

Iran embraces top-tier tests at Futsal World Cup, Tavassoli says

Sports Desk

Iranian goalkeeper and captain Farzaneh Tavassoli knows the challenge that lies ahead for her and her teammates at the upcoming Women's Futsal World Cup but embraces the opportunity to test themselves against the best in the game.

Iran has been drawn alongside futsal heavyweights Brazil and Italy, as well as Panama, in Group D of the inaugural World Cup, which will kick off on November 21 in the Philippines.

Iranian girls will get their campaign underway against eight-time Copa America champion Brazil – the top team in the latest FIFA World Ranking – on November 23, before facing Panama three days later.

The Asian side will hope to be in contention for a top-two finish in the group and a place in the round of 16, when it squares off against world No. 7 Italy on the final day on November 29.

When asked about Iran's tough draw, Tavassoli said, "Brazil and Italy are top-tier, star-studded teams, but we won't be intimidated by the magnitude of the task." "In fact, matches like these are a huge source of motivation for us. We've analyzed Brazil thoroughly; we know their strengths and weaknesses, and will be prepared for any scenario," the 38-year-old keeper told the official website of the Iranian Football Federation.



● AFC

cial website of the Iranian Football Federation.

"In futsal, everything comes down to belief and focus. They may have more global experience, but we have hearts full of motivation and passion. Our goal is to get the best possible result from every single match," added the Iranian skipper.

A third-place finish at May's

Asian Cup secured Iran a spot at the World Cup – alongside finalists Japan and Thailand – though it was hardly deemed a satisfying outcome for a nation that had won back-to-back titles in the previous two editions of the continental showpiece.

Following Iran's underwhelming campaign in China, the sport's national governing body dis-

missed head coach Forouzan Soleimani and reinstated Shahrzad Mozaffar, who had led the team to the Asian title in 2018 during her previous tenure.

"The Iranian team has changed; the players are more motivated and disciplined. Our technical staff is doing a fantastic, highly professional job; from fitness to analysis, everything is scientific

and precise. When you train with a team like this, you just want to go out and shine on the court – and we are ready to make that happen," Tavassoli said.

"Iran is now a rejuvenated team with a different mindset. We're firmly confident that we can stand our ground against any opponent. We push and motivate each other in training because we know

that every second of practice could be decisive at the World Cup."

Iran faced Russia in friendly double-header in Tula two weeks ago, playing to a 2-2 draw in the first game before winning the second outing 4-3.

"The training camps are truly intense, but we find this hard work rewarding because we know we have a great goal ahead of us. Every training session, every in-camp game, and every tactical meeting brings us one step closer to our objective. The coordination among the players improves daily, and the team has reached a strong level of mental and physical consistency.

"There's a powerful team spirit within the squad. The experienced players support the younger ones, and the younger ones motivate us all with their energy. We are like a family – everyone is working towards the same goal."

On Iran's ultimate goal in the Philippines, Tavassoli said, "For us, the World Cup is more than just a tournament; it's an opportunity to show the world the spirit of Iranian women. We'll go out there to prove that Iranian talent, dedication, and passion can excel at any level.

"Our matches will undoubtedly be challenging, but I can only promise that we will fight with all we have until the final whistle. Our team is ready to stun the world."

Iran's Safi finishes doubles' runner-up at World Tour event in Italy

Sports Desk

Iran's Meshkatozzahra Safi settled for the doubles' runner-up trophy at the W15 Solarino tournament in Sicily, Italy.

The Iranian player teamed up with Germany's Vivien Sandberg to reach Saturday's

final at the latest ITF Women's World Tennis Tour event but fell in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) to the Italian duo of Carlolina Gasparini and Kseniia Ruchkina.

The Iranian-German duo began their campaign with a 2-0 victory (6-4, 7-6(4)) over the

host's Alessandra Fiorillo and Ylenia Zocco and was then handed a walkover against NoemiLa Cagnina and Giulia Paterno in the quarterfinals. Safi and Sandberg then came out victorious in successive sets (7-6(3), 6-1) against Swiss pair of Nicole Gadient and Sophie Luescher to progress to the final showpiece.

Safi had claimed the doubles crown – alongside British girl Jasmine Conway – at the W15 Kayseri tournament in June to become the first Iranian to win a trophy at a World Tour event.



● ITF

Greek Super League:

Taremi on target again as 10-man Olympiacos edges Aris

Sports Desk

Iranian striker Mahdi Taremi found the net for a second game in a row to help Olympiacos beat Aris 2-1 at home in the Greek Super League on Saturday.

Making only his second top-flight start since joining the club in August,

the prolific Iranian exchanged a neat one-two with Portuguese winger Daniel Podence before firing the ball into the roof of the net on the hour mark to double the home side's lead at Karaiskakis Stadium.

Podence had opened the scoring in the 49th minute. Olympiacos still had to with-

stand a late scare to secure all three points, as Gustavo Mancha was sent off in the 71st minute, before Lorenzo Morón pulled one back from the spot for the visitors three minutes later.

This was Taremi's sixth goal in 10 appearances in the Olympiacos colors.

The former Porto and Inter

forward came off the bench to score twice on his club debut during a 5-0 win over Panserraikos on the opening day of the new league season, and netted another double to lead The Legend to a 2-1 victory over Asteras Aktor in the domestic cup on September 24. The Iranian then went on a six-game goalless run across all competitions, but ended the drought with a smashing header during a 2-0 win against archrival AEK Athens last week.

The latest victory saw Olympiacos move atop the top-flight table with 22 points from nine matches – two points clear of second-placed PAOK, which has a game in hand.



Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates his goal during a 2-1 victory over Aris in the Greek Super League in Piraeus, Attica, Greece, on November 1, 2025.

● olympiacos.org



Tractor aiming for back-to-back wins in ACL Elite

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Tractor will seek a second successive victory at the AFC Champions League Elite when it faces Al Shorta at Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium today.

Having shared the spoils with Emirati outfits Shabab Al Ahli (1-1) and Al Wahda (0-0) in its first two games in the league phase, Tractor upset the formbook with a stunning 5-0 win against Sharjah FC on matchday three while Iraq's Al Shorta has yet to shift into high gear with just a point to its name.

While Tractor would have been glad to

register victory against Sharjah, it will head into the Al Shorta tie having only twice won back-to-back matches on the continental stage, which were both achieved in 2016.

The victory against Sharjah, however, ended a run of three winless matches and with Al Shorta struggling to get its campaign running, Tractor will fancy its chances of taking maximum points.

Al Shorta's only point came from its opening-day draw with Al Sadd SC of Qatar and the Iraqi side needs to start getting points on the board if it is to stand a chance of a top-eight spot in the West Zone's 12-team table and a place in the round of 16.

The odds are stacked against the Iraqi side, with Al Shorta having only picked up one point over its last 11 outings in the Asian elite clubs' competition, finding the net only four times and conceding 28.

Sitting fifth in the table, Tractor will step onto the pitch on the back of a frustrating 1-1 home draw against 10-man Persepolis in the domestic league on Thursday, when a Marko Bakic's stunning free kick in the 96th minute canceled out in-form Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's 88th-minute opener for the host.



● FFIRI