

AFC Awards Bangkok 2026:

Beiranvand shortlisted for Player of the Year as Iran receives five nominations

Sports Desk

Iranian international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is among the three finalists for the Player of the Year award after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) unveiled its list of nominees for the upcoming AFC Awards on Friday.

The 30th edition of the annual ceremony will be held at Bangkok's Aksra Theatre King Power on November 19. Hoping to become the fifth Iranian footballer to win the prestigious award, following Khodadad Azizi (1996), Ali Daei (1999), Mahdi Mahdavi (2003), and Ali Karimi (2004), the Tractor goalkeeper faces competition from Saudi international duo Feras Al Brikan and Salem Al Dawsari.

"A stellar showing at the FIFA World Cup 2026 underlined Alireza Beiranvand's world-class abilities as the Islamic Republic of Iran narrowly missed out on



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the Round of 32 on goal difference. His nation's most-capped custodian, he also enjoyed a solid club campaign by helping Tractor FC to the AFC Champions League Elite 2025/26 Round

of 16. This is the 34-year-old's second nomination, after his first in 2019," the AFC website wrote of the Iranian. Beiranvand was one of Iran's standout performers at June's global showpiece

in the United States, with the highlight of his campaign coming in a man-of-the-match display during the goalless draw against Belgium.

Beiranvand has also made

an impressive start to the domestic season, keeping six clean sheets in eight league appearances for Tractor and conceding just twice.

Al Brikan, meanwhile, earned his maiden nomi-

nation after a memorable campaign that saw him score the winner in the AFC Champions League Elite. The 26-year-old striker also scored twice for Saudi Arabia during its World Cup qualifying campaign.

Nominated for the third time in four editions, reigning AFC Player of the Year Al Dawsari increased his World Cup appearances to nine over the summer. He also captained Al Hilal to an unbeaten 2025/26 league campaign and a record-extending 10th King's Cup title, as well as a place in the AFC Champions League Elite knockout stage.

Jafari, futsal duo nominated

Marzieh Jafari, who made history last year by becoming the first Iranian to win the Women's Coach of the Year award, has again been shortlisted for the prize. She faces stiff competition from Ma Xiaoxu, head coach of

China's U17 women's team, and Park Youn-jeong, coach of South Korea's U20 side.

Jafari was in charge of the Iranian national team at January's Women's Asian Cup, where her team's politically charged campaign in Australia ended in a group-stage exit. She then led Bam Khattoon to the AFC Women's Champions League group stage after finishing top of its preliminary group in August. Meanwhile, Iran will look to claim a fourth successive AFC Futsal Player of the Year award, with international duo Hossein Tayyebi and 2023 winner Saied Ahmadabbasi among the nominees. The pair scored nine goals between them to help Iran secure a record-extending 14th Asian Cup title in January.

The Iranian Football Federation was also shortlisted alongside Football Australia and the Japan Football Association for the AFC President's Recognition Award for Grassroots Football (Gold).

U23 Wrestling World Championships:

Iran's Rahmani, Mohammadnejad into freestyle finals

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers Abolfazl Rahmani and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad advanced to the finals of their respective events on Day 1 of the freestyle competition at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, United States, on Friday.

Looking to secure a second team title in three editions, Iran will also chase three bronze medals through Ebrahim Khari, Ali Karampour, and Reza Afshar across five weight classes.

An 86kg bronze medalist at last year's competition, Rahmani, who settled for silver at the U20 World Championships in August, began his 92kg campaign with an 11-1

victory by technical superiority over Jamaica's Steven Burrell Jr., before outmuscling Georgia's Sandro Kurashvili 11-6 in the quarterfinals.

A 6-3 win over Turkey's Fatih Altunbas saw the Iranian advance to the final, where he will take on 2024 champion Arslan Bagaev of Russia.

Defending superheavyweight champion Mohammadnejad, meanwhile, picked up where he had left off at the U20 Worlds, marching into the final without conceding a single point across three bouts.

The Iranian prodigy crushed Ukraine's Volodymyr Kochanov 10-0 in his opening bout and then hammered Russia's Andrei Bestaev 11-0 before defeating Azerbaijan's Khetag Karsanov 5-0 in a re-

match of last year's final in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Standing between Mohammadnejad and the gold medal is Georgia's Aleksandre Abramishvili, a two-time European U20 bronze medalist. Elsewhere, Khari – a silver medalist at the Zagreb Open in February – suffered a 7-1 loss to American Benjamin Davino in his opening 61kg bout but was given a second chance to add to his 2024 bronze after the American reached the final. Khari will resume action in the repechage against Japan's Akito Mukaida, who was beaten 11-0 by Davino in the quarterfinals.

In the 74kg class, Karampour enjoyed an emphatic run to the semifinals, claiming three

victories by technical superiority, but came up short against American Jayden James, who pinned the Iranian while leading 10-2 to reach the final.

Karampour kept trying to score exposure points using a whizzer, but James countered with his own whizzers. On his third attempt, James wrapped his arms around Karampour's chest and drove him to the mat for the fall.

Afshar, a world U17 champion in 2024, got off to a losing start in the 86kg class, falling 7-1 to Turkey's Ahmet Yagan. He will begin his bid for bronze with a repechage clash against Mexico's Kevin De Leon.

Iran aims to complete a



team-title double in Las Vegas after the country's Greco-Roman squad secured a third successive crown at the competition on Wednesday. Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Abolfazl Mohmedi (82kg), and Yasin Yazdi (87kg) won gold in their respective classes, while Mohammad Kamali

(67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi (97kg) added two bronze medals. Iran finished atop the team standings with 119 points, five ahead of runner-up Kazakhstan, while Russia – eligible to score team points for the first time since 2021 – finished third with 105.



Iranian freestyle wrestler Abolfazl Rahmani (blue) attempts a single-leg takedown against Jamaica's Steven Burrell Jr. in a 92kg bout at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, on Oct. 16, 2026.

● IAWFIR



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Iran defeated South Korea 67-62 to secure a second victory in the men's wheelchair basketball event at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan on Saturday.

Mohammad-Hassan Sayyari led Iran's scoring with 17 points in 21 minutes and 10 seconds on the court at Nagoya's Aichi International Arena, while Vahid Gholamzad added 14 points as Iran moved atop the Group B standings with four points, hav-

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iran beats South Korea in men's wheelchair basketball, blind football

ing routed Iraq 81-23 in its opening game on Friday.

Omid Hadiazhar also played a key role in Saturday's victory, recording an impressive double-double of 12 points and 10 assists, while Mahdi Abbasi and Morteza Abedi contributed 11 points apiece, helping Iran to recover from a three-point deficit at halftime.

Gim Donghyeon scored a game-high 18 points for South Korea, silver medalists at Hangzhou 2022, with Kim Sangyeol and Cho Seunghyun chipping in 15 points each. Having claimed bronze in the two editions either side of their 2018 gold, Iran will continue its

bid for a fourth medal in as many editions with a match against the Philippines on Monday, the final day of the group stage.

The Philippines, beaten 84-31 by South Korea in its opener, suffered a 72-35 defeat to Iraq later on Saturday.

Elsewhere at the multi-sport event, Iran suffered a 5-3 defeat to South Korea in men's goalball. In men's blind football, Iran bounced back from a 1-0 opening-day loss to Thailand to beat South Korea 3-1.

Hossein Rajabpour scored twice in the opening 14 minutes, with Sadeq Rahimiqasr adding a third

goal in the 17th minute. Kwon Kangmin pulled one back for South Korea in the first minute of the second half.

The fifth edition of the Asian Para Games will officially open with a ceremony at Nagoya's Paloma Mizuho Stadium today.

Iran is represented by 166 athletes, including 62 women, across 15 sports at the event, which will run through Oct. 24.

Having finished fourth in the first two editions – Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014 – before finishing third in Jakarta 2018, Iran achieved its best-ever finish in the history of the Games in Hangzhou

in 2022, collecting 44 golds, 46 silvers and 41 bronzes to finish runner-up in the medal table behind China.

The country's most successful campaign in terms of medals, however, came in Jakarta in 2018, where Iran bagged 51 golds, 43 silvers and 42 bronzes, but ultimately settled for third place behind China and South Korea.

Athletics has been Iran's most productive sport across the five editions, yielding 238 medals, including 83 golds, while swimming, archery and powerlifting have each contributed 13 gold medals.

