AFC Awards:

Beiranvand hopes to inspire next Iran generation after historic success

Sports Desk

Since the AFC Awards were introduced in 1994, no goalkeeper had ever clinched the Asian Player of the Year award – but that changed on Thursday night in Bangkok when Iran's Alireza Beiranvand became the latest winner of the prestigious accolade.
The Iranian, who was shortlisted in 2019, took home the coveted trophy on his second nomination and became the fifth player from his country to win it, following Khodadad Azizi (1996), Ali Daei (1999), Mahdi Mahdavikia (2003) and Ali Karimi (2004).
Beiranvand, who beat Saudi Arabian duo Feras Al Brikan and Salem Al Dawsari at the 30th edition of the gala at the Aksra Theatre King Power, could not hide his delight and hailed the award as a recognition that went beyond himself.
"Since I was nominated for the same award back in 2019, it has been seven years of hard work and consistent performances up until this evening here in Bangkok," he said at the post-event press conference.
"I would like to reiterate that this is such a great and unforgettable moment – not just for me but also for football in Asia that a goalkeeper has won. This was such a great wish and ambition for me, which I have achieved and fulfilled today – especially taking into consideration that no player from Iran had won this award for 22 years.
"I am sure that people in my country are very thrilled with this... and this is an honor that we can take pride in for many coming years in the future. It is a great honor for me and for everybody in my country, specifically for my family. I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has helped me through the years to come to this stage and lift this trophy."
Since leaving home at the age of 12 to pursue his footballing dreams and subsequently making his professional debut in 2011, the 1.95-meter shot-stopper has established himself as one of Asia's finest goalkeepers and proved that he remains at the top of his game at 34.
The most-capped goalkeeper in Team Melli history, Beiranvand produced brilliant displays during the FIFA World Cup 2026 and also shone at club level with Tractor FC, both domestically and in the AFC Champions League Elite 2025/26.



Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand (C) poses with his AFC Player of the Year award alongside FIFA president Gianni Infantino (R) and AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa at the AFC Awards in Bangkok, Thailand, on November 19, 2026.
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With the gleaming AFC Player of the Year trophy now added to his collection, Beiranvand wants to inspire the next generation to achieve more and showcase their abilities to the world.
"In my point of view, the young players who wish to join the national team later on may be (more) motivated after seeing me lift this trophy," he said. "So, in terms of motivation and giving them an incentive, I think this is very influential. And my message to the young generation of football players in Iran is to keep themselves away from social media and controversies, and only remain fully focused on the game and continue to dream of what they wish to achieve.
"I believe that, taking into account the great potential of Iranian players, we will hopefully not have to wait too long to see another Iranian player win this award."

Jafari retains prize

While Iran missed out on a fourth successive AFC Futsal Player of the Year award, with international teammates Hossein Tayyebi and 2023 winner Saied Ahmadabbasi – who scored nine goals between them to help Iran secure a record-extending 14th Asian Cup title in January – losing out to Thailand's Muhammad Osamanmusa, there was further glory for the country elsewhere at the ceremony.
After making history as the first-ever Iranian recipient last year, Marziyeh Jafari has become only the second person to claim back-to-back AFC Coach of the Year (Women) awards.
In taking home the honor, the 44-year-old follows in the footsteps of Japan's record seven-time winner Asako Takakura, who clinched the award between 2012 and 2015 and again from 2017 to 2019.
Jafari was recognized for her achievements at both club and international level in 2025/26, having served as head coach of Bam Khatoon FC and the Iran women's national team.
She guided Bam Khatoon through the group stage of the AFC Women's Champions League (AWCL) and also led the team to a fifth consecutive league title and 12th overall – both records. The league triumph secured the club a place in the preliminary stage of the 2026/27 AWCL, where they have since advanced to the group stage to secure a fifth appearance in the continental finals – the most of any women's club in Asia.
A native of Bam who began her coaching journey at 17 and has been with Bam Khatoon since 2008, Jafari has also made her mark on the international stage, leading Iran at the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia. Having spearheaded the team's qualification for a second consecutive edition of the showpiece, she oversaw a respectable campaign as the Iranian Lionesses bowed out in the group stage.
She said: "I am very happy to win this title once again. This award highlights the potential of football in Iran, and I am confident that we can continue this momentum for years to come, as women's football in our country still has so much more to achieve."

World Para Taekwondo Championships:

Iran strikes women's gold, silver on Day 1

Sports Desk

The opening day of the World Para Taekwondo Championships proved prolific for Iran, with the country collecting a gold and a silver medal in the women's competition in Muju, South Korea, on Friday.
Ailar Jami picked up where she had left off at October's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games, claiming the gold medal in the K44 -47kg division.
The 18-year-old sensation opened her campaign with a 2-1 victory over Georgia's Lia Chachibaia before defeating Thai second seed Khwansuda Phuangkitcha by the same scoreline in a repeat of their Asian Para Games final to advance to the semifinals.
The teen prodigy then overcame Australia's Shrijana Ghising in straight rounds (2-0, 4-0) to set up a final clash with Naoual Laarif, before defeating the Moroccan in successive rounds without conceding a single point to claim gold.
Later in the day, Zahra Rahimi – a silver medalist at the Paris 2024 Paralympics and October's continental showpiece – had to settle for silver in the K44 -52kg division after losing the final to China's Li Yujie, who had also beaten the Iranian in the Paralympic final.
Featuring 407 athletes, the 11th edition of the World Championships, which also forms part of the qualification pathway for the LA28 Paralympics, will run until Sunday at the iconic Muju Taekwondowon venue.
Iran's men's team will be without 2024 Paralympic bronze medalist Hamed Haqshenas, who has been ruled out with a knee injury, but the squad still features several medal hopefuls, including Alireza Bakht – also a Paralympic bronze medalist who will look to build on his gold-winning campaign in the -80kg division at the Asian Para Games – as well as Amir-Mohammad Haqiqatshenas, Amirhossein Alizadeh and Mohammad-Taha Hassanpour.
Asian Para Games bronze medalist Maryam Abdollahpour, meanwhile, will look to add to Iran's medal tally when she takes to the mat in the K44 -57kg event.

Iran's Ailar Jami won the gold medal in the women's K44 -47kg division at the World Para Taekwondo Championships in Muju, South Korea.
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AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup:

Iran off to emphatic start with Afghanistan rout

Sports Desk

Iran opened its title defense at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Phang Nga, Thailand, in emphatic fashion, cruising to a 9-2 victory over Afghanistan in Group B on Thursday.
Reza Dayeri netted a hat-trick for the record four-time champions at Ban Nam Khem Beach Arena as Afghanistan struggled to match their opponents' speed and attacking prowess.
Played in wet conditions, the match saw Iran skipper Mohammadali Mokhtari open the scoring in the third minute, latching onto a pass from Movahed Mohammadpour and finishing with an overhead kick that rolled past a diving Mohammad Osmani.
Sobhan Faleh then beat Osmani three minutes later and fired home from the right before Dayeri, connecting with a lob from goalkeeper Seyedmohammad Dastan, headed in from the right to give Iran a three-goal lead heading into the second period.
Dayeri's close-range overhead effort, which the Afghanistan goalkeeper managed to get a fingertip to, made it 4-0 in the 16th minute, with Mokhtari rattling the crossbar moments later.
Afghanistan pulled one back in the 21st minute when Qmid Homani's strike hit the right post and Mohamad Bahaduri pounced on the rebound.
Bahaduri struck again moments later with an overhead kick to reduce the deficit, but Dayeri restored Iran's three-goal cushion with an acrobatic effort in the 23rd minute to complete his hat-trick.
Mohammadpour converted a penalty on the half-hour mark, while Ali Mirshekari shrugged off two Afghanistan players two minutes later before directing an overhead kick into the left corner to make it 7-2.
Faleh then turned Mirshekari's attempt past Osmani in the 34th minute, before goalkeeper Seyed Mahdi Mirjalili rounded off the scoring with a strike into the top-left corner.
"We are happy to pass the first step, but this is just the beginning," Dayeri said after the game. "There is a long road ahead, but we will get better as we go along."
The start of the match was delayed due to inclement weather, but the wet conditions did little to dampen Iran's spirit or their dominance.
"We are Iran and used to all types of situations, so it made no difference to us," the 25-year-old defender said.
Dayeri is confident of repeating his three-goal feat when the Central Asian side face Vietnam today.
"My teammates helped me and with their support, I will do it again. We have special plans for all our opponents and are hopeful of continuing winning."
Vietnam also got off to a losing start in the competition on Thursday, falling to a 7-4 defeat against Lebanon.



Iranian skipper Mohammadali Mokhtari (9) attempts an overhead kick during a 9-2 victory over Afghanistan at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Phang Nga, Thailand, on November 19, 2026.
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