

Iran Win CAFA Women's Futsal Championship for Third Time



TEHRAN – Iran have claimed the title of the third edition of the CAFA Women's Futsal Championship.

The national Iranian women's futsal team defeated Tajikistan 9-0 in their last match at the Dushanbe Indoor Hall on Sunday.

Iran had defeated Uzbekistan 5-1, Kyrgyzstan 11-0 and Turkmenistan 9-0.

The CAFA Women's Futsal Championship is the annual international futsal championship organized by

CAFA for the women's national futsal teams of Central Asia.

A total of 5 (out of 6) CAFA member national teams entered the tournament, with Turkmenistan participating in the tournament for the first time since their establishment in 2022.

Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan competed in the edition.

Iran had won 2022 and 2023 editions.

Ivory Coast Beat Nigeria to Win Africa Cup of Nations



Ivory Coast's forward #15 Max-Alain Gradel (center) lifts the Africa Cup of Nations trophy on the podium after Ivory Coast won the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 final football match between Ivory Coast and Nigeria at Alassane Ouattara Olympic Stadium in Ebimpe, Abidjan on February 11, 2024.

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Sebastien Haller scored the winning goal nine minutes from the end as hosts Ivory Coast claimed a third Africa Cup of Nations title with a 2-1 victory over Nigeria in the final at the Alassane Ouattara Stadium in Abidjan on Sunday.

It was a triumph born from adversity as the Ivorians had scraped out of their group following two defeats, including a humiliating 4-0 loss to Equatorial Guinea, before finding their form in the knockout rounds with a never-say-die attitude that led them to the title.

William Troost-Ekong's header gave Nigeria a first-half lead as he rose to meet Samuel Chukwueze's flick-on from a corner, but Franck Kessie equalized just past the hour-mark after being left unmarked at the back post from a set-piece.

The Ivorians had to come from behind several times in the tournament and did it again when Haller steered Simon Adingra's cross into the net, much to the delight of his rookie coach Emerse Fae, who

had started the tournament as assistant to Frenchman Jean-Louis Gasset, who was sacked after the pool stage.

"It's the power of the group and the mindset that put us through. We had some challenging moments but we rescued ourselves, although it wasn't easy. The mental fortitude saw us restore our chances and do what we achieved today," said Ivorian man of the match Adingra.

Borussia Dortmund forward Haller was diagnosed with testicular cancer in July 2022 but beat the disease and has been a crucial player for the Ivorians, though he missed the start of the tournament with an ankle injury, playing his first game in the last-16 win over defending champions Senegal.

His story epitomizes the fight in the Ivorian side, who became the first home nation to lift the Cup of Nations since Egypt in 2006.

All four of their previous continental finals had finished 0-0, with them winning on penalties in 1992 and 2015, both times against Ghana, and losing the other two.

Rybakina Cruises Past Kasatkina to Claim Abu Dhabi Title

ABU DHABI (Reuters) - Top seed Elena Rybakina powered to a 6-1 6-4 win over Russian Daria Kasatkina in the final of the Abu Dhabi Open on Sunday to lift her second trophy of the season and seventh overall.

The 2022 Wimbledon champion began the contest on Stadium Court in typically dominant fashion to grab an early break, but seventh seed Kasatkina struck back with one of her own only to fall behind again in blustery conditions.

Rybakina regained composure to go 5-1 up on the back of big serving as Kasatkina struggled for consistency and the 24-year-old Brisbane champion wrapped up

the opening set in 25 minutes when her opponent sent a forehand wide.

The pair had come into the contest having split their four meetings - all on hardcourts - and Adelaide runner-up Kasatkina showed plenty of fight to pull two breaks back in the next set with relentless baseline hitting and stunning winners.

Level at 4-4, Rybakina turned the heat up to break the 26-year-old Kasatkina with a crosscourt scorch and the Kazakh returned after a brief rain delay to secure the victory on serve.

Both players will now head to Doha for the Qatar Open, with Kasatkina set to face Anastasia Pavlyuchen-



Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan (right) and Daria Kasatkina of Russia hold their trophies during the podium ceremony after the Women's Singles final match won by Rybakina at the Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open tennis tournament in Abu Dhabi on Feb 11, 2024.

kova in her opener on Monday while Rybakina has a bye into the second round.

Kasatkina, who came through a gruelling semi-final against Beatriz Had-

dad Maia on Saturday that lasted nearly three hours, was disappointed with the loss but remained upbeat about her form early in the season.

Marathon World Record Holder Kiptum Dies in Road Accident



In this file photo dated April 23, 2023, Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum ceases the finish line to win the men's race at the London Marathon.

NAIROBI (AFP) - The athletic world Monday paid tribute to

marathon record holder, Kelvin Kiptum, who died in a road acci-

dent alongside his Rwandan coach Gervais Hakizimana on Sunday night in northwest Kenya.

According to Elgeyo Market Police Commander Peter Mulinge, Kiptum was driving a sedan vehicle when it lost control and crashed along a road in Uasin Gishu County at around 11pm (20:00 GMT) on their way to his training camp in Kaptagat, killing him and his coach on the spot.

A third passenger - a woman identified by police as Sharon Kosgei - sustained serious injuries and was hospitalized in Eldoret.

"We are shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the devastat-

ing loss of Kelvin Kiptum and his coach, Gervais Hakizimana. On behalf of all World Athletics, we send our deepest condolences to their families, friends, teammates and the Kenyan nation," World Athletics president Sebastian Coe posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, as the country and world reeled in shock.

"It was only earlier this week in Chicago, the place where Kelvin set his extraordinary marathon world record, that I was able to officially ratify his historic time. An incredible athlete leaving an incredible legacy, we will miss him dearly," he added in his statement.

Alonso: Hamilton Can Bring Something Extra to Ferrari

LONDON (Reuters) - Fernando Alonso can see Lewis Hamilton bringing some extra fight to Ferrari when the seven-times world champion joins Formula One's most successful team in 2025.

The 42-year-old Spaniard, now at Aston Martin, spent five seasons at Ferrari from 2010-14 but was unable to deliver a championship to Maranello.

Ferrari have not won a title since the constructors' in 2008, with Kimi Raikkonen the last driver to take a title in 2007.

"I hope he enjoys the experience, I think it's a very special team," double world champion Alonso told reporters ahead of Monday's launch of Aston Martin's 2024 car at Silverstone.

"It is more special when you win and that's the thing. You need to win and it's a few years already that they have a very fast car and were fighting for big things and maybe Lewis can bring that extra to fight for the championship.

"The car is there. At the end of last year even with a very dominating Red Bull car, Ferrari were still able to match the lap time and be faster than them in most of the qualifying.

"So I think the car should be fast enough."

Hamilton's move from Mercedes to Ferrari on a multi-year deal was announced on Feb. 1.

The 39-year-old Briton said later that driving for the Italian

team would allow him "to fulfil another childhood dream."

Alonso said he had been busy training on the day the news was announced and so missed all the excitement.

"It probably was a surprise, I will not lie, but not because of the change itself. Just because from the outside it seemed like he was very linked with Mercedes and very loyal to them.

"It was not his childhood dream 12 months ago, or two months ago, I guess, because it was a different dream," he added.

Alonso could now be on the list of possible replacements for his former McLaren team mate at Mercedes, with the Spaniard out of contract at the end of the sea-

son and declaring himself fitter than ever.

Asked about any direct contact with Mercedes about the seat, he said there had been "nothing at all".

Alonso did point out, however, that he was the only world champion available for 2025 on the driver market and said he would talk first with Aston Martin once he had decided whether to continue.

"If we cannot reach an agreement and I want to commit to race in Formula One, I know I have a privileged position. I am probably attractive to other teams, the performance that they saw last year, the commitment," he added.

China's Pan Sets 100 Meters Freestyle World Record



****Pan Zhanle of Team China competes during the men's 4X100m freestyle relay final of swimming event at the World Aquatics Championships 2024 in Doha, Qatar, Feb 11, 2024.

DOHA (Reuters) - Doha ushered in the opening day of the swimming events on Sunday night, marked by Chinese swimmer Pan Zhanle setting a new men's 100m freestyle world record.

In the men's 4x100m freestyle relay, Pan clocked 46.80 seconds, surpassing Romania's David Popovici's previous record of 46.86 seconds.

"I'm extremely happy. Breaking a world record brings joy to me, proving that the training has paid off," the 19-year-old remarked. "My goal now is to go even faster. I can't predict how fast I can swim, but I hope my record won't be broken too soon."

Inspired by Pan's show, China's subsequent swimmers Ji

Xinjie, Zhang Zhanshuo and Wang Haoyu delivered stellar performances, ultimately securing China's first gold medal in swimming events with a time of three minutes and 11.08 seconds.

Italy, represented by Alessandro Miressi, Lorenzo Zazzeri, Paolo Conte Bonin and Manuel Frigo, claimed silver exactly one second behind China. The United States quartet of Matt King, Shaine Casas, Luke Hobson and Carson Foster clinched bronze in three minutes and 12.29 seconds.

"My target in Doha now is the 100m freestyle title," Pan stated, "And winning the Olympic gold is my ultimate goal this year, and that means I need to train even harder."