

# France Stop Iran's 7-Game Winning Streak at VNL



Iran have suffered their first straight sets defeat of the 2019 FIVB Nations League after falling to France in their last home game, May 23, 2019.

ARDABIL, Iran (Dispatches) - France made the race for the Final Six of the 2019 FIVB Men's Volleyball more exciting by beating Pool 15 hosts Iran on Week 4 closing.

France gave Iran the real chance only in the first set, pre-

vailing in the next two relatively easy to end rival's seven-game winning streak (team record): 3-0 (25-18, 26-24, 25-21). Thus, France prevented Iran to have a perfect record after two successive weeks in which they were hosts - Week 3 in Urmia

and this week in Ardabil.

Both teams are among the top six teams in the charts that will take part in the Finals in Chicago, the USA.

Trévor Clévenot highlighted for France (9-3; 28 points) with 15 points, while Mohammadja-

vad Manavinezhad notched 10 for Iran (10-2; 30 points).

The clash between the two teams fighting to avoid relegation Portugal and Australia, knowing that they are the lowest ranked challenger teams in the 2019 VNL standings at the moment, went into the favor of the players from the "Down Under" country 3-0.

Portugal (2-10; 7 points) had an advantage in the block (12-2) but Australia out-served rivals (11-2).

Lincoln Williams top-scored for the "Volleyroos" (2-10; 10 points) with 21 points. Marco Ferreira made 15 for Portugal, while Phelipe Martins set up 5 kill blocks.

Iran will travel to Bulgaria for its 5th week of the games where they will play Serbia, and the USA, as well as the hosts.

The top five teams in the standings plus hosts the USA will qualify for the finals in Chicago, which will be held from the 10th to the 14th of July.

## Aghapour Bags AFC U-20 Futsal Top Scorer Award



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Salar Aghapour emerged as the top scorer at the AFC U-20 Futsal Championship 2019 with eight goals to his name.

Aghapour opened Iran's 2019 campaign with a goal against Hong Kong, before firing two more goals to complete his hat-trick in their 6-3 win.

In the quarter-final match with Lebanon, Aghapour gave Iran the lead in the eighth minute, and struck an important extra-time goal to ensure the host nation advanced to the semi-finals with a 3-2 win.

Iran was knocked out of contention for a second suc-

cessive title after defeat to eventual champion Japan, but he found the back of the net three more times against Indonesia to ensure the young Team Melli finished third at home.

Japan was awarded the Fair Play Award, but it was Osawa Masashi that had more reason to rejoice at the end of the night as he was named the Most Valuable Player of the Tournament.

Masashi's performance was exceptional in Tabriz, where he scored on three different occasions, including the final match against Afghanistan to become Japan's leading goal scorer.

## IOC Prepares to Vote for 2026 Winter Olympics Host

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Italian officials insisted their debt-hit economy can support hosting the 2026 Olympics, and Sweden's prime minister promised his apparently skeptical nation also wants to do it.

The two Winter Games candidates brought government officials to help persuade International Olympic Committee members on Monday hours before they elect a winner.

Milan-Cortina and Stockholm-Are would likely have failed to come this far in previous Olympic bidding contests run under stricter rules demanding financial guarantees and government support earlier in the process.

Though Milan-Cortina has long been favored to win, bid leaders met with around 80 IOC voters on Monday amid increasing European Union scrutiny this month of Italy's national debt.

"We have budget problems in Italy but I think that this is something that everyone has," Italy Undersecretary of State Giancarlo Gior-



Italian Prime minister Giuseppe Conte speaks to journalists as he arrives during the first day of the 134th Session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), at the SwissTech Convention Centre, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Monday, June 24, 2019.

getti said at a news conference, citing the wealth of the Lombardy and Veneto provinces underwriting the games costs.

"They are two of the richest provinces in Europe," Giorgetti said. "They certainly have the capacity, they have the readiness, they have the finances in order to be able to support the event."

The IOC has promised to contribute at least \$925 million toward games operating

costs of up to \$1.7 billion. Building athlete villages in Milan and Stockholm shape as the main capital investment and biggest risk to the projects.

Both candidates were questioned in closed-door session by IOC members, with the Swedish bid challenged to prove support from a Stockholm city authority coalition formed last October and a national government only five months ago.

Sweden Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said he assured voters "it's in the Swedish model, it's in our DNA" to deliver a stable Winter Games.

Italy Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was due to join bid officials later Monday for last-minute lobbying.

One factor favoring the Italian bid — uniting Milan, the Alpine ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo, and several towns in between — is the IOC's own polling which puts support from local residents above 80% compared to Swedish public backing around 60%.

The 2026 contest meets the IOC's long-stated wish to return to traditional heartlands for winter sports after projects in Russia, South Korea, and China that required billions of dollars of investment in new venues, and potential white elephants.

A signature feature of the Swedish bid is using an ice sliding sports track in Sigulda, Latvia, instead of building a new venue at home.

## Argentina Beat Qatar to Escape Elimination at Copa America



Argentina's Lionel Messi, right, fights for the ball with Qatar's Tarek Salman during a Copa America Group B soccer match at Arena do Gremio in Porto Alegre, Brazil, June 23, 2019.

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil (AP) - Lionel Messi avoided another disappointment with the national team as Argentina escaped elimination in the group stage of the Copa America.

Lautaro Martinez and Sergio Aguero scored a goal in each half as Argentina defeated guest team Qatar 2-0 to secure a spot in the quarterfinals of the South American competition.

"We needed a victory to give us confidence and tranquility," Messi said. "What I liked the most was the team's attitude, its desire to win the game."

Argentina finished second in Group B behind Colombia, which did Argentina a huge favor by beating Paraguay 1-0 in the other group match on Sunday.

Colombia finished with nine points, Argentina four, Paraguay two and Qatar one.

The top two teams in each of the

three groups advance, along with the two best third-place finishers.

Argentina, which haven't been eliminated in the first round of the South American tournament since 1983, will face Venezuela in the quarterfinals at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

It was Argentina's first win at this year's Copa America after opening with a 2-0 loss to Colombia and a 1-1 draw with Paraguay.

Argentina struggled again on Sunday, unable to impose their game against the Asian champion. Messi again was far from his best, unable to spark his team into a dominant performance.

Martinez opened the scoring only four minutes into the match after a mistake by Qatari defender Basam Al Rawi while trying to pass to a teammate in front of his area. Martinez intercepted the pass and found the net to open the scoring at the Arena Gremio.

## Dominant Hamilton Setting a Record Pace

LE CASTELLET, France (Reuters) - Lewis Hamilton could overtake Michael Schumacher's record haul of 91 wins by the end of the season, however surreal that may sound.

The Mercedes driver is accelerating toward a sixth title with an air of inevitability after Sunday's French Grand Prix took his tally to 79 career wins with six victories in eight races so far this season.

"It's crazy to think that we are where we are right now," he mused at Le Castellet after his fourth win in a row sent him 36 points clear of team mate Valtteri Bottas, and 76 ahead of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel.

"I definitely didn't expect to have six wins at this point and it doesn't feel real."

With 13 races remaining, Hamilton has a mathematical chance of celebrating win number 92 in Abu Dhabi if he continues to steamroller all rivals in a fashion reminiscent of Schumacher in his pomp.

To do that he would have to obliterate more records, however. No driver in the history of the sport dating back to 1950 has won more than 13 races in a season or conjured up a run of more than



nine triumphs in a row. France was Hamilton's fourth on the trot.

No team has won more than 11 in a row in the modern era. Mercedes are on 10.