

FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship:

Iran retains perfect run with Pakistan rout

Sports Desk

Iran claimed a second successive win at the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship by defeating Pakistan 3-0 (25-23, 25-22, 25-18) in Doha on Friday. Captain and opposite Sina Hazrati and outside hitter Arash Ashrafi spearheaded Iran with a game-high 16 points apiece. Ashrafi was particularly efficient in attack, converting 14 of 24 attempts, while Hazrati contributed 13 attacks, two blocks and an ace. Outside hitter Azhvan Namazi added 11 points as Iran, having beaten Algeria in straight sets in their Pool E opener on Wednesday, secured a place in the round of 16. Muhammad Waleed Khan led Pakistan with seven points, while captain Muhammad Irfan and Faizan Ullah scored six each. However, Iran's wider range of attacking options and blocking pressure allowed it to take control of the match and close it out in three sets. Tested through two competitive opening sets, Iran gradual-



ly found more opportunities in attack and at the net, turning a close contest into a more convincing finish in the third. The victory carried special

significance for the Iranian boys, as they avenged the two defeats suffered against Pakistan at last year's Asian U16 Championship. Pakistan

came out on top in four sets in the second-round pool phase before rallying from two sets down to stun the traditional Asian powerhouse in the final



Iranian players celebrate a point during a 3-0 victory over Pakistan at the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship in Doha, Qatar, on Aug. 21, 2026.
● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. "The game brought back some bitter memories for the Iranian team, and the players had been counting down the days to face Pakistan again and avenge the two defeats at the Asian championship," Sadeqiani said after the match.

"I can confidently say that we were playing against several age groups of the Pakistan national team at the same time today. Of course, everyone knows that this team uses older players," added the Iranian head coach. Sadeqiani identified attack as one of Pakistan's main strengths but said his players had neutralized it with solid defense.

"Attack was one of Pakistan's strengths, and our players managed to contain that strength with good defense. Overall, we

had a good game."

Next for Sadeqiani and his boys is a game against Chinese Taipei today at Aspire Ladies Hall, while Pakistan will face Algeria on Monday.

Elsewhere, defending champion France, Italy and Bulgaria also maintained their perfect runs on Friday, with 2024 silver medalist Argentina responding to its opening-day defeat by sweeping Mexico in straight sets.

Jaden Ebagne Yon and Noé Sognon shared the scoring lead with 15 points each as France made it two wins from two in Pool A with a 3-0 (25-11, 25-11, 25-11) victory over host Qatar. The identical set scores reflected France's consistency throughout the match, with its attack producing 37 points alongside nine blocks and three aces.

Italy, meanwhile, faced its first real setback in Doha after India snapped the championship-wide run of 12 consecutive straight-set matches by taking the second set. The champions, however, bounced back to win 3-1 (25-20, 18-25, 25-19, 25-18) in Pool B.

Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship:

Iran pulls off comeback victory over Saudi Arabia in opener

Sports Desk

Iran got off to a flyer at the Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan, rallying from behind to defeat Saudi Arabia 28-20 in Group B on Friday. Iran trailed 12-10 at half-time despite putting in a solid performance in the opening period. However, the momentum shifted in the second half as Iran executed head coach Moham-

madreza Rajabi's game plan more effectively and produced a stronger all-round display to turn the match around and secure a convincing eight-goal victory. Ali Ghayour contributed a game-high six goals for Iran, with Arshia Javidifar and Mohammad-Taha Ebrahim Khanlari adding five apiece. Iran goalkeeper Mehrshad Mansouri was named Player of the Match after

a standout performance, with his saves playing a key role in the victory. With Asia's traditional powerhouses Qatar and Kuwait also in the group, Friday's victory gave Iran a massive boost in its bid for a top-four finish and a place in the quarterfinals. Iran will resume action against two-time champion Qatar, which defeated Kuwait 30-19 earlier on Friday, today before tak-

ing on Kuwait at Princess Sumaya Hall on Monday. The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran face Syria on Wednesday. The championship also serves as the qualification event for the 12th IHF Men's Youth (U19) Handball World Championship, with the top four teams securing direct qualification for the global tournament, scheduled to be held from July 29 to Aug. 9 next year.



● IRIHF

Toloukian named London Giants coach in English top-flight volleyball

Sports Desk

Iranian volleyball coach Alireza Toloukian has been appointed to the managerial role at English National Super League champion London Giants. Toloukian is currently with Iran's women's national team at the AVC Asian Championship, and will join up with his new club once his continental campaign concludes in Tianjin, China.

One of Iran's most experienced volleyball coaches, Toloukian has worked with both Iran's national and club teams. He has served as a coach and head coach at several Iranian Premier Volleyball League clubs and has also been part of the coaching staff of Iran's senior national

team. Toloukian's agreement with London Giants was finalized before Iran's national team traveled to China, with the move being officially an-

nounced after the Iranian women made a successful start to their Asian Championship cam-

paign. The appointment has drawn further attention to the prospect of an Iranian coach taking charge of the reigning English volleyball champions. Iran got off to a flying start to its campaign by coming from behind to beat Chinese Taipei 3-1 in its Pool A opener on Friday.

London Giants men's team rounded out a remarkable 2025/2026 season by winning the National Cup Final in April, adding the trophy to an already historic year for the club.

London Giants secured first place in the English National Super League regular season for the first time, before carrying that momentum into the Final Four, where they continued their strong campaign at the highest level of domestic competition.

The domestic triple marked an important step forward not only for the club, but also as a reflection of the rising standards and competitiveness of the sport across the country.

U20 Wrestling World Championships: Khateri bounces back to win consolation bronze in freestyle

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a first freestyle team title in three years at the U20 Wrestling World Championships got off to a slow start in Bratislava, Slovakia, after Ahoura Khateri and Abolfazl Shamsipour failed to reach the final in their respective events. Khateri still managed to rebound and finish with a consolation bronze medal in the 61kg class, while Shamsipour crashed out in the 86kg division.

Outmuscled in a technical superiority defeat (15-4) by American Aaron Seidel in the first round, Khateri recovered by claiming three emphatic wins.

A silver medalist at the competition last year, Khateri defeated Azerbaijan's Jamal Abbasov 11-5 in his first repechage bout and then made quick work of home favorite Marian Kret, winning 10-0, before defeating Mexico's Moses Mendoza Garza 12-7 in a thrilling third-place contest. Seidel proved to be in a league

of his own, securing three more technical superiority wins to reach the final, where he followed up with a 7-0 triumph over Kazakhstan's Bekassyl Assambek for the top prize.

Russia's Zelimkhan Chaniev walked away with the other bronze medal, thanks to a 7-4 win over Itsuki Younashiro of Japan.

Asian U20 champion Shamsipour, meanwhile, got off to a strong start, defeating Estonian Nikolai Tarassov 12-0 and Swiss wrestler Nick Scherrer 11-0, but was undone by another American opponent, Aeoden Sinclair, losing 4-4 on criteria in the quarterfinals.

Shamsipour was given a second chance in repechage after Sinclair reached the final, but failed to seize it, suffering a 4-0 loss to Kazakhstan's Ashkhab Khajiev.

Sinclair went on to claim a second gold medal for the United States, which is chasing a third successive team title, by defeating Russia's Akhmad Mukutov in the final.



Iranian freestyle wrestler Ahoura Khateri (blue) is seen in action against American Aaron Seidel in the 61kg class at the U20 Wrestling World Championships in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Aug. 20, 2026.
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