

Iran prepares for FIBA World Cup qualifiers in Lebanon

Sports Desk

The Iranian national basketball team, currently in Lebanon for the first FIBA World Cup qualifying window, is ready to compete after adding key legionnaires to its roster. Under the guidance of coach Sotirios Manolopoulos, the team is set to showcase its full potential, and fans are eager to see how the players will perform on the court. Due to recent developments, both of Iran's upcoming matches against Iraq in this window will take place at a neutral venue in Lebanon. However, in future windows, the Iranian "Skycrapers" are expected to host their opponents in Tehran, giving local fans the chance to cheer their team on at home, according to IRNA.

Following Iran's bronze medal finish at the FIBA Asia Cup in Saudi Arabia, the national team has strengthened further with the addition of players such as Behnam

Yakhchali, boosting the team's depth and competitiveness. The only setback at this stage is the injury to Mohammad Amini, who suffered an injury during his last training session with French club Nancy and will be sidelined for a while. Despite this, the rest of the national squad is fully fit and ready to compete, demonstrating that Iran is bringing its full strength to the World Cup qualifiers—a positive sign for the team and its supporters.

The qualifiers are organized into four groups, with Iran placed in Group C alongside Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. According to FIBA, Iran is ranked as the second-strongest team in the qualifiers, just behind Australia and ahead of China and New Zealand.

Group A features Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Guam, while Group B includes Japan, China, South Korea, and the Philippines. Group D consists of

Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, India, and Qatar.

Iran will compete in Lebanon with a lineup that includes Arsalan Kazemi, Arman Zangeneh, Navid Rezaeifar, Mohammad Sina Vahedi, Mobin Sheikhi, Matin Aghajani, Mehdi Jafari, Jalal Aghamiri, Mohammad Mehdi Heydari, Hassan Aliakbari, Amirhossein Azari, Behnam Yakhchali, Salar Monji, and Piter Girgoorian, all under the leadership of coach Manolopoulos. The team's goal is to secure a victory against Iraq, building on a favorable historical record in which Iran has won two of the last three encounters between the two sides. FIBA has scheduled the first match between Iran and Iraq for today (November 27), with the return match set for November 30, both to be held in Beirut. The Iranian team aims to demonstrate its strength and cohesion on the international stage, laying a strong foundation for future qualifying windows.



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Sepahan defeat Al-Hussein to claim top spot in Group C

Sports Desk

Sepahan earned an important 2-0 victory over Jordan's Al-Hussein on Tuesday night, keeping their hopes of advancing as Group C leaders firmly alive.

In a first half dominated by Sepahan, the Iranian side launched repeated attacks on Al Hussein's goal, but their efforts failed to break the deadlock. The half's most controversial moment came when Sepahan appealed for a penalty following a challenge inside the area, but the referee judged the foul to have occurred outside the box, keeping the score 0-0 at halftime, IRNA wrote. With statistics clearly in their favor, Sepahan entered the second half de-

termined to convert their superiority into goals. Backed by their supporters — despite a lower-than-expected turnout — the Isfahan side finally broke through in the 73rd minute when Aria Yousefi's powerful strike found the back of the net past goalkeeper Mahmoud Al Kawamleh.

Al Hussein responded by pushing the game into Sepahan's half in search of an equalizer. However, deep into stoppage time, Sepahan extended their lead through Mohammad Askari, securing a decisive 2-0 triumph.

With this win, Sepahan reached seven points, overtaking Al Hussein at the top of Group C. The group leadership will ultimately depend on Al Hussein's fi-

nal match against Ahal; failure to secure the required result would send Sepahan into the AFC knockout stage as group winners.

The right-back of Sepahan Yousefi, who came on in the second half, showed an attacking mindset and had a direct impact on his team's victory, earning him the title of the best player of the match.

Sepahan head coach Moharram Navidkia expressed both satisfaction and emotion after the match. "I want to sincerely thank the fans who were able to attend today. They supported us with all they had."

"They were truly an excellent team, with a high standard of play worthy of Asia. Their style was attractive, and it was a match where fans could feel a goal com-

ing at any moment." He added, "Fortunately, we took our chances in the second half and secured the result. It was a good performance, and I hope we continue this form in our next match."

Al-Hussein head coach Joaquim Machado attributed his team's loss to avoidable errors.

"We made individual mistakes that cost us the match," he said. "It was a difficult game against a big team. Sepahan were better in the first half, but we also had chances and failed to convert them."

Machado continued, "Our mistakes hurt us, but I believe a draw would have been a fair result. We still have one more match, and our goal remains to finish top of the group."



tasnimnews.com

Iran drawn into Pot 2 for 2026 World Cup group stage

Sports Desk

The teams participating in the FIFA World Cup have been placed into one of four seeded pots as they await the announcement of their opponents for the group stage. This tournament is set to be jointly hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. With just 10 days remaining until the draw ceremony for the 2026 World Cup, FIFA has officially announced the seeding arrangement. Based on this, the Iranian national football team has been placed in the second pot (Pot 2) for the competition, according to IRNA.

Pot 1 includes teams such as Canada, Mexico, the United States, Spain, Argentina, France, England, Brazil, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. The second pot consists of Croatia, Morocco, Colombia, Uruguay, Swit-

zerland, Japan, Senegal, Iran, South Korea, Ecuador, Austria, and Australia.

Pot 3 comprises Norway, Panama, Egypt, Algeria, Scotland, Paraguay, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. Pot 4 contains teams like Jordan, Cape Verde, Ghana, Curaçao, Haiti, New Zealand, plus six playoff qualifier teams from the World Cup qualification rounds.

On December 6, FIFA will unveil the updated match schedule, detailing stadium assignments and kickoff times for each game. Organizers assure an optimized timetable to provide ideal conditions for teams and convenient viewing times for global fans.



Dorostkar proud of wrestling team's medal tally

Sports Desk

Pejman Dorostkar, head coach of Iran's national freestyle wrestling team, spoke about his team's performance after three challenging tournaments, the most recent being the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

He highlighted the difficulties faced due to the intense 2025 World Wrestling Championships, which left wrestlers fatigued, and the short interval between the two events created challenges in training intensity and weight management, according to varzesh3.com. "The Islamic Solidarity Games were a competitive event in which the Iranian wrestling team participated with full force to support the country's sports delegation. Our main goal was to improve Iran's ranking in the overall team standings."

Dorostkar emphasized that the competition was held at a very high level. He said, "Given that these Games were also important for other countries, they came with their full strength. Almost all the world and Olympic titleholders from the Islamic countries participated in this event, which made the competition even fiercer and more challenging than usual." He noted that wrestling, a premier and national sport in Iran, delivered with 12 medals in 12 weight categories, including 8 gold medals, helping Iran secure the third place in the overall team standings.

The coach praised standout performances by Younes Emami, who made a strong comeback, Rahman Amouzad and Amirhossein Zare, who continued their winning streaks by defeating notable champions. Amirali Azarpira also showed his



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true potential beyond the medals he has won over two years, while Ali Momeni earned a bronze medal. Regarding Kamran Qasempour, Dorostkar explained that athletes' physical conditions vary due to age and genetics. Qasempour had to cut weight twice in a short period, which made him somewhat vulnerable despite not losing exces-

sive weight. He also experienced a previous lymph node issue initially suspected to be brucellosis but later diagnosed as a dental problem requiring surgery. Though he suffered a shoulder injury during a wrestling exchange, Dorostkar is confident that Qasempour will recover fully and return to the mats with strength.