

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games: Iran off to winning start in volleyball, Zarei makes history in athletics



Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a fourth successive men's volleyball gold medal at the Asian Games got off to an emphatic start at Aichi-Nagoya 2026 with a 3-0 victory (25-11, 25-16, 25-20) over Kyrgyzstan on Sunday.

Star opposite Amin Esmaeilnejad spearheaded Iran with a game-high 20 points, with middle blocker Yousef Kazemi adding 15. Outside hitters Mobin Nasri and Ali Haqparast also reached double figures, contributing 12 and 10 points, respectively.

Entering the multi-sport event on the back of a final setback against Japan at the Asian Championship a fortnight ago, Iran will take on Thailand next in Pool B today before concluding the preliminary stage against Indonesia on Tuesday. The top two teams in the group will advance to the quarterfinals.

"We had an easy game today. On the one hand, I am happy that we won in straight sets, but on the other hand, I am disappointed because we could have played much better," Iran head coach Roberto Piazza said after the game.

Piazza dismissed the suggestion that Iran's matches in the group would be equally comfortable, saying: "The only easy game for Iran in this tournament was this one. Even in our group, Thailand and Indonesia play at a different level and are tough opponents. We will have difficult games against them."



Iranian players celebrate a point during a victory over Kyrgyzstan in the men's volleyball event at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on September 27, 2026.
● PAYAM SANI/IRIVF

Piazza refused to look too far ahead when asked whether his side could reach the final and defend its title.

"To reach the final, we have to deserve it by beating other teams.

"Just as I did not talk about Japan a few weeks ago at the Asian Championship, I am not saying now that we will be in the final. We have to move forward day by day and show that we deserve to reach the final." Elsewhere on Sunday, Meshkatolzahra Safi and Mandegar Farzami secured Iran's first victories in the women's tennis event at the Asian Games since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.



Iranian sprinter Zahra Zarei celebrates after winning the women's 400m silver medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on September 26, 2026.
● BORNA

athletics medal at the Asian Games, claiming silver in the 400m event.

The Iranian sprinter clocked 52.38 seconds in the final to finish behind Bahrain's Salwa Naser, who set a new Asian Games record of 49.20 seconds.

The pinnacle of Iran's athletics campaign, however, came in the men's competition, where Mohammadreza Tayyebi secured the gold medal in the shot put.

A gold medalist at last year's Asian Championships, Tayyebi posted an Asian Games record of 20.81m with his second attempt – 49 centimeters farther than his gold-winning throw at the continental championships – to add a second men's medal to Iran's athletics haul, after compatriot Sadeq Samimi's bronze in the discus throw.



Iran's Mohammadreza Tayyebi celebrates after winning the men's shot put gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on September 26, 2026.
● IIRNA

Safi made quick work of Tajikistan's Shakhzoda Asimova in the singles first round, winning in straight sets (6-0, 6-1), while Farzami defeated Uzbekistan's Sevi Yuldasheva 2-0 (7-5, 6-3). In the men's doubles, however,

the Iranian pair of Ali Yazdani and Kasra Rahmani suffered a 2-0 defeat (6-4, 6-4) against China's Fumin Jiang and Tianhui Zhang in the first round.

In water polo, Iran's men's team, having beaten Singapore 19-8 in its Group B opener on the previous day, suffered a 12-8 defeat against China in a repeat of the final at last year's Asian Aquatics Championships in Ahmedabad, India, where China also emerged victorious.

Athletics history

Zahra Zarei wrote her name into the history of Iranian sport on Saturday by winning the country's maiden women's

Alamian set for podium

Noshad Alamian stole the headlines in table tennis by defeating home favorite and world No. 4 Tomokazu Harimoto 4-3 (11-9, 11-7, 3-11, 11-6, 14-16, 6-11, 11-9) in a thrilling quarterfinal in the men's singles event on Sunday, ensuring Iran would finish the Games with at least a bronze medal in the sport.

Standing between the Iranian, who won bronze in the team and doubles events – the latter alongside his brother Nima – and a place in the final in Monday's semifinal is world No. 1 and 2025 world champion Wang Chuqin of China.

Who is to blame for Mohitizadeh's shock disqualification?



Sports Desk

Iranian heptathlete Fateh-meh Mohitizadeh was denied a chance to win a historic Asian Games medal after being disqualified in one of the most bizarre incidents involving the country's athletics team at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

Mohitizadeh was sitting second in the heptathlon standings after six events and was within touching distance of a gold or silver medal. However, only hours before the final 800-meter race, the 23-year-old was disqualified for an equipment violation involving her shoes. The Ardakan-born athlete had emerged as one of Iran's leading athletics prospects after winning gold at last year's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh. She continued her impressive form in Nagoya, competing against 10 of Asia's leading heptathletes.

Mohitizadeh finished third in the 100-meter hurdles, won the high jump, placed



second in the shot put with a throw of 11.72 meters and finished third in the 200m in 25.16 seconds. On the second day, she topped the long jump with a 5.97m effort. She then added 36.41m in the javelin, finishing eighth in the event, but accumulated 4,925 points to move into second place overall after six disciplines. Her hopes of a historic medal ended before she could compete in the final event.

Reza Shojaei, head of the National Olympic Committee's national teams supervision center, said Mohitizadeh had used Nike Air Zoom Maxfly 2 shoes during the high jump. According to World Athletics regulations, the model is designed specifically for sprinting and is not permitted for use in jumping events.

Iran's athletics federation immediately filed an official protest, but the appeal was rejected. The

organizers reportedly maintained that responsibility for checking equipment before competition rests with the athlete and the federation's coaching staff.

The incident has therefore raised questions over who should bear responsibility for the costly mistake. While athletes are expected to be familiar with the equipment regulations governing their events, the seven disciplines of the heptathlon require

athletes and their support teams to manage different technical requirements. Ensuring that an athlete enters the competition with compliant equipment is also a fundamental responsibility of the coaching and management staff. The disqualification comes at a particularly difficult time for Iranian athletics. The country had won at least one athletics gold at each of the previous Asian Games, including four consecutive titles won by current federation president Ehsan Hadadi in the discus throw.

In Nagoya, however, Iran's medal hopes have fallen short of previous editions. Sadeq Samimi won bronze in the discus, ending Iran's five-edition gold-medal run in the event.

Mohitizadeh's disqualification has now added another major setback and is likely to intensify scrutiny of Iran's athletics federation, with a potential gold or silver medal lost because of an avoidable equipment violation.

Teenage goalkeeper Afshari joins Greek handball club Athinaikos

Sports Desk

Iranian handball goalkeeper Zahra Afshari has become the latest Iranian player to move abroad after signing a one-year contract with Greek club Athinaikos.

The 19-year-old is regarded as one of Iran's promising young goalkeepers and made a name for herself at last year's Asian Youth Games, where she

delivered some impressive performances to help the country win gold at the multi-sport event in Bahrain.

Athinaikos is one of the prominent teams in the Greek handball league and will compete in domestic competitions as well as the 2026-27 EHF European Cup, starting with a second-round two-legged tie against Belgium's HB Sint-Truiden.

