

# Iran to play Russia in volleyball friendlies in August

## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's national volleyball team is set to visit Ufa in late August for a pair of friendlies against European powerhouse Russia, the Iranian Volleyball Federation announced on Sunday. The national governing body added that other teams could be invited by the Russian federation during the same period, potentially expanding the event into a friendly tournament. Widely regarded as one of the heavyweights in the history of the sport, Russia has been suspended by the International Volleyball Federation from participation in FIVB and CEV tournaments since February 2022, in the aftermath of the country's invasion of Ukraine. The visit will form part of Iran's preparations for the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, which begins on September 4 in Fukuoka, Japan, where Iran will be chasing a fifth title in eight editions. As if Iran needed extra moti-

vation to avenge its 2023 final defeat to Japan on home soil, an Olympic quota place will be at stake in Fukuoka, with the champion securing a berth in the men's volleyball tournament at the 2028 Los Angeles Games. Iran faces a hectic international calendar in the coming months, beginning with the preliminary round of the Volleyball Nations League (VNL).

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's men will open their VNL campaign against Brazil in Brasilia on June 10, before taking on Bulgaria – finalist at last September's World Championships – Argentina and Belgium later in Week 1 at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium.

Iran will then travel to Orléans, France, for the second week of action, starting with a daunting clash against the formidable host and reigning Olympic champion France on June 24, followed by matches against the United States, Japan and Cuba. The third and final week of the preliminaries will see Piazza's



FIVB

side face Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, before further tests against Germany, Slovenia and

Türkiye. The top eight teams in the 18-team standings will advance to

the VNL Finals, which begin in Ningbo, China, on July 29. China is already guaranteed a place in

the quarterfinals as host. Iran will aim to build on a promising first year under Piazza by securing its first quarterfinal berth in four years at the prestigious annual tournament. After finishing in the bottom three in the previous two editions, Iran staged a late surge in the 2025 preliminaries to place eighth with six wins from 12 matches. However, Piazza's team ultimately missed out on the Finals, as China's host status secured it a quarterfinal spot despite finishing second from bottom. Momentum from several impressive VNL performances carried into the World Championship in the Philippines, where Iran advanced to the quarterfinals before suffering a 3-1 defeat to surprise package Czechia. Another encounter between Iran and Japan could be on the cards at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, which will kick off on September 19, as Piazza's men aim for a fourth successive men's gold medal at the multi-sport event.

## Iranian trio claims men's junior bronze at Sabre World Cup



IRNA

## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's junior team claimed a prestigious bronze medal at the Sabre Coupe du Monde event in Dakar, Senegal, on Sunday. The trio of Taha Kargarpour, Parsa Poursalman and Hesam Moradi suffered a 45-39 defeat to top seed Egypt in the semifinals, but bounced back to overcome the host team 45-31 and secure the consolation bronze. The third-place finish marked a second medal for Iran at the tournament, following Moradi's historic gold in the individual cadet event on Thursday. The 16-year-old prodigy capped his landmark campaign with a 15-12 victory over Ecuador's Jose Daniel Valencia Olmedo in the final, clinching Iran's first-ever Sabre World Cup gold medal in the age category. Moradi won four of his five bouts to finish fifth overall in the pool standings and advance to the round of 16, where he defeated Ishak Dali 15-4. A 15-11 victory over Kenya's Kinoti Kiara sent Moradi into the semifinals, before the Iranian edged Mexico's Nathan Mungia 15-13 to book his place in the final.

## 2026 Karate One-Youth League:

## Iranians secure eight-medal haul in Fujairah

## Sports Desk

Iranian karatekas collected eight medals – including two golds – to cap a solid campaign at the Karate One-Youth League event in Fujairah, UAE. Raha Babaei rounded off Iran's medal haul on Sunday with a bronze in the under-14 kumite -47kg class. Babaei bounced back from a narrow 3-2 defeat to eventual gold medalist Marharyta Koliada of Ukraine in the fifth round, defeating Saudi Arabia's Slama Alrasheed 8-0 in the repechage to finish joint third alongside American Riana Dukhande. Hasti Soltani also claimed bronze in the junior women's -59kg division, courtesy of an 8-2 victory over American Charlotte Singleton in the



Iran's Raha Babaei (R) poses on the podium with her U14 kumite -47kg bronze medal at the Karate One-Youth League event in Fujairah, UAE, on February 15, 2026. IKF

third-place bout.

Ghazal Fat'h Cheshmeh and Abolfazl Arab Yaqoubi headlined Iran's campaign in Fujairah by winning gold in their respective categories. Fat'h Cheshmeh secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Egypt's Noor Abdelaziz in the junior women's -48kg final on Friday, while Arab Yaqoubi defeated Spain's Rodrigo Garcia de Blas 3-2 in the cadet boys' -63kg final a day later. Meanwhile, Arash Razani (junior boys' -76kg), Arash Alhaki (junior boys' individual kata), Mohsen Keikhaeikia (cadet boys' -52kg), and Setayesh Qaneifard (cadet girls' -54kg) added four bronze medals across four days of competition. The next stop of the Karate One-Youth League will be held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from March 26 to 29.

## Tunis African Open 2026: Parhizgar wins gold as Iran bags three medals

## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's judo team collected three medals – including one gold – at the latest African Open event in Tunis. Elyas Parhizgar headlined Iran's medal haul in the Tunisian capital by claiming gold in the -81kg division on Sunday.



Elyas Parhizgar (white), pictured at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, won the men's -81kg title at the African Open event in Tunis. isg-2025.com

An Asian junior silver medalist in 2024, Parhizgar defeated Romania's Elemer Szocs in the semifinals before overcoming Muhammad Yusufzoda in the final – securing his second gold of the 2026 African Open series following his triumph in Casablanca last month. Mohammadpouria Banaeian settled for silver in the +100kg class after suffering a defeat to Egypt's Hady Hussein in the final. Amirabbas Choopan, meanwhile, claimed a bronze medal in the -90kg division. After falling to home favorite Abdelaziz Ben Am-

mar in the semifinals, Choopan rebounded to defeat Tajik opponent Mizrobozha Loiqov in the third-place bout. Sunday's medals capped a solid run for Iranian judo in Tunis, after the country had captured three medals at the Junior and Cadet African Cup events over the previous two days.

Banaeian had clinched the men's +100kg title with a victory over Egypt's Abdalla Abdalla in Friday's final, while Ali Nikseresht – who missed out on the podium on Sunday – finished runner-up in the men's -100kg category after losing to Belarus' Yauheni Morau. Sobhan Hakimi also claimed silver at the cadet event. Hakimi received a first-round bye in the -81kg class before defeating home favorite Mohamed Amin Abidi to book his place in the final. He ultimately fell short against world No. 3 Aly Elramly of Egypt, settling for second place.