

## AFC Futsal Asian Cup:

*'Toughest of the lot':* Shamsaei relishes hard-fought 14th title

## Sports Desk

Head coach Vahid Shamsaei was full of praise for his players after Iran defeated hosts Indonesia 5-4 in a shootout to lift the AFC Futsal Asian Cup trophy in Jakarta on Saturday.

The Asian powerhouse had to withstand a euphoric home crowd at the Indonesia Arena and come from behind on three occasions, with the match finishing 5-5 after extra time, before Hossein Sabzi's composed finish with the final spot-kick secured a record-extending 14th title at the flagship continental event. "From a technical point of view, all my players delivered today. I never wish such pressure on anyone, but the important thing is the trophy is now in our hands," said Shamsaei, who won the competition eight times as a player and was also in charge when Iran was crowned Asian champion two years ago.

"I've lifted many trophies throughout my career, but this one was definitely the toughest of the lot," added the 50-year-old, who went on to hail first-time finalists Indonesia for pulling off "the biggest development that I've seen in futsal."

Prolific pivot Hossein Tayyebi

gave Iran a third-minute lead, slicing his shot from inside the semi-circle beyond a diving Ahmad Habiebie for his sixth goal of the competition.

The contest, however, turned on its head inside three minutes as Reza Gunawan pounced on a rebound and poked his shot past Iranian goalkeeper Baqer Mohammadi in the seventh minute, before Israr Megantara added two in quick succession to send Indonesian fans roaring.

Mahdi Karimi reduced the deficit in the 18th minute when Salar Aqapour, from a free-kick on the edge of the circle, rolled the ball to him, with the winger side-footing his shot past the Indonesian wall and into the back of the net.

Saied Ahmadabbasi, who went on to pick up the tournament's Most Valuable Player award, drew Iran level four minutes into the second half, only for Indonesia to restore the lead seconds later through Samuel Eko. Aqapour and Mohammadhossein Derakhshani both struck the woodwork before Karimi finished off a well-worked power play for Iran's second equalizer in the 38th minute, forcing the match into extra time.

Iran looked destined for only a



Iran captain Hossein Tayyebi (10) holds aloft the AFC Futsal Asian Cup trophy after a shootout victory over Indonesia in the final in Jakarta, Indonesia, on February 7, 2026.  
● AFC

fourth defeat in Asian Cup history when Israr bagged his third of the afternoon with less than two minutes remaining, but Ahmadabbasi struck again moments later to ensure the final would be decided by a shootout. Indonesia's Muhammad Nizar saved Iran's opening spot-kick from Masoud Yousef, before Iran's second-choice goalkeeper Mahdi Rostami denied Dewa Riz-

ki's fourth attempt for the hosts. Israr then went from hero to villain after sending Indonesia's final effort wide, allowing Sabzi to step up and clinch the title.

"It's very difficult in this situation to say if I'm happy or unhappy," said Shamsaei. "A lot of incidents have happened recently in my country. I believe futsal is a sport that brings everyone together.

"Since I started as a player, it was always about being of service to my country. That was my mentality – to show my best performance for my country. I believe everything I did was for my people.

"When I became a coach, my mentality stayed the same. The team and I were under a lot of pressure. I want to thank the federation, all the players and

the team manager – hand in hand, we made our people back home happy."

Meanwhile, Shamsaei's opposite number on the Indonesian bench, Hector Souto, was proud of his team despite missing out on the title on home soil.

"I'm super proud of my players for doing an amazing job and for working so hard," said Souto. "No one would have believed that we would make the final, with chances to win in 40 minutes, in extra time or on penalties," said the Spaniard.

"The tournament went well for us and we were mentally super strong – probably the strongest team in the tournament – and we made it difficult for Iran, but we also made many mistakes.

"The team needs to build on their game in many areas, but today we talk about how good they were, their amazing performance and how we pushed Iran to the limit.

"We must remain humble because there are stronger teams in Asia like Iran and Japan with very good players, and we cannot yet match their speed.

"Sometimes you succeed and sometimes you don't, but today we came really close, so we should be really proud."

## Asian Indoor Athletics Championships:

## Zarei wins women's 400m silver as Iran bags three medals on Day 2



Iran's Zahra Zarei (L) poses with her women's 400m silver medal alongside Uzbek gold medalist Hukmova Jonbibi (C) and China's bronze medalist Zuo Siyu at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tianjin, China, on February 7, 2026.  
● SUN FANYUE/XINHUA

## Sports Desk

The second day of the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships saw Iran collect three medals — including a women's 400m silver through Zahra Zarei — in Tianjin, China, on Saturday.

Zarei clocked a personal-best 54.18 seconds in the final to finish behind Uzbekistan's

Hukmova Jonbibi, who crossed the line in 53.61 seconds, with China's Zuo Siyu settling for bronze in 54.62 seconds.

Elsewhere, Arash Sayyari claimed bronze in the men's 400m final. The Iranian, who was only handed a place in the final after a Chinese sprinter was forced out through injury, also registered a career-best

47.59 seconds, finishing behind Qatar's Bassem Hemeida (47.27 seconds) and China's Chiyu Zheng (47.34 seconds).

Iran's second bronze medal of the day came in the men's 3000m, where Hossein Nouri clocked 8:12.09. Japan's Kazuya Shiojiri (7:53.87) and Kyrgyzstan's Nursultan Keneshbekov (7:55.06) took gold and silver, respectively.

## Zagreb Open Ranking Series:

## Oskou dominates 77kg class to remain on course for major events

## Sports Desk

Iranian wrestler Ali Oskou capped his 77kg campaign at the Zagreb Open with an emphatic gold medal, taking Iran's tally to three in the Greco-Roman competitions at the Ranking Series season opener.

A world under-23 bronze medallist last October, Oskou defeated Hungary's Zoltan Levai by technical superiority (9-1) in Saturday's final at Arena Zagreb.

The Iranian began his run with a commanding 7-0 victory over American Kamal Bey before dispatching Egypt's Yehia Abdelkader 10-0 to reach the quarter-finals.

A 5-2 win against Hungary's Robert Fritch sent Oskou

into the semifinals, where he again overpowered Georgia's Temuri Orjonikidze by superiority (10-1).

With the tournament also serving as the second phase of Iran's team selection process, Oskou – who claimed gold at the national championships last December – will hope his dominant showing in the Croatian capital convinces head coach Hassan Rangraz to hand him a place at either the Asian or World Championships later this year.

In contrast, Amirmahdi Saeidi Nava endured a disappointing outing in the 77kg class, suffering a first-round 7-2 defeat to home favorite Antonio Kamenjasevic. Ahoura Bouveiri also exited early in the category, losing

3-1 to Bulgaria's Stoyan Kubatov in the qualification round.

Erfan Jarkani had opened Iran's Greco-Roman account in Zagreb with gold in the 63kg division on Friday, following an 8-4 victory over India's Chetan Chetan in the final.

The triumph saw Jarkani – a world junior and under-23 bronze medalist in 2024 – secure his place in Iran's squad for April's Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile, former world champion Meisam Dalkhani settled for bronze in the 63kg class,

rebounding from a 14-5 semifinal loss to Chetan by defeating Kazakhstan's Dastan Zarlykhanov by technical superiority (8-0) in the third-place bout.



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## CAVA Women's League:

## Sepahan into last four after clean sweep of group wins

## Sports Desk

Iran's Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan continued their perfect start to the CAVA Women's League with a comfortable straight-sets victory (25-11, 25-11, 25-11) over Uzbekistan's Humo VC in Malé, Maldives, on Saturday.

The win over the runner-up at the 2024 CAVA Women's Volleyball Club Championship saw Sepah-

an finish top of the Pool B standings and advance to the semifinals.

Sepahan had opened their campaign with a 3-1 victory (25-14, 23-25, 25-14, 25-12) against home favorite Hurraa Community Club at the Social Center Indoor Hall on Thursday, powered by a game-high 19 points from Iranian international outside hitter Fatemeh Khalili. Khalili again topped the scoring, with additional



● ASMA DAFEIAN/volleyball.ir

contributions from Elahesh Poursaleh, Masoumeh Qadami and middle blocker Zahra Karimi, as Sepahan went on to secure a 3-0 win (25-14, 25-15, 25-18) over

Nepal Police Club later on Saturday.

Organized by the Central Asian Volleyball Association (CAVA), the tournament features seven clubs from across Central and South Asia and serves as a qualification pathway to the upcoming AVC Women's Champions League, with the champions earning a place at April's showpiece event in Goyang, South Korea.