

FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship: Iran's last-four dreams shattered by Czechia heartbreak

Sports Desk

Iran's fairy tale run at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship came to an end following a last-eight defeat against Czechia in Pasay City, Philippines, on Thursday.

Roberto Piazza's men gave away a one-set lead to suffer a 3-1 loss (22-25, 27-25, 25-20, 25-21) and miss out on a maiden semifinal spot at the flagship international event of the sport.

Czechia managed to recover from Iran's fiery start to the first set that got the Asian powerhouse to an early five-point advantage, but still made far too many unforced errors that allowed Iran to come out as set winner with opposite Ali Hajipour pounding the closing point from the back row.

The defining moment of the contest perhaps came in the closing stages of the second set when Iranian captain and outside-hitter Morteza Sharifi, with his team leading 22-20, missed an absolute sitter, spiking the undefended ball wide, and Czechia capitalized to level the match at 1-1. That completely shifted the momentum in Czechia's favor as the European side went on to win the next two sets to set up a last-four date with Bulgaria, which pulled off a sensational comeback to beat USA in a five-set thriller (21-25, 19-25, 25-17, 25-22, 15-13) later in the day.

When asked what made the difference between the two sides at end, Piazza said: "I think everyone in the team exact-



ly know about that moment. We have to grow up a lot on the mental side, I knew that before and I know it now. We have to improve the technical aspect of our game, we need to be better on serving, we need to be better everywhere. The most im-

portant thing is that when you are leading in a game, you need to be able to finish off the game. This is the lesson that we need to understand. After that, they deserved it because they played an amazing game, on block, defense, transition. They were

really good after that moment.

"I'm still so proud of my guys, because there are 11 new players in the team, but I know we have to work a lot."

Asked if the whole campaign makes him exited for the future of his team, the Ital-



Iranian players are dejected after a last-eight defeat against Czechia at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship in Pasay City, Philippines, on September 25, 2025.

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

ian replied, "I was excited when I decided to take this job, and I'm excited now. I know exactly that there are a lot of talents, but that is not enough to reach any goal. We need to work hard, and we also need to be patient, and at the same time strong, on the court."

Czechia outperformed Iran in attack by 56-54 in spike kills and in net defense by 7-5 in kill blocks, but the biggest difference came from the fewer unforced errors – 25 against 31. Opposite Patrik Indra showed a great efficiency in offense, swinging at a 69% success rate. He also fired a couple of aces towards a match-high total of 22 points. Outside hitter Lukas Vasina came a close second with 21 points, including one ace and one kill block. He registered a 61% success rate in attack.

Iran delivered seven aces in the match, against Czechia's five. Young outside Pouriya Hosseinkhanzadeh authored three of those and spiked at a 54% success rate towards a team-high 18 points to match the tally of Hajipour, who signed off with three kill blocks and a 65% success rate in attack. Sharifi also reached the double digits with 11 points, including two aces.

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Iran defeated South Korea 28-25 in the final showpiece on Thursday to be crowned the champion at the Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan.

The victory rounded off an emphatic run for the Iranian boys, who celebrated an eighth win in as many games at the inaugural edition of the tournament in the Jordanian capital.

The two teams had already secured a spot at the 1st IHF Men's U-17 Handball World Championship – starting October 24 in Morocco – by progressing to the final.

Arshia Javidi and Amirhossein Nikeqbal scored a joint-high

six goals for Iran in Thursday's showdown at the Princess Sumaya Hall, with Mohammad Keshavarz, Ali Ghayouri, and captain Mahdi Ahmadi contributing four goals apiece.

South Korean Kang Dongho captain scored a match-high nine goals, while Seong Jiseong added six, though it proved not enough as the traditional Asian handball powerhouse suffered a second defeat against Iran in the tournament, following a 31-25 setback in the preliminary round.

There was further glory for Iranian players in the awarding ceremony as Keshavarz and Nikeqbal were joined by teammate Mahdi Ahmadi in picking up the individual awards.

Iran began its campaign in Am-

man with a 65-4 hammering of Maldives, and then went on to defeat Syria (44-22) and South Korea to win Group D in the preliminary phase.

The first game in the main round saw Iran beat Kuwait 35-30, followed by a 42-22 rout of the host team, and a commanding 46-25 win against Qatar on Sunday for a top-spot finish in Group 2.

Iran then hammered Bahrain 37-

19 in the semifinals on Tuesday.



Mahdi Ahmadi (14) lifts the trophy as the Iranian team celebrates winning the title at the Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan, on September 25, 2025.

● [IHf](https://ihf.com)

Invincible Iran crowned Asian U17 handball champion



Four Iranians among nominees for AFC Awards

Sports Desk

Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi was nominated for the Asian International Player of the Year prize at the upcoming AFC Awards Riyadh 2025.

The Asian Football Confederation announced the highly anticipated list of nominees – including six Iranians – for 29th edition of the gala ceremony, which will be staged in the Saudi

capital on October 16, on Thursday. Taremi, who made it to the UEFA Champions League final with Inter last season before suffering a 5-0 defeat against Paris Saint-Germain, will be joined by South Korean winger Lee Kang-in – a treble winner with PSG – and Real Sociedad's Japanese winger Takefusa Kubo in vying for the men's prize. Meanwhile, Iran international teammates Moslem Oladqobad and Salar Aqapour were shortlisted for the

Futsal Men's Player of the Year after helping the country lift a record-extending 13th Asian Cup trophy last year, with Thailand's Muhammad Osaman-musa also nominated.

Marziyeh Jafari was nominated for the Women's Coach of the Year.

Jafari led Bam Khatoon to an 11th Iranian top-flight title, as well as an impressive last-eight spot at the AFC Women's Champions League, last season, and was also in charge of the national team when Women's Team Melli won Group A of qualifiers – thanks to a sensational final-day win against host Jordan – in July to book a place in March's AFC Women's Asian Cup finals in Australia. The Iranian Football Federation will be among the three nominees for the AFC Member Association of the Year (Platinum) award – alongside the Saudi and Japanese national governing bodies.



Iran and Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi was nominated for the Asian International Player of the Year prize at the 2025 AFC Awards.

● khabarvarzeshi.com



Persian Gulf Pro League:

Persepolis left frustrated by winless streak at home

Sports Desk

Persepolis failed to secure a first home victory at the new Persian Gulf Pro League season, settling for a drab goalless stalemate against Malavan FC at Tehran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Thursday.

A third home draw meant the Tehran Reds, seven-time Iranian top-flight champion over the past nine seasons, have only managed one victory in five outings, heaping pressure on head coach Vahid Hashemian, who took his first managerial role in July after replacing former Turk-

ish boss Ismail Kartal. The Reds' sole victory of the campaign came against Sepahan (1-0) at Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium on August 25, as Persepolis celebrated a first top-flight victory in the so-called 'Iranian Clasico' in 1,335 days.

Next for Persepolis and Hashemian is another home fixture against Golgozar Sirjan on Friday, while Malavan will host Khaybar on Thursday. Elsewhere, defending champion Tractor dominated for the best part of the home game against newly-promoted Fajr Sepasi but still failed to capitalize as

it finished goalless at Tabriz's Bonyan Diesel Stadium.

Croatian striker Domagoj Drozdek thought he had given Tractor the lead, when his effort from inside the box found the bottom corner on the half-hour mark, only to see strike chalked off by the VAR due to teammate Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh committing a handball in the buildup.

Tractor will visit Ahvaz to face Foolad Khuzestan next Saturday, with Fajr – yet to concede a defeat on return to the Iranian Pro League – will host Esteghlal Khuzestan on Thursday.