

U-20 Footballers to Take on Indonesia in Asian Cup China 2025



TEHRAN – Iran’s U-20 football team arrived in Shenzhen, China on Tuesday.

The young Persians are drawn in Group C along with Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Yemen.

The AFC U-20 Asian Cup China 2025 is primed for thrilling action following the conclusion of the official draw at Grand Skylight International Guanlan in Shenzhen, China on Thursday.

The 16 teams were drawn into four groups with not just continental glory at stake but also four tickets to the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2025 in Chile.

The 42nd edition of the tournament will take place from February 12 to March 1, 2025, in Shenzhen, China.

Draw Result
Group A: China, Australia, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar

Group B: Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, DPR Korea

Group C: Uzbekistan, Iran, Indonesia, Yemen

Group D: Japan, Korea Republic, Syria, Thailand

Iran Women to Participate in 2026 AFC Qualifiers



TEHRAN – The race to qualify for the next edition of Asia’s most prestigious women’s national team football competition marked its latest milestone with 37 Member Associations (MAS) confirming their interest in competing in the AFC Women’s Asian Cup Australia 2026.

The Participating MAS will be aiming to clinch the eight available berths to join host Australia and the top three sides from the AFC Women’s Asian Cup India 2022 – defending champion China, runner-up Korea Republic and third-placed Japan – at the 2026 Continental showpiece, which will be held from March 1 to 21, 2026.

The 33 teams that have submitted their interest and are poised to participate in the qualifiers are: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Chinese Taipei, DPR Korea, Guam, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The AFC Women’s Asian Cup Australia 2026 Qualifiers will see the teams battle in a group stage format across centralized venues from June 23 to July 5, 2025 with the host associations and draw mechanics to be determined and communicated in due course.

Chelsea Rally to Beat West Ham 2-1 at Stamford Bridge

LONDON (Reuters) – Chelsea recovered to beat their former manager Graham Potter’s side West Ham United 2-1 with a second-half strike from substitute Pedro Neto and an own goal by Aaron Wan-Bissaka lifting them to fourth place in the Premier League on Monday.

The result took Chelsea two points above fifth-placed Manchester City and Newcastle United in sixth and within four points of Nottingham Forest, who are third.

Jarrold Bowen, in his first game back after a month out with a foot fracture, put the Hammers ahead when he pounced on a back pass by defender Levi Colwill three minutes before halftime and fired a left-foot shot past Filip Jorgensen in Chelsea’s goal.

The goal livened up the game after a messy first half, with Chelsea’s Enzo Fernandez, Cole Palmer, Noni



Chelsea’s English midfielder #20 Cole Palmer (left) has his shot deflected by West Ham United’s English defender #29 Aaron Wan-Bissaka (right) into the West Ham net making it 2-1 during the English Premier League.

Madueke and Jadon Sanchez all missing good chances.

West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola ensured West Ham went into the break in the lead when he tipped a spinning Palmer free kick over the bar three minutes after the opener.

Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca, criticized recently for failing to make timely substitutions, sent on Neto for Sancho and Marc Guiu for Nicolas Jackson seven min-

utes into the second half and the hosts looked brighter for the changes.

Portugal winger Neto snatched the 64th-minute equalizer after latching onto a ricocheted shot from teammate Fernandez. After a lengthy VAR check for offside, the goal was given.

Palmer created the winner 10 minutes later, with his cross deflected by Aaron Wan-Bissaka into his own net to the despair of West

Ham boss Potter on his return to Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea pushed for a third goal with chances for Palmer and Fernandez but West Ham finished strongly and Jorgensen, selected ahead of mistake-prone Robert Sanchez, kept out efforts by Mohammed Kudus and Konstantinos Mavropanos in the dying minutes.

“This victory coming from behind was really important for us. We have to be consistent, this is the most important thing,” Neto told Sky Sports.

The result was a disappointment for Potter, who was sacked in April 2023 after failing to find a winning formula following seven months in charge at Chelsea.

The 49-year-old has been at West Ham less than a month with two defeats, a draw and a win in the league so far but Bowen has been encouraged by the team’s progress under Potter.

Esteghlal Held by Al Shorta in ACL Elite



TEHRAN – Esteghlal edged closer to a place in the knockout rounds of the AFC Champions League Elite 2024-25 on Monday as the side from Iran drew 1-1 with Al Shorta at the Azadi Stadium.

Joel Kojo gave the Iranians the lead in the fourth minute but Re-wan Amin leveled four minutes after the interval for the visitors, whose slim chances of a top eight finish in the league phase and a last

16 berth now hinge on results in other matches.

The draw moves Esteghlal onto six points from seven matches with Al Shorta on three, meaning defending champion Al Ain cannot climb into the qualification places for the knockout rounds with one league phase match remaining.

Esteghlal will meet Al Rayyan on Matchday 8 on February 18 in Doha, Qatar.

Warriors Battle Back to Beat Magic 104-99



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) drives to the basket as guard Brandin Podziemski (2) screens Orlando Magic forward Tristan da Silva, middle, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Monday, Feb. 3, 2025.

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Andrew Wiggins scored 25 points and Stephen Curry added 24, leading the Golden State Warriors to a 104-99 win over the Orlando Magic on Monday night.

Wiggins shot 7 of 14, made 10 free throws and passed Hall of Famer Chris Mullin to take seventh place on the Warriors’ career list for 3-pointers.

Moses Moody added 17 points while rookie center Quinten Post had seven points and seven rebounds in his third consecutive start to help Golden State get back above .500.

Cole Anthony had 26 points and five rebounds for the Magic. Franz Wagner added 21 points and five assists and Paolo Banchero scored 18.

Russia, Belarus Remain Banned From Ice Hockey Tournaments



ZURICH (AP) — Russia and Belarus are to remain frozen out of International Ice Hockey Federation competitions through the 2025-26 season.

The IIHF decision on Tuesday covers all world championships and effectively next year’s Winter Olympic Games in Italy, although the International Olympic Com-

mittee has the final say.

“It is not yet safe to reintegrate the Russian and Belarusian national and club teams,” the IIHF said, because “the current security conditions do not allow the necessary requirements for the organization of tournaments guaranteeing the safety of all.”

The IIHF council said it will next assess the issue in May 2026.

The 2026 Winter Olympics are scheduled for Feb. 6–22 in Milan and Cortina.

Russia, in previous guises as the Soviet Union or Unified Team, has won the Olympic

gold nine times. Russia won the silver at the 2022 Beijing Olympics, just weeks before Russia-Ukraine war. Russia and Belarus have been banned from international ice hockey tournaments since then.

The IOC in 2023 green-lit Russian and Belarusian individual athletes participating in international events after meeting some conditions but they have remained banned from team events.

The 2026 Olympics will welcome back NHL players for the first time since the 2014 Sochi Games.