

CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship: Iran's golden girls defeat Kazakhstan to defend title



Shabnam Alikhani holds aloft the trophy as Iranian players and coaching staff pose with their gold medals at the CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship in Kathmandu, Nepal, on May 29, 2026.

CAVA

Sports Desk

Iran secured back-to-back crowns at the CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship thanks to a 3-1 (25-18, 19-25, 25-15, 25-21) victory over Kazakhstan in Friday's final showpiece at the NSC Indoor Hall in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Outside-hitter Fatemeh Khalili, who went on to pick up the tournament's Most Valuable Player prize for the second year in a row, led the scoring for Iran with 15 points, while opposite spiker Elaheh Poursaleh (14) and middle blocker Reihaneh Karimi (11) also finished in double figures as Iran capped off the event with a perfect 5-0 record, moving up to 41st in the latest FIVB Women's Rankings – eighth in Asia.

Kazakhstan's Tatyana Yatskiy, meanwhile, chipped in a game-high 17 points, with Kristina Belova and Zhanna Syroyeshkina adding 14 and 11, respectively. Stepping into the tournament on the back of a historic feat in the

previous edition – which delivered Iran's maiden international gold medal since the women's national team program was launched in 1963 – South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's team dominated in Kathmandu, routing Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Kazakhstan to top the pool table before beating the host in the semifinals, not conceding a single set in the process.

Iran's dominance was further reflected in the individual awards, as Khalili was also named the Best Outside Hitter – alongside Kazakhstan's Kristina Belova – while Poursaleh and team captain Shabnam Alikhani received the Best Opposite and Setter prizes, respectively. India's Shilpa Rajendran Nair Sindhu and Kazakhstan's Yuliya Fomenko were selected as the Best Middle Blockers, while India's Sathi Das earned Best Libero honors.

Earlier in the day, India beat Nepal 3-1 (25-22, 25-23, 15-25, 25-22) to finish with the bronze medal, with

the host nation, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Bangladesh in the following spots.

The Iranian girls, who have been away from the country since April 21 for an unprecedented preparatory program ahead of a congested international calendar, will look to build on the CAVA glory when they get their Pool B campaign underway at the AVC Women's Nations Cup against Indonesia in Candon, Philippines, on Saturday.

Iran played Indonesia twice in last year's edition, winning a five-set thriller in the pool phase but suffering a 3-1 setback in the classification match to settle for a sixth-place finish. Lee's side will follow the opener with games against Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, and defending champion Vietnam, before taking on Lebanon on the final day of the group stage on June 12. The top two in the group table will progress to the semifinals, with the final showpiece to be staged at the Candon City Arena on June 14.

Wrestling U17 Asian Championships: Iran marches to Greco-Roman crown

Sports Desk

Iran was in a league of its own in the Greco-Roman competition at the U17 Asian Championships, collecting eight medals – including six golds – across 10 weight classes to lift the team trophy in Da Nang, Vietnam, on Friday.

The remarkable medal haul saw Iran dominate the standings with 205 points, while Kyrgyzstan edged Uzbekistan for the runner-up spot despite both countries finishing on 161 points.

The final day of the Greco-Roman event, however, was hardly one to remember for the Iranian squad, which missed out on gold in the remaining three weight classes.

Esmaeil Zaherdoust had to settle for silver in the 71kg division after suffering a 9-0 superiority defeat to Baeli Nuraliev in the final, while Mahdi Gholamian defeated Kazakhstan's Alinur Toleugali by fall to claim a bronze medal in the 80kg category.

Hamed Dehqanzadeh, meanwhile, was one of two Iranians – alongside Ahmad Badraddini (51kg) – to finish the tournament empty-handed after a 9-0 defeat to China's Yunqi Chu in the 65kg bronze-medal bout.

Friday's results came after Iran had captured six gold medals in seven weight classes on the opening day of the Greco-Roman competition.

Ali-Akbar Akoo capped the glorious day for the country by defeating Kazakhstan's Arystan Temergali 8-1 in the 110kg final.

Armin Esmaeil opened Iran's account with an 8-2 victory over Uzbekistan's Tokhirjon Karimov in the 45kg final, while another Iran-Uzbekistan showdown saw Ali Esmaeili beat Javokhir Sharifboev 4-1 to claim the 48kg title.

Vahid Ashiri secured the 55kg gold medal with a 3-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan's Syimyk Askarov.

Amirreza Tahmasbpour stormed to the 60kg title, recording three victories without conceding a single point – including two by superiority – on his way to

the final before dispatching Kyrgyzstan's Baeli Zhamaolidinov 9-0.

Amirreza Mehri also finished on a high in the 92kg category, rounding off his campaign with a 3-1 victory over South Korea's Jongyeon Na.

Freestyle flyer

The Iranian freestyle team, meanwhile, got off to a flying start on Saturday, claiming two medals – including the 80kg gold – across the opening three weight classes.

Amirali Ferasati secured the title in style by routing India's Mandeep Mandeep 10-0 in the final, recording his third superiority victory in four matches.



Iranian wrestlers and coaching staff pose with the Greco-Roman team trophy at the U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam, on May 29, 2026.

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Amir-Abbas Lotfinejad bounced back from a 4-3 semifinal defeat to eventual champion Rihito Hiura by

beating Kyrgyzstan's Khanatemir Ismanov 5-2 to earn bronze in the 65kg division. Kiarash Torabi suffered an

early exit in the 71kg category, falling 2-1 to Tajikistan's Idris Bakhromov in the second round.

Asian U20 Athletics Championships: Shahpari wins silver in 3000m steeplechase

Sports Desk

Iran's Hanieh Shahpari claimed the country's second women's silver medal at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships on Friday, finishing runner-up in the 3000m steeplechase in Hong Kong, China.

The Iranian athlete clocked a personal-best 10:26.34, shattering the senior national record of 10:29.24, which she had previously set, to finish behind Japan's Rei Taya, who crossed the line in 10:22.52.

Uzbekistan's Sadafbonu Nusratilloeva also produced a personal-best performance, taking bronze in 10:37.32.



Hanieh Shahpari celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the women's 3000m steeplechase silver medal at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Hong Kong, China, on May 29, 2026.

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Shahpari's silver medal, which secured her a place at the World Athletics U20 Championships in Eugene, Oregon, in August, came

after Maryam Ahmadi had also won silver in the women's 1500m on the opening day of the competition.

Ahmadi finished in a

personal-best 4:33.35, behind Sri Lanka's Dilki Nehara, who won gold in 4:31.41. South Korea's Song Dawon took bronze with a time of 4:35.42.

Iran rallies past Gambia in pre-World Cup friendly

Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to beat The Gambia 3-1 in a friendly in Antalya, Türkiye, on Friday ahead of the FIFA World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11.

Center-back Omar Colley gave the West African side – ranked 116th in the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking – the lead, tapping in from close range in the 42nd minute, only for his strike to be canceled out by young full-back Aria Yousefi two minutes after the restart.

Amir Qalenoee's men built on their second-half momentum to go ahead through Ramin Rezaeian's superb strike from the edge of the box just before the hour mark, before

skipper Mahdi Taremi netted his 58th international goal with a left-footed effort from a tight angle in the 68th minute.

Iran will open its World Cup campaign against New Zealand in Inglewood, California, on June 15 before facing European heavyweight Belgium at the same venue six days later.

The team will then travel to Seattle, Washington, to take on Egypt in its final group-stage fixture at Lumen Field on June 26.

With eight third-placed teams from the 12 groups advancing to the round of 32, Iran will fancy its chances of securing a first-ever place in the knockout stage at the seventh attempt.

Iranian defender Ali Nemati (R) is seen in action with Gambia's Salieu Drammeh during a friendly game at Mardan Sports Complex, Antalya, Türkiye, on May 29, 2026.

UMIT BEKTAS/REUTERS

