

# World Snooker Championship: Vafaei launches epic comeback to stun world No 1 Trump

## Sports Desk

Iran's Hossein Vafaei caused the biggest shock of this year's World Snooker Championship as he beat the world No 1, Judd Trump, in a final frame decider on Monday. Hossein showed nerves of steel to rattle off a break of 91 in the 25th frame to claim a 13-12 victory and move through to the quarter-finals for the first time. Trump, aiming to add to his 2019 title, had led 10-7 and 12-11, but Vafaei would not be denied. The beaming Iranian was warmly congratulated by Trump at the end and received a standing ovation from the crowd. "He's such a tough opponent. I respect him on and off the table," Vafaei said. "Today I played better than yesterday and I managed it better than before. I said: 'If it's my tournament, it's going to happen.' I've been working on the mental side, I've wanted to be calmer and perform. It's better to sometimes shut your mouth and let the game come out."

Trump had looked in a strong position going into the final session as he held a 9-7 lead, but 31-year-old Vafaei, who came through two qualifying matches and was the only qualifier to win in the first round, fought back well. He won six of the nine frames in the final session, making breaks of 106 and 91 to rally from behind and win. Vafaei, the current world number 32, felt he could go all the way in Sheffield, the city he lives in. "I'm looking forward to playing anyone - I'm not scared of anyone and all of them know that," said Vafaei, who plays China's Wu Yize next. "There's no pressure, so why should I be worried? Some of us are different. When you see the line you get hungry or you get tired, it's up to you. I came to live in Sheffield to be beside the Crucible. The Crucible trophy is living in my head rent free. "It's one of the biggest wins of my career. I'm looking forward to it against Wu and fancy the job -

let's see how talented he is. I was not nervous, I enjoyed every moment. I was born for these kinds of situations." Trump, the 2019 champion, added: "It hurts but I had my chances. When you know you didn't play a good shot it's not like you've been unlucky. "I'm not angry about it, I just was not good enough." Meanwhile, Ronnie O'Sullivan admitted he got what he deserved after seeing his attempt for a record-breaking eighth Crucible crown shattered by a stunning comeback from John Higgins while Mark Selby branded the playing surface "horrific" after a 13-11 defeat by Wu. O'Sullivan twice led by five frames, but lost six in a row over the final two sessions and Higgins fired three centuries on Monday before holding his nerve to get over the line and complete a memorable 13-12 win to make the quarter-finals. BBC and The Guardian contributed to this report.



Hossein Vafaei plays a shot during his shock win against Judd Trump at the World Snooker Championship in Sheffield, Britain, on April 27, 2026.  
● NIGEL FRENCH/PA

## Asian Beach Games: Iranian pair into beach volleyball final



● volleyball.ir

## Sports Desk

The Iranian duo of Abolhasan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenoee secured a place in the men's beach volleyball final at the Asian Beach Games on Tuesday, thanks to a 2-1 victory over the Omani pair in Sanya, China. The Iranian team won the first set 21-17 before Mazin Al Hashimi and Hood Rashid Al Jalaboubi - who had beaten Iran's Alireza Aghajani and Abbas Pourasgari in the quarter-finals - leveled the match with a 21-15 win in the second. The decisive set saw Khakizadeh and Qalenoee prevail 15-13, marking the Iranian pair's fifth victory in six outings at the Tianya Haijiao venue. "The conditions in today's semifinal were truly difficult. We faced a very strong Oman team in rainy weather. Yesterday, the Omanis eliminated another Iranian team - one of Asia's best - and I'm pleased that we were able to avenge that

loss and advance to the final," Qalenoee said after the last-four victory. "It was a high-pressure match. We managed to beat them in the first set, but in the second set, Oman, having nothing to lose, played with great strength to win. In the third set, although we stayed neck and neck until 12 points, thank God, thanks to our teamwork, we managed to emerge victorious," the Iranian added. Standing between the Iranian duo and the gold medal will be the high-profile pair of Cherif Samba and Ahmed Janko - a rematch of their Pool B encounter, which the Qatari duo won. Bronze medalists at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Samba and Janko continued their perfect run in Sanya with a straight-set victory over Thailand's Wachirawit Muadpha and Netitorn Muneekul in the other semifinal later on Tuesday. Iran will also compete for gold in the men's beach soccer final on Wednesday

after hammering Palestine 9-1 in the semifinals last Monday. Mohammadali Mokhtari scored a hat-trick, with Mohammad Masoumizadeh and Mahdi Shirmohammadi adding doubles, while Movahed Mohammadpour and Davoud Shokri were also on the scoresheet for Ali Naderi's side, which claimed a fourth successive victory at the Sanya Bay Yuhai Club venue. Oman edged out Saudi Arabia 5-4 in extra time to set up a final date with Iran. Represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports, the Iranian delegation has bagged two gold medals over eight days of action at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, which will conclude with the closing ceremony on Thursday. Hassan Ajami opened Iran's account by winning gold in the men's shot put on Sunday, before the men's kabaddi team stunned India 44-31 to claim the top prize on Monday.

## Ex-Iran basketball coach, pundit Atashi dies at 80

## Sports Desk

Iranian basketball veteran Enayatollah Atashi passed away at the age of 80 in Tehran on Tuesday after a long battle with cancer. A national team player in the 1960s, Atashi coached Iran over two spells, in 1983 and 1998, and worked as a prominent commentator and pundit for the country's IRIB TV for more than three decades. He was also a former player of Esteghlal Club - formerly known as Taj - and was credited with renaming the Tehran-based club after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali offered his condolences on the passing of the high-profile figure in the Iranian sport, writing in a message: "Iranian basketball has lost a man who lived every dimension of the sport with expertise and integrity.

"His unparalleled contributions across various facets of basketball - from wearing the jersey of the national team and coaching elite players to serving in leadership roles in

the federation - have etched the image of a true expert into the memory of the nation's sports community. "He was the 'clear voice of basketball,' who, with his warm and insightful commentary, brought this exciting and academic discipline into people's homes, leaving a lasting legacy in the development and popularity of the sport."



## Iran's Banitalebi voted Taolu Athlete of the Year

## Sports Desk

Iran's Shahin Banitalebi has been crowned the IWUF Male Taolu Athlete of 2025 following a public vote conducted by the International Wushu Federation. Banitalebi's nomination for the prize came after a performance review by the IWUF Athletes' Committee and despite fierce competition - particularly from Chinese athletes - the Iranian emerged victorious in the public vote to claim the prestigious honor. A national team member since 2013, Banitalebi claimed the nanquan-nangun combined gold at the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China, last August, before bagging bronze in the nandao event at the 17th World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil. "Throughout his career, Shahin has consistently showcased his abilities

on both the world and Asian stages, earning multiple medals at these prestigious levels," the official website of the sport's international govern-

erning body wrote of the Iranian. "His steady and reliable performances demonstrate his capacity to compete and succeed among the sport's elite. His professionalism, discipline, and relentless dedication to training have also made him an inspiration for younger athletes and a trusted representative of the federation on the international stage."



Iran's Shahin Banitalebi competes during the men's nanquan-nangun final of wushu event at the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China, on August 8, 2025.  
● XU SUHUI/XINHUA