

AVC Men's Champions League:

Foolad routs Garuda Jaya to progress to last four

Sports Desk

Iran's Foolad Sirjan advanced to the AVC Men's Champions League semifinals in emphatic fashion, hammering Jakarta Garuda Jaya 3-0 (25-14, 25-12, 25-12) in Pontianak, Indonesia, on Thursday.

Pouria Hosseinkhazadeh contributed a game-high 19 points, including six aces, while Bulgarian outside hitter Aleksandar Nikolov — who joined the club on a short-term contract for the showpiece — added 13 for former Iran coach Behrouz Ataei's side.

Dawuda Alahimassalam topped the scoring for the Indonesian outfit with 12 points.

Chasing a third title in six editions, the Iranian top-flight champion will take on JTEKT Stings Aichi of Japan in today's last-four showdown at the Terpadu Gymnasium.

French opposite Stephen Boyer contributed 20 points, with American outside hitter Torey DeFalco (13) and Brazilian star Ricardo Lucarelli (11) also finishing in double figures, as the star-studded Aichi defeated Thailand's Men Korat in straight sets (25-20, 25-14, 25-18) earlier on Thursday.

Foolad will be looking to make



Foolad Sirjan players celebrate a point during a 3-0 victory over Jakarta Garuda Jaya at the AVC Men's Champions League in Pontianak, Indonesia, on May 14, 2026. ● FIVB

stunned Al Rayyan of Qatar 3-1 (25-20, 25-20, 21-25, 25-21) in the other quarterfinal clash on Wednesday.

South Korean international Heo Soo-bong spearheaded the Skywalkers' scoring with 16 points, followed by Chinese opposite Chuan Jiang (15) and Hong Dongseon (14).

Egyptian outside hitter Abdelrahman Ahmed Azab had 22 points to his name, while Russia's Ivan Polianskii and Maksim Bahatka had 13 and 12, respectively, though their contributions proved not enough as Al Rayyan suffered an early exit in its bid for a second successive continental crown.

The winner of the tournament will earn a spot at the FIVB Club World Championship later this year.

Foolad made it to the last four at the global showpiece in 2024, before ultimately settling for bronze thanks to a victory over Volley Lube in the third-place playoff in Uberlândia, Brazil.

amends for last year's setbacks against Japanese opposition, after Ataei's men fell to a four-set defeat against Osaka Bluteon in the semifinals in Kyoto, and then were beaten by Suntory Sunbirds Osaka in three sets to miss

out on the bronze medal. Jakarta Bhayangkara Presisi and South Korea's Hyundai Capital Skywalkers will square off in the other semifinal today. Boosted by the world-class additions of Slovenia's Rok Mozc,

Cuba's Robertlandy Simon, and Mali's Noumory Keita, Bhayangkara Presisi defeated Kazakhstan's Zhaiyk 3-1 (25-19, 25-27, 25-19, 25-21) to advance. Keita stole the show with 28 points, while Mozc and Simon

added 15 and 11 points, respectively. Iranian outside hitter Amirhossein Esfandiari delivered a 19-point performance but could not keep the Kazakh champions from crashing out. The Skywalkers, meanwhile,

Iran confirms gymnastics squad for Asian Championships

Sports Desk

Iran has named its five-man squad for the upcoming AGU Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships, which will kick off on June 18 in Zunyi, China.

Mahdi Olfati — winner of a historic Asian gold last year — will headline the Iranian roster in Zunyi. He will be joined by Mahdi Ahmadkohani, Hooman Jafari, Amirabbas Mojahed, and Mohammad Khosrownejad, who secured their spots through trials in the national team camp, to represent the country in six categories.

A finalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics, Olfati scored 14.500 points in the men's vault final in Jecheon, South Korea, to claim the country's first gold in 12 editions of the competition — a feat recognized as "one of the sport's 10 biggest stories" of 2025 by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). Ahmadkohani, meanwhile, will be looking for a strong return to the international stage after serving a 24-month suspension imposed by the International Testing Agency (ITA). The ban, which expired on February 21, was imposed after the

Iranian — a two-time rings silver medalist in the 2023 FIG World Cup series — accrued three whereabouts failures within a 12-month period. He has ruled out any wrongdoing, insisting he "had not entered the necessary information on the anti-doping website regarding my residence and training location, which led to my suspension." The showpiece in Zunyi will also serve as the qualification path for the gymnastics event at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September. "Previously, all countries could participate in the Asian Games

without restrictions. However, a decision by the Asian Gymnastics Union means only the top 10 teams on the continent will earn berths for the multi-sport event — a change that has doubled the significance of precise planning and preparation for the Asian Championships," Iran's men's head coach Reza Kheirkhah told IRNA in April.



Asian vault champion Mahdi Olfati will be part of the Iranian squad at the AGU Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships. ● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships: Pischevar wins boys' U15 gold

Sports Desk

Abolfazl Pischevar got Iran off the mark at the Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, by grabbing gold in the boys' U15 con-

tests on Thursday. The young Iranian, who had beaten Kyrgyzstan's Umar Asanbaev in the semifinals, out-muscled Kazakhstan's Zhaksylyk Yermekuly via a unanimous 5-0 points decision (30:27, 30:27, 29:28,

30:27, 30:27) to claim the top prize in the 35kg weight class. In a touching and symbolic gesture, Pischevar entered the ring with a school bag slung over his shoulder — a tribute to the memory of the 168 victims, including 120 schoolchildren, who were killed by a U.S.-Israeli airstrike on the Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School in Minab, southern Iran, on February 28. Coached by Sina Belansh, the Iranian squad features six boxers apiece in the under-15 and under-17 boys' categories, as well as two female U15 boxers at the competition.



Iranian gold medalist Abolfazl Pischevar poses with a school bag as a tribute to the schoolchildren killed by a U.S.-Israeli airstrike on an elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, at the Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on May 14, 2026. ● IRNA



Iranian goalkeeper Barkhordari joins Torrelavega in Spanish handball league

Sports Desk

Iranian men's national handball team captain Saeid Barkhordari has joined Balonmano Torrelavega in the Spanish top flight, Liga ASOBAL, on a one-

year contract. The move brings an end to the goalkeeper's four-year spell with Spanish club Ademar León. "After four years at Ademar León, I decided it was time for

a change. I received offers from other countries, including Hungary, Denmark, and France, and my performances in the European League opened doors. In the end, I decided to continue my career in Spain and join Torrelavega," the 37-year-old Iranian told IRNA.

"Torrelavega is regarded as one of the powerhouses of Spanish handball. Apart from Barcelona, four teams constantly battle for second place, and Torrelavega is one of them," Barkhordari said of his new team, which currently sits fifth in the league table with 39 points — level on points with fourth-place BM Granollers and two behind Ciudad de Logroño in second, in a tight race for the three places in next season's European League.

Barkhordari has previously played for Spanish clubs Guadalajara and Santonia.



● saeidbarkhordari.com