

## AFC Awards Riyadh 2025:

## Iran's Jafari makes history, wins Women's Coach of the Year prize

## Sports Desk

History was made at the 2025 AFC Awards on Thursday as Marziyeh Jafari became the first-ever Iranian to win the Asian Women's Coach of the Year prize at the prestigious ceremony in Riyadh.

Beating Chinese Taipei coach Lu Kuei-hua and Thailand U20 manager Nuengrutai Srathongvian to the award, Jafari was recognized following a remarkable year with both the Iranian women's national team and domestic top-flight champion Bam Khatoon.

Jafari successfully steered Iran through the AFC Women's Asian Cup qualifiers in July, securing Team Melli's second consecutive berth at the continental showpiece following its 2022 debut.

Needing nothing less than victory in its final qualification showdown, Iran defeated Jordan 2-1 in Amman to progress to next March's finals in Australia. What made the feat even more remarkable for Jafari is the fact that the 43-year-old had only been appointed to the Iranian job three months before the qualifiers.

"I'm thrilled to have won this prestigious award. This is a great and ever-lasting honor for me," Jafari said in



Iran's Marziyeh Jafari poses for a photo with the Asian Women's Coach of the Year prize at the AFC Awards in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Oct. 16, 2025.

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a video message on Thursday night.

"I sincerely thank all the players and everyone who has stood by me over the years, as their role in this success has been truly significant.

"I hope I've brought joy to the people of my country and showcased the true potential and competence of all Iranian women."

Only the third Iranian

woman to be nominated for the award – after Shahrzad Mozaffar (2010) and Katayoun Khosrowyar (2019) – the Bam-born coach also guided her hometown club from the preliminary stage of the 2024/25 AFC Women's Champions League all the way to the quarterfinals, where Khatoon fell 1-0 to South Korea's Incheon Red Angels in March.

Having begun her coaching journey at just 17, Jafari has been the driving force behind Bam Khatoon's domestic dominance since joining the club in 2008. Promotion to the top flight followed a year later, and in 2011 she captured the first of 11 league titles – the most recent coming in March.

## Aqapour's accolade

It was business as usual

for Iran in the Futsal Player of the Year category, as Salar Aqapour claimed the award ahead of club and country teammate Moslem Oladqobad – the 2022 winner – and fellow first-time nominee Muhammad Osamanmusa of Thailand. Aqapour became the seventh Iranian – and third in succession – to win the prize, following Vahid Shamsaei, Mohammad Ta-

world-class talent and currently plies his trade for Gohar Zamin.

There was another familiar face for the Iranians among the winners as Alireza Faghani, representing Football Australia, was part of the trio to win the AFC Referees Special Award – alongside Anton Shchetinin and Ashley Beecham.

Elsewhere, Saudi Arabian maestro Salem Al Dawsari was named the AFC Player of the Year, with Japan star Hana Takahashi claiming the AFC Women's Player of the Year honor.

Al Dawsari was recognized for a stellar 2024/25 season that saw him finish as top scorer in the AFC Champions League Elite to help Al Hilal reach the last four, while also starring at the FIFA Club World Cup in their run to the last eight. At domestic level, the 34-year-old became the all-time assist leader in the Saudi Pro League and scored 15 times.

Takahashi spearheaded Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies' domestic cup triumph as well as a third-placed league finish, while featuring in their journey to the AFC Women's Champions League quarterfinals. The defender was deployed upfront to great effect, scoring 12 times across all competitions.

## World Para Powerlifting Championships:

## Iran's Gharibshahi shatters world record to win gold

## Sports Desk

Iranian para powerlifter Aliakbar Gharibshahi once again proved to be in a league of his own, delivering another world record-breaking performance to claim his third World Championships title in Cairo on Thursday.

Reigning Paralympic champion Gharibshahi displayed an incredible show of strength and determination to break his own world record of 254kg (set in Dubai 2022) by one kilogram with his second lift in the men's up to 107kg showdown. He attempted to go further with 260kg only to falter this time and save it for later.

"After last year's Paris Paralympics, I trained a lot to raise the bar again. I came to Cairo with a new world record in my mind and wanted to set 260kg but maybe next time," said the 43-year-old Iran, who won the gold in the French capital with a Paralympic record lift of 252kg.

Tokyo 2020 champion Sodnompiljee Enkhbayar settled for the silver at 243kg, with American Bobby Body taking the bronze with a 237kg effort. This was Iran's fourth medal in the Elite competition in Cairo.

Two-time Paralympic champion Rouhollah Rostami had to settle for a runner-up finish in the men's -88kg weight class with a lift of 243kg – one kilogram short of China's Yan Panpan – taking his personal World Championships tally to

one gold and four silvers.

Iran's second silver medal came in the men's -72kg class, where Amir Jafari posted 186-193-202 to finish behind Malaysian Bonnie Bunyau Gustin in the total standings.

Aliasghar Abareqi took the bronze in the men's -97kg contest thanks to a best effort of 227kg.

Earlier in the Egyptian capital, Iranians had impressed with nine medals, including a remarkable eight golds, in the Rookie and Next Gen age class at the World Championships.

Atiyeh Sadat Hosseini, 17, made history by winning Iran's maiden women's gold at the world showpiece, triumphing in the -61kg category.

Mani Saeidi clinched the gold in the men's -88kg category (Next Gen) by setting a new world record of 166kg before bettering the mark with

172kg on his second attempt.

Reza Enayatollahi secured the gold in the men's -97kg category with a new Next Gen world record of 195kg, before an overall tally of 383kg saw the Iranian prodigy also clinch the total gold.

Hassan Mohammad Hosseinpour claimed the ultimate prize in the Next Gen -80kg class, thanks to a 156kg lift, but settled for the total silver with 303kg.

Amirali Es'hagnia also enjoyed a double-gold winning campaign in the +107kg event with a 171-336 tally.



Iran's Marziyeh Jafari poses for a photo with the Asian Women's Coach of the Year prize at the AFC Awards in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Oct. 16, 2025.

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## Wrestling World Championships:

## Iran handed 2015 freestyle title after Russian's doping violation confirmed



Russian wrestler Abdusalam Gadisov (red) is seen in action against American Kyle Snyder in the freestyle 97kg final at the 2015 World Championships in Las Vegas, NV, US.

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Iran was officially awarded the freestyle team title from the 2015 Wrestling World Championships, a decade later, after the United World Wrestling confirmed on Thursday that Russian wrestler Abdusalam Gadisov's doping ban had been upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Gadisov lost in the final to American Kyle Snyder, settling for silver in the 97kg class in Las Vegas, but was later stripped of his medal and handed a four-year ban after testing positive for prohibited substances, as confirmed by the World

Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Russia had originally made a clean sweep of men's titles in Las Vegas, but has now dropped to third place in the freestyle team standings with 44 points, behind Iran (49) and Azerbaijan (46). Under former head coach Rasoul Khadem, Iran bagged a couple of silver medals through Hassan Rahimi (57kg) and Hassan Yazdani (70kg), along with bronze medals from Ahmad Mohammadi (65kg) and Alireza Karimi (86kg) across eight weight divisions in Las Vegas.

The international governing body's announcement took Iran's tally to seven freestyle team titles at the sport's

flagship international event since its inception in 1951.

Iran's most recent crown came at September's showpiece in Zagreb, where the nation's 10-man squad captured seven medals and tallied 145 points to beat the United States (134) to the top spot.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) won the ultimate prize in their respective weight classes, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan (61kg), Amirali Azarpira (97kg) settled for two silver medals. Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), Kamran Qasempour (86kg), and Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg) added four bronzes to Iran's medal haul.