

Women's Handball World Championship: Iran falls to Hungary in second group game

Sports Desk

Iran fell to a second straight defeat at the IHF Women's Handball World Championship in Germany and the Netherlands, suffering a 47-13 loss against European powerhouse Hungary in the Dutch city of 's-Hertogenbosch on Saturday.

The defeat left Iran at the bottom of the Group B table, while Hungary maintained a perfect record to remain at the top, holding a superior goal difference to Switzerland.

Hungary will now face Switzerland in the final round of the group stage in a direct battle for first place and the chance to carry full points into the main round. Iran will face Senegal to fight for the group's final main round spot, with the losing side moving on to the President's Cup.

From the very start, the disparity between the two teams was obvious. Hungary got off to a blis-

tering start, building an early 4-0 lead, while Iran had to battle hard to find its way to the goal. Iran's first goal came in the fifth minute, the second in the sixth, and then a long scoreless drought followed. In the next 14 minutes, Iran scored only twice, while Hungary kept piling on goals and was already up 18-4 by the 20th minute. In those opening 20 minutes alone, Hungary coach Vladimir Golovin had already rotated his entire squad, and 12 of them had scored. Many of the goals came from fast transitions.

The Hungarians were backed by a strong performance from goalkeeper Kinga Janurik. Whenever Iran did manage to break through late in the half, it was mostly thanks to Haniyeh Karimi. The team also missed their left back, Nastaran Koudzari, who was injured in the opening minutes. For the second match in a row at Germany/Netherlands 2025, the inexperienced Iranian side fin-

ished the first half with just seven goals, while Hungary was already closing in on the 30-goal mark.

The same pace continued in the second half, though Iran showed more confidence compared to its first match against Switzerland, where they managed to score only twice after the break. This time, they scored four goals within the opening 12 minutes. Iran kept fighting, but Hungary did not slow the tempo.

By the 50th minute, Hungary had already reached the 40-goal mark and finished with 47. The result marks Iran's largest losing margin at the World Championship. The previous record was a 45-22 defeat to Germany in 2023.

For Iran, Aseman Badvi and Karimi led the scoring with three goals each. On the Hungarian side, where all players featured, Gréta Márton scored nine, and both Kinga Janurik and Anna Bukovszky finished with save percentages above 50%.



● IHF

Qayedí at the double as Al Nasr advances to UAE League Cup semifinals



● khabarvarzeshi.com

Sports Desk

Iranian winger Mahdi Qayedí scored twice to help Al Nasr defeat Shabab Al Ahli 3-2 in the second leg of the UAE's ADIB Cup quarterfinals on Saturday, with his side ultimately prevailing 3-2 in a penalty shootout at Al Maktoum Stadium.

The victory came after the first leg had ended in a 2-1 defeat for Al Nasr. Al Nasr took the lead in the 13th minute when Qayedí broke free inside the box and finished coolly past goalkeeper Hassan Hamza Al Mazmi.

Shabab Al Ahli equalized 12

minutes later through Mateus Dias Lima, who won the ball from Salem Al Shargi before converting calmly for his fifth goal in ten ADIB Cup appearances.

Qayedí struck again against his former club just before halftime, lifting the ball over the onrushing goalkeeper to restore Al Nasr's lead and swing the momentum back in his team's favor.

Abdoulaye Toure extended Al Nasr's advantage with a composed finish from inside the area in the 61st minute.

Yuri Cesar set up a tense finish by reducing the deficit in the

82nd minute, which sent the tie directly to a penalty shootout. Al Nasr held its nerve from the spot to seal its place in the semifinals against Al Ain.

Al Nasr head coach Slaviša Jokanović was full of praise for the Iranian international after the match, saying: "Mahdi made a powerful return and delivered an exceptional performance. Having just recovered from an injury, he proved he remains a high-quality and impactful player."

Al Ain hammered Sharjah 4-1 later in the day to advance to the last four with a commanding 7-2 victory on aggregate.

Esmailnejad joins Akkus Belediyespor in Turkish volleyball league

Sports Desk

Iranian opposite spiker Amin Esmailnejad has joined Turkish Efeler Ligi side Akkus Belediyespor.

The Iranian made his debut for the club in a straight-sets defeat to Halkbank on Saturday, contributing three points. The loss marked Akkus Belediyespor's sixth in seven outings, leaving them second from bottom in the 14-team league.

Esmailnejad was a key player for Iran in June's Volleyball Nations League (VNL), finishing as the 17th-highest scorer with 158 points. His efforts helped Iran finish eighth in the 18-team preliminary round, though the team narrowly missed qualification for the VNL Finals.

The prolific spiker missed September's World Championship in the Philippines due to an untimely ankle injury sustained just before the tournament. Without him, Iran reached the quarterfinals, where they were defeated 3-1 by Czechia.

Iranians shine in Turkey

Meanwhile, other Iranian players delivered impressive performances in the Turkish league's seventh round on Saturday. National team captain Mor-teza Sharifi scored 20 points, including three aces, to lead Istanbul BSK to a 3-0 (25-21, 25-20, 27-25) home victory over Spor Toto. The win keeps Istanbul second in the table with six wins.

Ali Fazli earned a man-of-the-match award, contributing 21 points in Istanbul Basaksehir's straight-sets win (32-30, 25-11, 25-22) against Gaziantep Genclik.

Despite a 15-point performance from the in-form Bardia Sa'adat, Alanya Belediyespor fell to a 3-1 defeat against league leaders Ziraat Bankasi.



● FIVB



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ITTF World Youth Championships:

Injury struggle costs Faraji in quarterfinals

Sports Desk

A pre-match injury setback proved costly for Benyamin Faraji at the ITTF World Youth Championships in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, as the Iranian table tennis prodigy suffered a quarterfinal defeat to China's Li Hechen on Saturday. Faraji, who won a historic under-15 bronze medal in last year's edition, sustained a knee

injury just before his last-eight showdown in the boys' singles U19 category.

To secure the ranking points for the round—which would have been forfeited with a withdrawal—the Iranian technical staff made the difficult decision for him to compete.

Clearly hampered by limited mobility and pain, Faraji fell to a 4-0 defeat (11-2, 11-9, 11-5, 11-6)

against his formidable Chinese opponent.

Faraji's campaign had begun promisingly on Thursday with a 4-3 victory (10-12, 13-11, 6-11, 11-3, 6-11, 12-10, 11-4) against Brazil's Leonardo Iizuka. He followed this with a remarkable comeback in the round of 16, overcoming American Nandan Nareh in seven games (12-10, 9-11, 6-11, 1-11, 11-7, 12-10, 11-7).