

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games:

Iran surrenders lead to fall to Kuwait in handball opener

Sports Desk

Iran's men's handball team got off to a losing start at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, relinquishing a first-half lead to suffer a 26-24 defeat against Kuwait in Group B on Saturday. Kuwaiti left wing Abdulaziz Al-Shammari led his team with a game-high 11 goals, followed by Saif Al-Adwani, who contributed four.

Mohammadreza Oraei and Younes Asari were the top scorers for Iran, scoring six goals apiece.

Iran, which entered the competition without its key overseas-based players due to their club commitments in Europe, made a strong start and controlled the early stages of the

match, maintaining its advantage to take a 15-13 lead into halftime. Kuwait, however, gradually closed the gap after the break and eventually brought the game level. The two sides then exchanged the lead several times as the match entered its closing stages.

The bronze medalist at January's Asian Championship on home soil, Kuwait was more clinical in the closing minutes, establishing a 26-24 lead and holding on for the victory.

Tensions boiled over late in the match when Iranian player Oraei became involved in an altercation with Kuwaiti players. The Kuwaiti players appeared to prevent Oraei from moving forward during a play, trigger-

ing a confrontation between the two sets of players.

"We played very well. I congratulate the Kuwait team. They are one of Asia's most experienced teams and have a good coach. We have to accept that we have a young squad. Nevertheless, we played very well and I am truly proud of our team," said Iranian captain and goalkeeper Mohammad Siavoshi, who made nine saves for a 33% save rate.

When asked what ultimately made the difference between the two sides, Siavoshi said: "I think handball is a game of opportunities, and today we gave away too many chances in the second half. I think we were very good in the defensive phase and performed well, but unfortunately in attack we



couldn't capitalize on our opportunities."

"In handball, you'll be punished if you don't put your balls into the goal, and that is one of the problems we always face. There are still many games left. Our young players will have to learn from today's setback and regroup ahead of the future games," added the Iranian skipper.

Chasing a third handball medal in the history of the multi-sport event – and first since the Guangzhou 2010 silver – Iran will look to bounce back against Asian champion Bahrain next on Monday.

Iran will then take on another daunting test against South Korea on Tuesday, before concluding the group phase against



Iran's Ali Heidarian (13) makes an effort during a handball game against Kuwait at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Inazawa, Japan, on September 19, 2026.

● IRIHF

Kazakhstan the following day. The top four teams in the group will advance to the quarterfinals.



FIDE Chess Olympiad:

Iran defeats France in women's third round

Sports Desk

Iran's women's national chess team secured an impressive 3-1 victory over France in the third round of the FIDE Chess Olympiad in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on Friday.

Iran recorded two wins and two draws against the French side, with Melika Mohammadi and Mobina Alinasab coming out victorious against

Marie Sebag and Deimante Daulyte-Cornette, respectively. Anousha Mahdian and Mitra Asgharzadeh, meanwhile, shared the spoils with their respective opponents, as the Iranian quartet – captained by Amirreza Pourramezani – celebrated its third team victory in as many outings ahead of the fourth-round clash against Serbia.

Friday's victory, which lifted

Iran to 10 points, was particularly notable as all four French players had higher ratings than their four Iranian players. Iran, however, produced a strong performance to pull off one of the upsets of the third round.

In the open event, meanwhile, Iran's men's team drew 2-2 with Belgium. Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei and Reza Mahdavi claimed vic-

tories for Iran, while Bardia Daneshvar and Mahdi Gholami fell to their respective opponents.

Iran began its open campaign with a 4-0 victory over Mozambique before defeating Bolivia 3½-½ in the second round.

The 46th edition of the biennial Chess Olympiad will conclude with the Round 11 pairings on September 27.

Iran Women's Premier League:

Khatoon held by Ista as Tehran archrivals off to winning starts

Sports Desk

Bam Khatoon opened its Iran Women's Premier League title defense with a frustrating draw, while Tehran city rivals Persepolis and Esteghlal won their Matchday 1 games on Friday.

Kicking off a week later than originally scheduled following a sudden national team training camp, the new women's top-flight season got underway after a 221-day break, with the prospect of a first-ever women's Tehran Derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal drawing significant attention from football fans in the country.

Chasing a record 12th title in 19 editions – and fifth in succession – Khatoon was held to a goalless stalemate away to Ista Alborz in Karaj.

The match marked Sara Qomi's first game as Ista head coach, with her side producing a strong performance to frustrate Khatoon, which entered the game fresh off securing a place in the upcoming AFC Women's Champions League after winning the preliminary group last month in



Esteghlal's Hajar Dabbaghi celebrates her goal during a 2-0 victory over Palayesh Gas Ilam in the Iran Women's Premier League in Tehran, Iran, on Sept. 18, 2026.

● IRNA

Hisor, Tajikistan.

The champions missed several opportunities and were unable to find a way past Ista's well-organized backline. The match ended in controversy after Khatoon reserve goalkeeper Nazanin Taherian became involved in a confrontation with the referee at the final whistle and slapped the official. Taherian was shown a red card and could face further disciplinary action.

Elsewhere, Esteghlal made a triumphant return to the

Women's Premier League after nearly a decade, defeating Palayesh Gas Ilam 2-0 at Tehran's Kargar Stadium.

The hosts produced an attacking display and were the better side in both halves, with Niloufar Azimi and Hajar Dabbaghi finding the net to secure all three points.

The Tehran Blues had previously competed in the fifth, sixth and seventh editions of the women's league before the team was dissolved. After rebuilding and earning suc-

cessive promotions from the second division, Esteghlal returned to the top flight under former national team head coach Maryam Irandoust.

Persepolis also made a winning start, defeating Ava 2-0 at Tehran's Shahid Kazemi Stadium.

The Reds, who finished seventh last season under Maryam Azmoon, entered the new campaign under new head coach Niloufar Ardalan. After a goalless first half, Zahra Qanbari broke the deadlock after the interval before Marzieh Nikkhah added a second to seal a morale-boosting home victory.

Chatrenour on fire

Golgohar Sirjan, last season's runners-up, began its campaign with a convincing 4-1 home victory over newly promoted Varash Nowshahr. Maryam Jahan-Nejati's side produced an impressive performance, with Afsaneh Chatrenour netting a hat-trick to inspire the victory. In the other match of the opening round, Sepahan defeated Malavan FC 2-0 at home.

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games:

Golshadnejad lands host rival as Iranians discover karate fate

Sports Desk

Reigning world champion Atousa Golshadnejad will begin her bid for gold at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games with a tricky test against Japanese karateka Tsubasa Kama in the women's kumite -68kg weight class on Monday. The Iranians learned their pathways in their respective karate events on Saturday, with Fatemeh-Zahra Saeidabadi drawn against Turvanhxai Pa of Laos in the women's -55kg first round on Tuesday.

Six-time world bronze medalist Fatemeh Sadeqi will open Iran's campaign in the women's individual kata against Thailand's Monsicha Sakulrattanatara on Sunday.

The Iranian trio of Sadeqi, Zeynab-Sadat Hosseini and Sepideh Amiri will face Thailand



in the opening round of the women's team kata on Tuesday, which also features teams from Cambodia, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. In the men's kumite, Morteza Nemati will face Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azikanov in the -75kg category on Tuesday, while Ali-Asghar Asiabari will take on Qatar's Abdullah Babiker in the -84kg opening round.

Mahmoud Nemati will

be Iran's sole representative on Wednesday, facing Laos' Vatthana Xayasan in the men's +84kg class.

Iran will not have representatives in the men's -55kg and -60kg kumite events as well as the women's +68kg category.

The country will also be absent from the men's individual kata, men's -67kg and women's -61kg kumite events on Monday.

The karate tournament will conclude on Wednesday.



● WKF