

Islamic Solidarity Games:

Iran braces for 'mini World Cup' test in futsal

Sports Desk

The futsal competition at the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games will be among the most highly-anticipated events in Riyadh, as six of the eight participating teams featured at last year's World Cup in Uzbekistan.

Record 13-time Asian Cup champion Iran will be joined by African powerhouse Morocco, as well as Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in Group B, while Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Libya, and Azerbaijan complete the lineup in Group A. Recently-crowned AFC Player of the Year Salar Aqapour and three former winners of the prestigious prize – Hossein Tayyebi, Saeid Ahmadabbasi, and Moslem Oladqobad – will spearhead Iran's 14-man squad in the Saudi capital.

Baqer Mohammadi, Behzad Rasouli, Mohammadhossein Derakhshani, Mahdi Karimi, Masoud Yousef, Behrouz Azimi, Hossein Sabzi, Mohammadhossein Bazayr, Amirhossein Gholami, and Ali Khalilvand complete the Iranian roster as head coach Vahid Shamsaei, having named a full-strength squad, aims to go all out for glory at the Games.

"This is going to be a mini World Cup in Riyadh," Shamsaei's number two Mahmoud Khorakchi told Varzesh3 before Iran left for the Games on Friday.



Former Asian Player of the Year Moslem Oladqobad (L), pictured against Morocco at the 2024 Futsal World Cup, will be a key player in the Iranian squad at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

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the World Cup. They are a team we are watching very closely.

"Just like Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been on a sharp upward trajectory, earning a spot at the previous World Cup. They will undoubtedly be a tough opponent for any team and should not be underestimated," Khorakchi said of the two rising powers in Asian futsal.

Iran made hard work of a 3-1 win over Afghanistan when the two sides met in the 2024 Asian Cup group stage, while Tajikistan was somewhat unfortunate to finish fourth after back-to-back shootout defeats – against Thailand in the semifinals and Uzbekistan in the bronze-medal match.

"All four teams in this group have now competed on the biggest stage, which raises the stakes and makes every match in this group critically important," Khorakchi insisted.

The top two teams in each group will advance to semifinals, with the final showpiece set to be staged at the Prince Faisal bin Fahad Olympic Complex – Green Hall on November 11.

"Morocco is literally a global powerhouse of the game. We recently watched them in a couple of friendlies against Spain last week. They were tactically spot-on and came away with the victory. They excel in every tactical aspect of

the game – in attack, in defense, on set-pieces – and possess everything it takes to be a top-tier futsal team," added the Iranian coach. Iran will face Morocco in the group opener on Tuesday – a rematch of last year's World Cup

knockout encounter, which the African side came from behind to win and progress to the quarter-final.

Iran's second outing in Riyadh will be against Afghanistan on Thursday, followed by the final

group game against Tajikistan on Saturday.

"Afghanistan has also been turning heads, both at the World Cup and in the recent Asian tournaments. Argentina only managed a narrow 2-1 victory over them at

Iran's Mottaqian eyeing ISG gold, new javelin milestone in Riyadh



● NPC

Sports Desk

Tokyo Paralympic champion Hashemiyeh Mottaqian said her goal for the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games is not only to win the javelin throw gold medal but also to set new record for the discipline.

Mottaqian will be one of the four Iranians – alongside Zeinab Moradi, Parastou Habibi, and Yassin Khosravi – vying for glory in para athletics at the multi-sport event in Riyadh.

When asked about her absence at September's World Championships in India, the 39-year-old Iranian explained, "I suffered a serious injury after last year's Paris Paralympics and my physiotherapy program lasted for six months to achieve a full recovery. "If I had competed in the

World Championships, I might have won a medal despite my injury, but my ultimate goal is always to claim the gold, which is why I decided to rest and take part at the Islamic Solidarity Games, not risking my shot at a gold medal," the three-time world silver medalist told ISNA. "The injury has completely healed, and I have no issues now. I have been training seriously for three months and gearing up for the Games in Riyadh," Mottaqian added. "I am striving to begin this new chapter by winning a gold medal and setting a new world record at the Islamic Solidarity Games. After that, I will focus on preparing for next year's Asian Para Games in Nagoya, and the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics."

IHF Men's U17 World Championship: Iran defeats Puerto Rico to finish ninth

Sports Desk

Iranian handball boys managed to win their second match in a row at the IHF Men's Under-17 World Championship, defeating Puerto Rico 42-30, as the Asian champions finished ninth at the inaugural event in Morocco.

Player of the match Amirhossein Samarbakhsh and Farshad Nowruzpour each contributed with a game-high nine goals for Iran, with Ali Ghayour scoring seven.

Fresh off an impressive win against the host in their previous game, the Puerto Ricans started right on the front foot, building on an unanswered four-goal run to take a 7-4 lead

and prompt the first team timeout from Iran.

Dylan Andreu and Antwan Garcia were the players to watch from Puerto Rico, before Iran began to turn up the pressure, with the biggest difference between the two teams in the first half being the shooting efficiency.

While Iran boasted a 74% efficiency, Puerto Rico hovered around 50% – largely thanks to Iranian goalkeeper Mehrshad Mansouri, who stood tall with 11 saves and a 44% saving efficiency in the first half.

Iranian boys took control as the first half wore on, as a 7-0 unanswered run turned the game on its head and helped the Asian side build a four-goal lead, 11-7, which



Iran's Mohsen Hadizadeh (24) shoots during a victory over Puerto Rico at the Men's U17 Handball World Championship in Casablanca, Morocco, on October 31, 2025.

● IHF

Iran began its campaign with a 45-20 loss to Germany, which went on to secure a place in the final, and then suffered a 38-29 defeat against Argentina in Group C.

The preliminary win against Puerto Rico was followed by a 30-21 triumph over South Korea in the 9-12 place semifinals – a rematch of the final showpiece in September's Asian U17 Championship, which Iran had won 28-25.

it maintained to lead 19-15 at halftime.

The two sides had already met in the preliminary round, with Iran winning 38-33, but this time around, with Puerto Rico shuffling their cards in the second half, there was no question about the winner.

The Asian side, which dominated throughout the whole match, opened its first 10-goal lead (33-23) after 44 minutes, part of a four-goal unanswered run.

Eventually, Iran clinched a 42-30 win, finishing on the ninth place with two wins in five matches.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Esteghlal beats 10-man Iralco to go top

Sports Desk

Esteghlal moved atop the Persian Gulf Pro League table, thanks to a 3-1 home victory over Iralco at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium.

In-form Albanian winger Jasir Asani put the Tehran Blues ahead from the spot in the 17th minute, after being fouled in the box by Yassin Jorjani. Former Barcelona player Munir El Haddadi headed home Alireza Koushki's delicate cross to double the home side's lead in the first-half added time.

Rahman Jafari pulled one back for the visitors with a

52nd-minute penalty, but Reza Marzban was sent off for a second bookable offence on the hour mark, before Koushki's glancing header restored the two-goal cushion five minutes later.

Esteghlal sits atop the tight standings – in which the top eight are separated by just four points – with 16 points from nine games, with Iralco is seventh with 13.

single point.

Foolad Khuzestan had substitute Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar's 96th-minute equalizer to thank for salvaging a point in the Ahvaz Derby against Esteghlal Khuzestan, after Aref Rostami had given the home side a 19th-minute lead.

Zob Ahan and Malavan shared the spoils in a goal-less stalemate in Isfahan – the same scoreline between Khaybar and Golgozar Sirjan in Khorramabad.

Chadormalou continued its impressive start to the season with a 3-2 away victory over Mes Rafsanjan to sit third with 14 points.



● AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

On Thursday, defending champion Tractor and Persepolis drew 1-1 in an empty Bonyan Diesel Stadium in Tabriz.

Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh thought he had secured the Tractor's first victory over Persepolis since February 2022 when his low effort

from the edge of the box found the bottom corner in the 88th minute.

The Tehran Reds, however, had the final say, as Montenegrin midfielder Marko Bakić drew the visitors level with a sumptuous free kick in the seventh minute of stoppage time.