

# Iranian Chess Players Secure Three Spots in FIDE World Cup



TEHARN - Iranian chess players delivered an outstanding performance at the West Asian Zonal Championships, earning three coveted spots in the upcoming FIDE World Cup.

The landmark achievement marks one of Iran's strongest showings in international chess competition.

In the men's division, Grandmaster Pouya Idani claimed first place, followed by International Master Bardia Daneshvar in second.

The women's competition saw Woman FIDE Master Anahita Zahedifar take top honors, securing her position in the World Cup alongside the two male qualifiers.

The nine-round Swiss-system tournament, which concluded on Tuesday, featured 46 male and 20 female competitors from across West Asia.

Notable achievements included Zahedifar earning her Woman International Master title and Anousha Mahdian obtaining a WIM norm. Armin Samimi also gained recognition as a FIDE Master during the event.

## Beach Volleyballers Win Bronze Medal in 24th Samila Open

TEHRAN – Iran's Abbas Pourasgari/Alireza Aghajani won a bronze medal in the AVC Beach Tour 24th Samila Open at the Samila Beach on Wednesday. Team Melli defeated In-

donesia's Bintang Akbar/Sofyan Rachman 2-0 (21-18, 25-23) in the bronze medal match.

The competition is being held in Songkhal, Thailand from April 13 to 16.



## Kylian Mbappe Receives One-Match Ban for Tackle in Alaves Clash

PARIS (AFP) - Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe will serve a one-match suspension following his tackle on Alaves' Antonio Blanco, the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) said on Tuesday.

The Frenchman was shown a straight red card in Sunday's game against Alaves for a violent challenge on midfielder Blanco, with the referee overturning his initial decision to give



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (second left) is shown a red card by the referee during a Spanish La Liga soccer match.

him a yellow after a VAR review.

The RFEF's Disciplinary Committee ruled the

dismissal warranted the minimum one-match sanction under article 130 of its regulations.

Following the incident, Mbappe apologized to Blanco and his Real Madrid teammates. He will miss Real's next game against Athletic on Sunday.

Alaves' Manu Sanchez, who was sent off for a similar challenge on Vinicius Jr in the same match, will also serve a one-match ban.

## Barcelona Reach Champions League Semis Despite 3-1 Loss at Dortmund



Barcelona's goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny (top right) punts the ball during the Champions League quarterfinals second leg soccer.

DORTMUND (Reuters) - Five-time European champions Barcelona reached their first Champions League semifinal in six seasons with a 5-3 aggregate victory despite being beaten 3-1 by Borussia Dortmund

on Tuesday. Serhou Guirassy scored a hat-trick for Dortmund to condemn Barca to their first defeat across all competitions this year but it could not prevent the Catalans from reaching the last

four.

Barcelona will play either Inter Milan or Bayern Munich, who face each other on Wednesday, in the last four.

"Dortmund did very well. We did not have our best day. I had a feeling something like that would happen today because I know the stadium well," said Barcelona coach Hansi Flick.

"Things didn't go too well for us but Dortmund played very well. But congratulations to my team, we're in the semifinals. We're happy. I'm really happy for the team and the club."

The visitors found them-

selves on the back foot from the start with Dortmund shooting out of the blocks as they attempted to bounce back from last week's 4-0 first-leg loss.

Dortmund, who drew 2-2 against Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga on Saturday, had two golden chances in the opening minutes before Guirassy's chipped penalty in the 11th minute gave them a deserved lead.

The Spaniards, unbeaten in 2025 going into the game, gradually fought their way back and could have levelled were it not for some sloppy finishing from Jules Kounde in the 40th.

## Komeil Ghasemi Named Saudi Arabia's Wrestling Team Coach



TEHRAN – Former Iranian Olympic and world wrestling champion Komeil Ghasemi has been appointed head coach of Saudi Arabia's national freestyle wrestling team.

Komeil Ghasemi, a former world and Olympic champion in the heavyweight category

of freestyle wrestling, has officially accepted the role of head coach of Saudi Arabia's national freestyle wrestling team.

This marks the first time in history that an Iranian coach has been appointed to lead a national team of athletes from Saudi Arabia.

## Warriors Cruise Past Grizzlies 121-116

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Jimmy Butler and Stephen Curry threw their arms around each other and embraced.

Playoff Jimmy in all his brilliance on the big stage took all the pressure off Curry, and now they're taking the Golden State Warriors to the playoffs.

"I know I want to win a championship so he needs, his what, this would be No. 5?" Butler said.

Butler had 38 points, seven rebounds and six assists creating opportunities on both ends at every chance, Curry scored 37, and the Warriors earned the seventh seed in the Western Conference by beating the Memphis Grizzlies 121-116 on Tuesday night in the Play-In Tournament.

Curry knocked down a baseline 3-pointer with 1:50 to go and one from the left wing with a minute on the clock then converted four free throws in the closing five seconds.

Golden State is now headed for a best-of-seven first-round series with the Rockets beginning with Game 1 on Sunday at Houston.

"It took 83 games but we're right where we want to be, which is back in the playoffs and we've got a chance," coach Steve Kerr said.

After a pair of free throws by Curry with 5.4 seconds left, the Grizzlies had one last chance — but Santi Aldama couldn't inbound the ball before a five-second violation.

Desmond Bane scored 30 points and Ja Morant 22 for Memphis, which will head home to play Friday against the winner of the Mavericks-Kings matchup on Wednesday night in Sacramento to determine the eighth playoff spot.

With the Grizzlies on a roll midway through the third, Butler grabbed momentum back with a steal and dunk. He shot 12 for 20 in a second straight 30-point performance and his highest scoring game since joining the Warriors at the trade deadline. He made 12 of 18 free throws — having been 63 of 68 from the line over the previous eight games in April.

Morant went down hard rolling his right ankle when he stepped on Buddy Hield's foot and was fouled by Quinten Post with



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (30) shoots a 3-point shot.

4:25 remaining in the third but got up and finished the three-point play to pull the Grizzlies within 82-81.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 18 points, while Zach Edey contributed 14 points, 17 rebounds and hit two free throws with 14.3 seconds left.

Curry had eight rebounds, four assists and shot 9 for 22 while regularly swarmed by Scotty Pippen Jr. before he fouled out late.

Curry had lit up the Grizzlies for 52 points on their home floor in a 134-125 win on April 1, and the Grizzlies made him a top priority this time — so Butler took charge.

He led four straight scoring possessions to put the Warriors up 31-18 late in the first quarter — assisting on Gary Payton II's cutting dunk, dishing to Post for a 3 and making a 3-point shot and three-point play himself. Butler showed no signs of being affected by a tender left quadriceps muscle after he took a knee from Kawhi Leonard on Sunday.

The Warriors hoped to avoid this extra game, but lost in overtime to the Clippers in the regular-season finale on Sunday for their third home defeat over the final week.

Curry, Green and the Warriors had been 0-3 in play-in games during appearances in 2021 and last year. The Grizzlies eliminated them at Chase Center with a 117-112 overtime victory in '21.