress to the final.

Next for Amir Qalenoee's side, which will represent the continent in next year's FIFA World Cup in North America, is a friendly game against Russia in Volgograd on October 10.

Meanwhile, Spain moved atop the World Ranking for the first time in a decade, overtaking reigning world champion Argentina, thanks to back-to-back emphatic away victories over Bulgaria (6-0) and Türkiye (3-0) at the World Cup European qualifiers.

France, which defeated Ukraine and Iceland at the UEFA qualifiers, also jumped up to stand second, with Argentina dropping to third after a 3-0 win against Venezuela and a 1-0 loss to Ecuador in a couple of dead rubbers for the Albiceleste at the World Cup qualifiers in South America.

England, Portugal, Brazil, the Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia, and Italy complete the top 10 of the ranking, with European powerhouse falling to 12th, sitting behind Morocco.

## Dorostkar eyes FS wrestling golds at L.A. Olympics

### Sports Desk

Iran head coach Pejman Dorostkar hopes the country's freestyle wrestling team can build on winning the world title in Zagreb to enjoy a glory-laden campaign at the Los Angeles Olympics in three years.

Dorostkar's 10-man squad bagged seven medals, including double golds, to claim its first freestyle team trophy in 12 years at the Wrestling World Championships in the Croatian capital on Tuesday.

Having finished runner-up to the United States in the previous two editions, Iran topped the team standings with 145 points – 11 ahead of second-placed Team USA. Japan (111 pts) and Azerbaijan (83 pts) followed in third and fourth places, respectively, while the results of the Russian wrestlers, who competed as neutral athletes, were declared null and void by United World Wrestling.

"It used to be a three-horse race featuring Iran, the United States, and Russia for the freestyle crown, but it is fair to say that Japan and Azerbaijan joined the list of contenders this time. However, even after factoring in the Russians' results, Iran still managed to clinch the championship in commanding fashion," Dorostkar said upon arriving in Tehran on Friday.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) – silver medalists in last year's Paris Olympics – walked away with the ultimate prize in their respec-



*Iran freestyle head coach Pejman Dorostkar carries Rahman Amouzad on his shoulder after he won the 65kg gold medal at the Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 16, 2025.*

● [IAWFIR](https://www.iawfir.com)

tive weight classes in Zagreb, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan (61kg), and Amirali Azarpira (97kg) settled for a couple of silver medals.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour (86kg), and Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg) finished with a consolation bronze, with Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Amirmohammad Yazdani (70kg), and Younes Emami (74kg) leaving Zagreb empty-handed.

Asked if his team can carry the momen-

tum into the L.A. Games in three-years' time, Dorostkar said: "The latest triumph must lead to success at the Olympics. I truly believe that Iranian wrestling's rightful place goes beyond just winning five or six gold medals in the history of the Games. I just hope this group of wrestlers can keep up the momentum to succeed in Los Angeles."

Wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani remains the last Iranian win a freestyle gold at the Olympics – the 74kg title in Rio 2016.

## Iran U23 crashes out of 3x3 Basketball World Cup

### Sports Desk

Iran suffered four successive defeats to crash out in the pool phase of the FIBA 3x3 U23 World Cup in Xiongan, China.

The Iranian team – comprising Seyyed Mohammad Ghaffari, Piter Girgoorian, Alireza Sharifi, and Amirhossein Yazarlou – finished its Pool A campaign with a 15-10 loss to Germany on Friday, having suffered a 21-16 set-

back against Croatia earlier in the day. Iran began with a 17-15 defeat against Lithuania on Wednesday, and then fell short against Poland (21-20) in its second outing in the 20-team tournament later in the day.