



Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games:

Iran falls to South Korea in men's basketball semifinals

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for maiden men's basketball gold at the Asian Games ended in a 77-51 defeat against South Korea in the semifinals at Nagoya's Aichi International Arena in Japan on Friday.

A silver medalist in 2014 and 2018, Iran will still have a shot at a fifth medal in six editions of the multi-sport event when Greek head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos's side takes on Japan or China for a consolation bronze on Sunday.

Lee Hyun-jung led South Korea with an impressive double-double of 26 points and 14 rebounds. He attempted 13 three-pointers, converting seven (54%).

Lee Woo-seok and Lee Jung-hyun contributed 19 and 11 points, respectively, as South Korea remained on course

for a first gold medal since beating Iran in the final on home soil at Incheon 2014. Veteran shooting guard Mohammad Jamshidi, who spearheaded Manolopoulos's men to a last-eight win over Jordan with 20 points, was the only player in the Iranian outfit to score in double figures, chipping in 12.

Mohammad Heydari had nine points to his name, while team captain Arslan Kazemi finished with eight points and 11 rebounds. South Korea made the difference from beyond the arc, repeatedly punishing Iran with accurate three-point shooting, making 14 of 33 attempts for a 42% success rate, to take control of the game and leave the Iranian side, which converted only two of its 23 three-point attempts, with little chance of



South Korea's Lee Hyun-jung (1) shoots during a semifinal win against Iran in the men's basketball at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games at the Aichi International Arena, Nagoya, Japan, on September 18, 2026.
● PARK SEONG-WON/THE CHOSUN DAILY

a comeback.

Iran started with a com-

pact defensive setup but fell 6-0 behind after South

Korea knocked down two three-pointers in the open-

ing two and a half minutes. Mobin Sheikhi opened Iran's scoring with two free throws, before Kazemi's drive and another two-pointer from Sheikhi brought the game level at 6-6.

South Korea, however, caught fire from long range late in the opening quarter, making four three-pointers in the final two minutes to finish the period with a 12-8 lead.

The Koreans opened the second quarter with another three-pointer to stretch their advantage to 11 points. Iran struggled to make inroads against a disciplined South Korean defense, although dunks from Alireza Sharifi and Heydari helped cut the deficit to nine.

Iran's struggles from beyond the arc proved costly, with its first 12 three-point attempts all missing. Heydari finally ended the drought with a

successful shot from long range, but South Korea went into halftime 36-24 ahead.

The Koreans continued their dominance after the break as Choi Jun-young hit consecutive three-pointers to widen the gap. Iran tried to respond by attacking the basket and drawing fouls, but could not change the momentum.

With South Korea extending its lead to 17 points, Lee Hyun-jung then took charge with a series of shots that pushed the advantage to 24. South Korea entered the final quarter with a commanding 61-37 lead.

There was little Iran could do in the closing period as South Korea continued to find the target from three-point range. The final margin reached 26 points as the Koreans sealed a 77-51 victory.

Iran lines up domestic league players for friendly double header



● MANU FERNANDEZ/AP

Sports Desk

Iran's men's national team head coach Amir Qalenoeei has named a list of 18 Persian Gulf Premier League players for the two upcoming friendly games against Uzbekistan and Russia.

The domestic top-flight group will be joined by the overseas players before Team Melli's meetings with the two familiar opponents of recent years.

Making its first appearance after the group-stage exit at June's FIFA World Cup, Qalenoeei's side will take on Uzbekistan in Tashkent on Thursday, looking to beat the Central Asian foe for the first time since the 2023 CAFA Championship final.

The two sides shared the spoils in four 2026 World Cup qualification games, before Uzbekistan won 1-0 in extra time in the 2025 CAFA final and then

emerged victorious in a shootout when they met in a friendly tournament in the United Arab Emirates last November.

Iran will then play Russia in Kazan on Sept. 29, which will mark a third friendly between the two sides since Qalenoeei was appointed to the national team job for a second spell in March 2023.

The two sides played out a 1-1 draw at Tehran's Azadi Stadium days after Qalenoeei's appointment, before Russia won 2-1 at Volgograd Arena in October last year.

The Russian national team has been banned from all FIFA and UEFA competitions for the past four years after Russia launched its military operation in Ukraine in February 2022.

The upcoming match will be part of Iran's preparations for the 2027 AFC

Asian Cup, which kicks off on January 7 in Saudi Arabia.

A semifinalist at the previous two editions, Iran will begin its bid for a fourth Asian Cup title – and its first since 1976 – against China in Group C, which also features Kyrgyzstan and Syria, at Riyadh's Kingdom Arena on January 9. Center back Hossein Kananizadegan and midfielder Rouzbeh Cheshmi – the skippers of Tehran archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal, respectively – are the two high-profile absentees from the latest list.

Kananizadegan is set to be sidelined for up to three weeks after suffering a knee problem during a training session with the club last week, while Cheshmi, who missed Iran's three World Cup games with an injury, has only managed three starts

for the Capital Blues in seven outings across all competitions this season.

Persepolis striker Ali Alipour, who made a cameo appearance in the 2-2 draw against New Zealand at the World Cup, has also been overlooked by Qalenoeei despite an impressive run in the league, contributing three goals and three assists in six games.

Shams Azar winger Milad Sourgi and Persepolis defender Mohammad-Mahdi Zare, meanwhile, will fancy their chances of making their senior international debuts after receiving a call-up from Qalenoeei, while veteran fullback Ehsan Hajsafi, who has 148 international caps under his belt, could overtake Javad Nekounam for the all-time most Team Melli appearances should he feature in both games.

The following is Iran's 18-man roster for the September international break:

Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiranvand (Tractor), Payam Ni-azmand (Persepolis), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini (Sepahan)
Defenders: Mohammad Naderi (Tractor), Ehsan Hajsafi (Sepahan), Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Mohammad-Mahdi Zare (Persepolis), Aref Aghasi (Esteghlal), Saman Fallah (Esteghlal), Saleh Hardani (Esteghlal), Aria Yousefi (Sepahan), Ramin Rezaeian (Foolad Khuzestan)

Wingers: Mahdi Limouchi (Sepahan), Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi (Persepolis), Amirhossein Mahmoudi (Persepolis), Milad Sourgi (Shams Azar)

Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games:

Strong continental rivals awaiting Iranian GR wrestlers



Sports Desk

The preliminary entry list for the wrestling competition at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games has revealed a challenging field for Iran's Greco-Roman wrestlers, with several continental and world-class names set to compete for gold.

The wrestling event will get underway at Nagoya's Inae Sports Center on Sept. 30, with the list released by United World Wrestling featuring prominent wrestlers from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Japan and other Asian nations. UWW has stressed that the entries are subject to change.

Sajjad Abbaspour, Javad Rezaei, Alireza Abdevali, Gholamreza Farrokhi, Amir-sam Mohammadi and Amin Mirzazadeh will represent the Iranian squad across six Greco-Roman weight classes.

A world U23 silver medalist last year, Abbaspour is set to face one of the biggest names in the Asian field in the 60kg class, with Kyrgyzstan's two-time world champion Zholaman Sharshenbekov – an Olympic bronze medalist in Paris 2024 – listed among his potential rivals. Reigning Asian champion Alisher Ganiev of Uzbekistan is another notable entry in the weight class.

At 67kg, Kyrgyzstan's Razzak Bishkekoy appears to be the leading challenger to Rezaei. Bishkekoy won gold at the 2026 Asian Championships, defeating Iran's Ahmadreza Mohsennejad by technical superiority on his way to the final. Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov and South Korea's Jeong Han-jae are also listed in the weight class.

The 77kg category could be particularly demanding for Abdevali, with Kyrgyzstan's Akzhol Makhmudov among the biggest names in the draw. The two-time world champion, who had moved up to 82kg, won Asian gold on his return to 77kg, defeating Iranian Ali Oskou in the final.

Japan's Nao Kusaka could add further difficulty to the weight class. The Paris 2024 Olympic champion has resumed training after recovering from injury and is preparing for a home Asian Games ap-



● IAWFIR

pearance.

Farrokhi will face a familiar opponent at 87kg in Kyrgyzstan's Asan Zhanyshov. The two met in the Asian Championships final in April, where home favorite Zhanyshov stunned the reigning world senior and U23 champion with an 11-4 victory. Kazakhstan's Shamil Ozhaev and India's Sunil Kumar are also among the entries.

The 97kg category features several contenders, making it difficult to identify a single standout rival for Mohammadi. Kazakhstan's Islam Yevloyev is one of the notable names. He lost 3-1 to Iran's Mohammad Hadi Saravi in the semifinals of the Asian Championships but remains an established contender in the division.

In the superheavyweight category, Mirzazadeh is aiming for back-to-back Asian Games titles after missing out on his world title defense in October following a setback against Fardin Hedayati in the national team trials.

The Olympic bronze medalist is set to renew his rivalry with Uzbekistan's Rafael Tsitsvashvili, whom he defeated 9-0 in the Asian Championships final.

With several reigning Asian champions, world-class wrestlers and a Paris Olympic champion in the field, Iran's Greco-Roman team faces a demanding path in its bid for gold in Nagoya.