

AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship:

Iran ousts Australia in semis to close in on Olympic berth



Sports Desk

Iran moved within touching distance of a coveted men's volleyball berth at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics after securing a hard-fought 3-1 (25-21, 17-25, 25-17, 25-22) victory over Australia in the AVC Continental Championship semifinals in Fukuoka, Japan, on Saturday.

Outside hitter Pouria Hos-

seinkhanzadeh and opposite Ali Hajizadeh finished with a joint game-high 24 points, with Morteza Sharifi adding 13, as Iran tallied 56 points from attacks, seven blocks and eight service points, while benefiting from 21 opposition errors.

Australian outside hitter Lorenzo Pope led his team with 18 points, while opposite spiker Lincoln Williams chipped in 16, though their contribution did little to prevent the Oceanian side, which also capitalized on 25 Iranian errors, from suffering a 22nd defeat in 29 meetings with the Asian powerhouse.

The four-set victory, which finished just before the two-hour mark, earned 2.52 FIVB ranking points for Iran, as Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's side remained in 18th position.

A fourth successive final appearance at the Asian showpiece also secured a place at next year's rebranded FIVB Volleyball World Cup in Poland for Piazza's men.

The ultimate prize, however, will be up for grabs in today's final, where Iran, chasing a fifth Asian title in eight editions, will face the winner of the last-four clash between Japan and South Korea.

With the formidable hosts the hot favorites to defend their continental title, Piazza will hope to see his men deliver their best performance yet in what will be their toughest test in Fukuoka.

The likely showdown will be a repeat of the thrilling Volleyball Nations League encounter between Iran and Japan in June, with the latter emerging victorious in five sets in Orléans, France, as part of a perfect 12-game run in the preliminary phase. Iran will still look to take inspiration from that meeting after fighting back from two sets down to force the game into a decider, having been swept in straight sets by the Japanese in their previous three encounters – including a 2023 final defeat at the Asian Championship on home soil.



Iranian players celebrate their semifinal victory over Australia at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sept. 12, 2026.

● AVC

Changwon 2026 WSPS World Championships:

Ahmadi wins gold as Iran secures one-two finish in 10m air pistol

Sports Desk

Iranian shooter Faezeh Ahmadi won the women's 10m air pistol gold medal at the 2026 WSPS World Championships in Changwon, South Korea, on Saturday. Ahmadi topped the final with a score of 238.3 to claim the world title and gold medal and book Iran's first individual quota place for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympics.

Nasrin Shahi, another Iranian finalist, finished second with 233.7 to take the silver medal, while four-time Paralympic champion Sareh Javanmardi missed out on the podium,

placing fourth with 194.1.

The Iranian trio had dominated the qualification round, with Shahi finishing first on 572 points, Ahmadi second on 568 and Javanmardi third on 567 to all advance to the final.

Ahmadi, Shahi and Javanmardi also combined to win the women's 10m air pistol team gold. The Iranian team finished first with a total of 1,707 points. Meanwhile, Iran's Seyed Mohammad Reza Mirshafiei, Mostafa Khadem and Ali Golouei failed to advance to the final in the men's 10m air pistol event.

Featuring 595 athletes from 53 countries, the world championships will run until Wednesday. Iran had previously secured its first team quota for the 2028 Paralympics through the men's sitting volleyball team, which earned its place by winning the world title in July.



● IRNA

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games:

Iran edges Chinese Taipei in basketball to stay in knockout contention



● FIBA

Sports Desk

Iran overcame a stubborn Chinese Taipei side 72-69 in a thrilling Group B encounter at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games on Saturday to keep alive its hopes of progressing to the men's basketball quarterfinals. Entering the court on the back of a 59-53 setback against Qatar in their group opener, Greek head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos's men made an unconvincing start, with defensive lapses and inaccurate ball movement allowing Chinese Taipei to take control. The East Asian side finished the opening quarter 17-13 ahead.

The introduction of Mohammad Jamshidi in the second quarter, however, changed the momentum of the game. The experienced guard took control of the court and scored 10 points in the quarter, helping Iran win the period 15-10 and reduce the deficit to one point by halftime.

Iran again struggled at the start of the second half, with individual mistakes and rushed attacks allowing Chinese Taipei to regain the

initiative and win the third quarter 23-21, leaving the outcome to be decided in the final 10 minutes.

With Chinese Taipei holding a narrow lead early in the fourth quarter, Iran stepped up its defensive intensity and showed greater composure on offense to launch its comeback.

The decisive moments came in the closing seconds, when Seyed Mehdi Jafari made two well-timed plays to help Iran seal the victory. The comeback was reminiscent of Iran's dramatic fightback against Chinese Taipei in last year's FIBA Asia Cup quarterfinals, when Manolopoulos's men overcame a 21-point deficit to win 78-75.

Jamshidi led Iran's scoring with 18 points, while Arman Zangeneh made a key contribution under the basket and finished with a game-high efficiency rating of 14.

Alireza Sharifi and Peter Gregorian each recorded an efficiency rating of 11, while Navid Rezaeifar played his part in Iran's fourth-quarter comeback, hitting two three-pointers without a miss to help

turn the momentum in his team's favor.

Chen Ying-Chun, meanwhile, led Chinese Taipei with 29 points, while Brandon Gilbeck finished with 12.

Iran will wrap up the group stage against Jordan, which recovered from an 83-80 loss to Chinese Taipei to defeat Qatar 76-65 later on Saturday.

With all four teams in the group tied on three points, the race for a top-two finish and a place in the last eight remains wide open ahead of today's final round of the group phase.

Iran and Jordan met as recently as July in the preliminary stage of the FIBA World Cup qualifiers, where Manolopoulos's men comprehensively won 67-49 in Amman before completing a 5-1 run to progress to the second round. The result also helped make amends for the 73-60 setback against their familiar West Asian foe earlier in the qualifiers in February.

The top two teams in each of the three groups will be joined by the two best third-placed teams in the quarterfinals.

Olad targets two golds at Asian Para Games

Sports Desk

Iran's Mahdi Olad says he is targeting two gold medals in the shot put and discus throw at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, which start on Oct. 18, as he prepares to make his third appearance at the continental multi-sport event.

"Last year, our training conditions were normal, but this year, our preparation was somewhat disrupted due to the wartime circumstances in the country," Olad, a Tokyo 2020 Paralympic shot put gold medalist who also won two silver medals at

Paris 2024, told Mehr News Agency. He said the national team resumed training in late April despite the difficult circumstances and has since held three extended training camps. "I have reached around 70 to 80 percent of the required level of readiness for the Asian Para Games," Olad said. "I am following my training program in a way that will allow me to reach full readiness by the time we travel to Nagoya."

Olad recalled his performances at the previous two editions of the Para Asian Games, saying he won gold in both the shot put and discus at the 2018 Games in Indonesia.

He entered the Hangzhou 2022 Games aiming to repeat that feat but suffered an ankle fracture during the shot put competition, preventing him from defending his title and forcing him to settle for silver.

"Doctors would not allow me to continue competing, but I competed in the discus three days later with the same broken leg and despite the pain, and I won gold," he said.

With three golds and one silver to his name from his two previous Asian Para Games appearances, Olad is determined to return to the top of the podium in both events in Nagoya.

"I will compete in the shot put and discus again, with the hope of repeating the two gold medals I won in Indonesia," he said. "I am training with exactly that goal in mind. I say from now that the two para-athletics gold medals in Nagoya will have my name on them."

Olad, who competes in the F11 classification, also said he had avoided problems arising from the merging of classifications and had therefore been able to focus more calmly on his preparations.

"I am determined to win two gold medals in Nagoya and then continue my training with greater motivation and determination to secure a place at the Paralympic Games," he said.



● MMA