

FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship:

Iran out for revenge against Pakistan in pool phase

Sports Desk

Iran will look to avenge its two setbacks against Pakistan at last year's Asian U16 Championship when the two teams go head-to-head again at the upcoming FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship, which kicks off on Wednesday in Doha. The new draw for the second edition of the global showpiece took place on Saturday after Japan, USA, Puerto Rico and Czechia withdrew from the event due to security concerns in the region.

Iran and Pakistan have been drawn alongside Chinese Taipei and Algeria in Pool E of the 20-team tournament. Iran will take on Algeria on the opening day of the competition, followed by a highly anticipated clash against

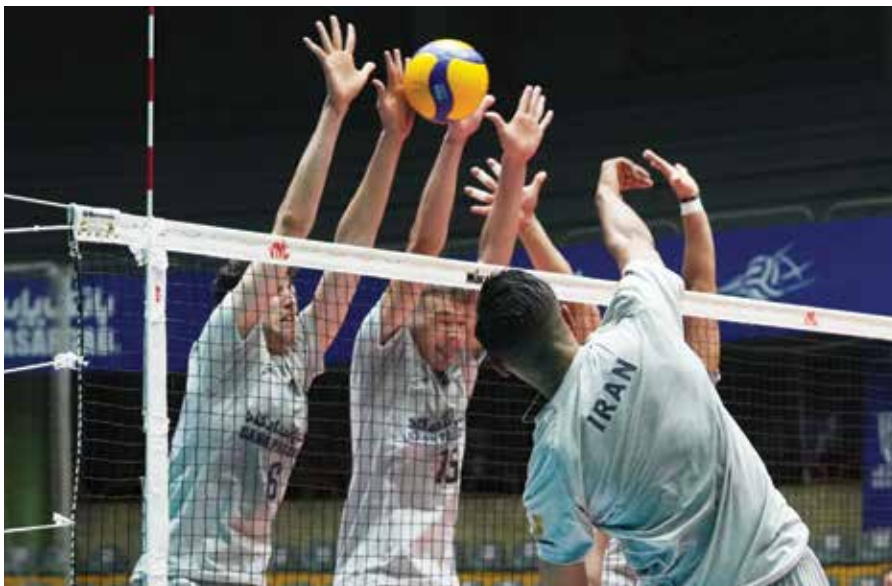
Pakistan on Friday.

Pakistan came out on top against Iran in four sets in the second-round pool phase at the Asian U16 event, before rallying from two sets down to stun Arash Sadeqiani's boys in the final in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

The final day of the pool phase will see Iran face Chinese Taipei on Sunday. Chinese Taipei was a surprise bronze medalist at the inaugural U17 World Championship in Sofia in 2024, defeating Spain 3-2 in the third-place match.

A global powerhouse in age-group volleyball, Iran had to settle for fifth place in the Bulgarian capital after defeating Belgium 3-2 in its final classification match.

Setter Aydin Poozesh and outside hitter Azhvan



Iranian players are seen in action during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on Aug. 11, 2026.
● AMIRMAHDI AKHOONDI/volleyball.ir

Namazi, who were named to the tournament's Dream

Team at the Asian Championship, headline the Ira-

nian roster in Doha. The squad also includes Sina

Hazrati, Akam Ebrahimnejad, Seyyed Amirreza Mirhosseini, Arash Ashrafi, Hamzeh Aqcheli, Amirreza Faramarzi, Monib Sheikh, Mohammadreza Zibaei, Sina Ahmadi, Parsa Maqsoodi, Radan Salehi and Yasin Asadzadeh.

Sadeqiani's team played Egypt in the first of its two warmup games in Doha on Saturday, winning 3-1 (25-15, 25-22, 30-32, 25-21).

"Egypt is a strong team and put in a respectable performance in the previous edition. We tried to implement different tactical approaches on the court and used various combinations during the match," Sadeqiani said after the game.

"Thankfully, I am satisfied with the team's condition on our first day in Qatar. Considering the weather

conditions, the difference in altitude and other such factors, the players are adapting well to the new circumstances," added the Iranian coach, whose team will face Italy in a second friendly in Doha today.

Elsewhere in Saturday's draw, host Qatar was joined by France, Venezuela and Tunisia in Pool A.

Defending champion Italy has been drawn in Pool B along with Cuba, India and Romania, while Pool C features Argentina – beaten by Italy in the 2024 final – Brazil, Poland and Mexico.

Spain, Egypt, Bulgaria and Türkiye complete the lineup in Pool D.

Each team will play three preliminary-round matches, with the top 16 teams in the combined ranking advancing to the knockout stage.

Faraji bags historic bronze at Europe Youth Smash

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis wonderkid Benyamin Faraji claimed a historic bronze medal at the prestigious Europe Youth Smash event in Malmö, Sweden, on Saturday. The teen prodigy secured five successive victories before suffering a 4-3 defeat (7-2, 6-7, 7-2, 4-7, 7-6, 5-7, 7-5) against Japan's Ryuusei Kawakami in the U19 boys' singles semifinals, finishing joint third alongside Colombia's

Emanuel Otlavaro at the second WTT Youth Grand Smash of the season.

Faraji opened his campaign with a 4-2 (7-5, 6-7, 7-5, 5-7, 7-2, 7-3) victory over Italy's Francesco Trevisan on Friday before making quick work of France's Antoine Noiraud in straight games (7-4, 7-3, 7-1, 7-6).

A 4-2 win (3-7, 7-5, 7-3, 6-7, 7-5, 7-6) against Denmark's Dominykas Samuolis saw Faraji win Group 6 and advance to the last 16, where

he defeated Hung Che-Yen of Chinese Taipei 4-2 (7-3, 6-7, 7-3, 4-7, 7-5, 7-1).

Faraji then defeated Portugal's Tiago Abiodun 4-0 (7-5, 7-6, 7-2, 7-1) to set up a last-four clash with Kawakami, who won the U19 boys' singles title at last year's ITTF World Youth Championships.

Faraji, who also won the U19 boys' singles title at the latest WTT Youth Contender event in Vientiane, Laos, earlier this

month, will be part of the Iranian squad at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

Iran will look to emulate the impressive success of Hangzhou 2022, which yielded men's doubles and team bronze medals – the country's first table tennis medals at the multi-sport event in 65 years.

The winner of Iran's maiden and, to date, only medal at the World Youth Championships – a bronze in the U15 category in 2024 – Faraji will aim for further international glory when he takes part in the upcoming Summer Youth Olympics, starting Oct. 31 in Dakar, Senegal.



● WTT

Persian Gulf Premier League:

Persepolis launches new era with victory over Shams Azar

Sports Desk

Persepolis got off to a winning start to its Persian Gulf Premier League campaign, defeating Shams Azar 2-0 in Qazvin on Saturday.

Marquee summer signing Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi put the visitors ahead 10 minutes into the game, pouncing on Abolfazl Jalali's cross and firing home into the roof of the net from close range.

Mohammad Omri doubled the Tehran Reds' lead five minutes later when his side-footed effort from the edge of the box found the bottom corner.

With new head coach Mahdi Tartar in charge and a completely revamped starting XI following a busy transfer window, Persepolis will look to build on the impressive start to its new era as it chases an eighth domestic top-flight title since the 2016-17 season, having missed out

on the title in the previous two campaigns.

Saturday's result came after the other three members of the so-called "Big Four" of Iranian football also delivered opening-day statement victories on Friday.

Saied Saharkhizan scored twice, with Mohammad-Hossein Eslami and 20-year-old midfielder Esmaeil Qolizadeh also finding the net late on, as Persepolis' archrival Esteghlal defeated newly promoted Mes Shahr-e Babak 4-0 at home.

In Tabriz, Tractor gave head coach Javad Nekounam, who only replaced Mohammad Rabiei last week, a fitting start to life on the bench by defeating 10-man Paykan 2-0, thanks to a first-half goal from Iranian international striker Shahriar Moghanlou, who joined from Emirati club Ittihad Kalba in the summer.

Sepahan, meanwhile, secured a hard-fought 2-0 away victory over Chadormalou. Ehsan Hajsafi broke the deadlock from the spot with 14 minutes remaining before Alireza Arta's own goal in the sixth minute of stoppage time secured all three points for Moharram Navidkia's side. Elsewhere on Saturday, Zob Ahan and Foolad Khuzestan played out a goalless draw in Isfahan, while San'at Naft Abadan, back among the domestic elite after spending two seasons in the second division, shared the spoils with Malavan at home.

Matin Karimzadeh gave the home side an eighth-minute lead, only for Malavan to equalize three minutes before the break.



Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi (c) celebrates his goal with Persepolis teammates during a 2-0 win against Shams Azar in the Persian Gulf Premier League in Qazvin, Iran, on Aug. 15, 2026.
● IRNA

FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League 2026:

Iran men, women secure Stop 5 double

Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a dominant fifth stop at the FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League in Cangzhou, China, winning both the men's and women's basketball events in the Asia Central/East division on Saturday.

In the men's competition, Iran defeated China 21-11 before beating Kazakhstan by the same score to win Pool A and advance to the final. Comprising Mohammad-Mahdi Rahimi, Seyyed Mohammad Ghaffari, Mohammad-Basir Mo'meni, Sarem Jafari and Argen Minasians, the Iranian team beat Mongolia 19-17 in the final to add to its Stop 4 victory from the previous day, when it de-

feated Japan in the final. The Iranian men had finished runners-up behind South Korea at Stop 1 before placing third at Stop 3 on Thursday. The Iranian women's team, meanwhile, began the day with an overtime 16-14 win over Japan, followed by a comfortable 21-12 victory over Kazakhstan to finish top of Pool A.

Iran then pulled off an impressive 20-13 victory over hosts China in the final.

Featuring Mahla Abedi, Mahsa Karani, Farnaz Khodamardi and Shamim Nouri, the Iranian team began its campaign with a third-place finish at Stop 1 and then repeated the feat at Stop 4.



Iran's women's team poses for a photo after winning Stop 5 at the FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League - Asia Central/East in Cangzhou, China, on Aug. 15, 2026.
● FIBA