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² FutsalHub

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End-of-Year Breaking News!
After Concluding National Team Contract

VAHID SHAMSAEI **Appointed Head Coach** **of Safir Gofteman Tehran**



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Nowruz Message from Safir Gofteman Language Academy and Sports & Cultural Club

On the eve of the New Year, Safir Gofteman Tehran Language Academy and Sports & Cultural Club released a special Nowruz message:

"Live life wholeheartedly, as time never truly belongs to us. Sometimes we forget that love is life's sole reason, but we gratefully embrace Nowruz, which annually reminds us of this truth. Happy Nowruz! May the coming year be filled with love, friendship, and joy for all.

Spring is nature's wise teacher, painting the meadows, trees, and flowers with vibrant colors, reminding us of the journey from silence to renewal.

As we approach the year 1404 of the Persian calendar, honoring our ancestors' traditions and invoking Ya Moghaleb Al Gholob, "O Transformer of Hearts," we at Safir Gofteman Language Academy

and Sports Club wish everyone's life to flourish beautifully with the colors of spring. May divine joy illuminate the hearts of our people!

In 1403, thanks to the unwavering support of shareholders, board members, management team, esteemed teachers, and dedicated staff, Safir Gofteman experienced its third successful season in Iran's Futsal Premier League, securing its reputation among athletes, fans, and futsal enthusiasts.

In the coming year, we are confident that increased solidarity and collaboration will help us overcome challenges, strengthen our endeavors, and take meaningful steps toward enhancing Safir Gofteman's esteemed status.

Undoubtedly, with the continued support and dedication of our shareholders, management, instructors, and diligent

staff across our beloved country, the Safir Gofteman Sports & Cultural Club will continue its upward trajectory in various competitions, consistently achieving success.

With sincere respect and pride, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on the upcoming Persian New Year to the honorable people of Iran, the sports community, especially futsal enthusiasts, and the extended Safir Gofteman family nationwide. Wishing you all a prosperous year filled with achievements and happiness.

With gratitude and respect,

Saeed Sayyad Chamani – CEO, Safir Gofteman Language Academy

Mohammad Faeghi – CEO, Safir Gofteman Sports & Cultural Club



A Happy Ending to a Rough Year

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Safir Gofteaman Tehran's crucial 1-0 victory over Foolad Hormozgan in the 25th week of Iran's Futsal Premier League not only ensured the survival of the capital's sole representative but also provided a satisfying conclusion to an otherwise challenging season.

The team, one of the earliest to start preparations for the new season in mid-May 2024 under the head coach Reza Zarkhanli, managed to retain key players while introducing several young talents. Their rigorous preparations included several friendly matches and participation in a six-team tournament hosted by Safir in July. The first six weeks of the league brought mixed results—two home victories contrasted with four away defeats—placing them mid-table before the league paused for a two-month break in preparation for the Futsal

World Cup.

However, during this interval and despite participating in further friendly matches and the Mashhad tournament, Zarkhanli unexpectedly resigned, plunging the club into crisis.

Assistant coach Hamid Nassiri took charge, immediately proving his worth with a win against Giti Pasand. Yet, persistent injuries, particularly to key players Mohammad Asadshir, Seyed Ali Ghasempour, and goalkeeper Hashem Abarghouei, severely tested Nassiri and his team, leading to a steep decline in the second half of the season.

The club responded decisively, replacing Nassiri with Mohsen Khabiri to avert relegation. Under Khabiri's leadership, Safir implemented a successful strategy to prioritize home matches, gaining 7 crucial points from their final three home games despite losing all three away fixtures. This strategy secured their Premier League status, providing a satisfying end to a difficult year.

Iran Reigns Supreme at AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2024 in Thailand

The 17th edition of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup concluded in Thailand from April 17th to 28th, 2024 (April 29th to May 9th). A total of 16 teams battled it out for continental supremacy, with Iran ultimately emerging victorious, claiming their 13th Asian Cup title.

The top four teams in the tournament earned automatic qualification for the 2024 FIFA Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan. However, with Uzbekistan already securing their place as hosts, the fourth qualifying spot was decided through a play-off between the losing quarter-finalists. Afghanistan, the surprise package of the tournament, stunned Kyrgyzstan in this play-off to secure their historic first-ever World Cup berth. In a shocking turn of events, defending champions Japan crashed out in the group stage, missing out on a World Cup spot.

Iran Was Drawn Into Group D into Group D alongside Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The Iranian squad, coached by Vahid Shamsaei, faced stiff resistance, securing narrow victories against Afghanistan (3-1) and Bahrain (5-3) before comfortably dispatching Kuwait (4-0) to advance to the knockout stages with a perfect 9 points.

In the quarter-finals, Iran faced Kyrgyzstan, dismantling them with a resounding 6-1 victory. The semi-final clash against hosts Uzbekistan proved to be a nail-biter, ending in a 3-3 draw after regular and extra time. Iran ultimately prevailed 5-4 in a tense penalty shootout, securing their place in the final.

The final saw Iran deliver their best performance of the tournament, dominating hosts Thailand in a 4-1 victory, to clinch the coveted Asian Cup trophy.

Despite their triumph, Iran's performance during the tournament was met with some criticism, with concerns raised about their playing style. Hopes were high that Shamsaei would address these issues ahead of the World Cup, but the squad remained largely unchanged. Individual accolades saw Saeed Ahmad Abbasi crowned both the tournament's Most Valuable Player and Top Scorer, while Bagher Mohammadi was recognized as the Best Goalkeeper.



Iran's squad for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2024 consisted of:

Saeed Momeni, Bagher Mohammadi, Mohammad Hossein Derakhshani, Mohammadreza Sangsefidi, Asghar Hassanzadeh, Alireza Rafieipour, Salar Aghapour, Moslem Oladghobad, Saeid Ahmad Abbasi, Masoud Yousefi, Ali Khalilvand, Ali Akrami, Mehdi Karimi, Behrouz Azimi.

WORLD CUP REGRETS: IRAN MISSES PODIUM FINISH



FIFA FUTSAL WORLD CUP 2024 UZBEKISTAN

WHY DID WE FAIL?

The 10th Futsal World Cup, held from September 14 to October 6, 2024, in Uzbekistan, saw Brazil crowned champions after defeating Argentina, with Ukraine securing third place over France.

Iran dominated Group F, convincingly defeating Venezuela (7-1), Guatemala (9-4), and France (4-1), marking their strongest-ever World Cup group stage performance.

MATCH RESULTS:

**7-1**

Venue: Bukhara Sports Complex, Uzbekistan
Attendance: 1,694
Goals: Mehdi Karimi (2), Salar Aghapour (2), Behrouz Azimi (2), Amirhossein Davoudi (Iran); Middleton Francia (Venezuela)

**9-4**

Goals: Saeed Ahmad Abbasi (3), Salar Aghapour (2), Hossein Tayyebi (2), Behrouz Azimi, Mehdi Karimi (Iran); Patrick Ruiz (2), Marvin Sandoval, Edgar Santizo (Guatemala)

**4-1**

Goals: Salar Aghapour (2), Moslem Oladghobad, Alireza Rafiepour (Iran); Mohamed Toure (France)
Despite a perfect group stage, Iran's World Cup campaign ended abruptly in a heartbreaking 4-3 defeat to Morocco in the Round of 16, with an own-goal from Alireza Rafiepour sealing their fate.

**3-4**

Goals: Mohammad Hossein Derakhshani, Hossein Tayyebi, Moslem Oladghobad (Iran); Khalid Bouzid, Soufiane El Mesrar, Idriss Raiss El Fenni, Alireza Rafiepour (own goal, Morocco)
Referee: Daniel Metkovic
Attendance: 1,954
This early exit left Iran lamenting a missed opportunity for a podium finish.



Iran's national futsal team needed comprehensive preparation and quality friendlies to ensure a successful campaign in the year leading up to the World Cup. However, neither acquiring a reputable assistant coach for Vahid Shamsaei nor arranging high-quality friendly matches materialized. Ehsan Osouli, Head of the Futsal Committee, failed to meet the technical team's expectations, leaving the squad significantly underprepared heading into the World Cup. Many consider Osouli primarily responsible for the team's shortcomings. After securing the Asian Championship, Shamsaei requested a qualified foreign assistant coach, but delays from the futsal committee and football federation hindered progress. Poor negotiations for friendly matches further compounded the situation. Critics argue that the committee's management, unfamiliar with futsal dynamics, severely harmed Iran's chances. The football federation president, Mehdi Taj, now faces pressure regarding the future direction of the committee. Since Shamsaei took charge, discussions about hiring a reputable foreign assistant were ongoing, but nothing came to fruition, leaving an entirely Iranian coaching staff. Experts felt Shamsaei needed stronger coaching support. Despite their strong playing backgrounds, the existing coaches lacked sufficient coaching experience.

A seasoned assistant could have significantly improved preparations, provided valuable tactical insights, and strengthened matchday coaching. Unfortunately, this never materialized, directly impacting the team's performance. The coaching staff's continuous praise of opposing teams ahead of the World Cup negatively affected the players' confidence. Despite Iran being ranked fourth globally and respected by opponents, fear of stronger teams undermined self-belief, notably evident in the 4-1 halftime deficit against Morocco. Experts consistently criticized two technical issues under Shamsaei: weak defense and excessive reliance on individual creativity. Iran's defensive vulnerabilities, evident even against weaker teams during the Asian Cup, became painfully clear against Morocco. The team's defensive fragility ultimately proved costly. Excessive dependence on creative individuals like Moslem Oladghobad and Salar Aghapour became problematic. The lack of effective tactical alternatives was evident whenever the team faced scoring difficulties. Experts repeatedly highlighted this, yet no solution was implemented. Following third place in the 2016 World Cup and a quarterfinal exit in 2021, Iran regressed further in 2024, exiting in the Round of 16, clearly showing a troubling decline.



Iran's World Cup Squad (2024):

Bagher Mohammadi, Saeed Momeni, Mohammad Hossein Derakhshani, Alireza Rafiepour, Mohammad Reza Sangsefidi, Amirhossein Davoudi, Hossein Tayyebi, Ali Asghar Hassanzadeh, Salar Aghapour, Moslem Oladghobad, Mehdi Karimi, Behrouz Azimi, Saeed Ahmad Abbasi, Sajad Yousefkhah

Prominent Figures Discuss Safir: A Model of Professional

Safir Gofteman's Involvement in Futsal Private Sector Team Management



Vahid Shamsaei, Iran National Futsal Team Coach:

"I hope Safir Gofteman remains committed."

"I previously recognized Safir Gofteman as a language and cultural institute. It's encouraging to see their successful entry into sports, particularly futsal. Given the tough economic conditions, private investments in sports deserve recognition and support. We must ensure clubs like Safir Gofteman stay committed and don't lose interest. Although I've rarely met Mr. Faeghi, the CEO, I deeply appreciate his efforts in sustaining futsal in Tehran—a city once renowned for futsal teams such as Esteghlal, Tam Iran Khodro, and Tasisat Daryaei."



Sadeq Doroudgar, Former Head of Futsal Committee:

"We must ensure clubs like Safir Gofteman receive attention."

"Safir Gofteman's involvement in futsal offers little financial return, driven instead by their social responsibility. We should support such private clubs to ensure their investments are worthwhile. Television broadcasts can significantly encourage private investment, as demonstrated during my tenure when private teams were predominant."



Alireza Raadi, Veteran Coach and Instructor:

"Safir Gofteman deserves comprehensive support."

"We must value sponsors like Safir Gofteman, especially when government support is lacking. Safir invests its resources and reputation and deserves extensive backing. As Tehran's sole futsal representative, increased support could pave the way for more teams in the capital."



Abolghasem Arefian, Coach and Instructor:

"Competing with state-sponsored teams is tough for clubs like Safir Gofteman."

"Safir Gofteman provides a valuable platform for futsal growth. We must support and appreciate clubs like Safir, who keep futsal thriving despite economic hardships. The Futsal Committee and federation should offer special privileges as competing with state-funded teams requires extra support."



Ehsan Kamiani, Secretary of the Futsal League Organization:

"The League Organization fully supports clubs like Safir Gofteman."

"We strive to support clubs actively investing in futsal, whether in men's or women's leagues. All our policies aim to encourage continued and increased club participation in futsal."

Siamak Dadashi, Coach of Iran National Futsal Team:

"We must appreciate Safir Gofteman's efforts."

"Tehran, given its size, deserves more than one Premier League team. We should be thankful for Safir Gofteman's private-sector initiative. The more private organizations we have, the stronger our national futsal team becomes."

Ali Imani, Goalkeeper Coach for Iran Futsal:

"We must applaud the management of Safir Gofteman."

"Operating a private futsal team is challenging in the current economy, and Safir Gofteman's efforts deserve our gratitude. Special thanks go to Mr. Faeghi for continuing despite limited support in Tehran."

Fatemeh Sharif, Coach of Saipa Women's Futsal Team:

"Safir Gofteman should also consider women's futsal."

"Relying solely on government-sponsored teams restricts opportunities for coaches and players. It's commendable that the private sector, represented by Safir Gofteman, is involved. Extending such support to women's futsal would significantly enhance its development."

Shahnaz Yari, Former Head Coach of Iran's National Women's Futsal Team:

"Safir Gofteman Should Also Support Women's Futsal"

"Unfortunately, the private sector has not made a strong entry into women's futsal, and sponsors in the Women's Premier League are not satisfied. Every year, several teams withdraw from the competition. A well-managed team like Safir Gofteman, which provides strong support for futsal in the capital, could make a significant impact if it also extended its support to women's futsal."



Giti Pasand Crowned Champions Once Again

When the Iranian Futsal Premier League commenced in summer, excitement and anticipation filled the air, but Giti Pasand Esfahan quickly demonstrated they were destined for more than just competition—they intended to dominate.

Securing their second consecutive title, Giti Pasand showed their prior success was no accident but the outcome of meticulous planning, teamwork, and a winning mentality. Now the most decorated team in Iran's futsal history, Giti Pasand boasts five league titles and eight runner-up finishes, symbolizing consistency, strength, and effective planning.

Success in futsal requires tactical mastery, quick thinking, and decisive execution—all traits exemplified by Giti Pasand. Coach Mohammad Keshavarz, former national team captain, orchestrated this dominance with strategic brilliance, shaping the team's mentality and ensuring seamless teamwork.

Star players significantly contributed, notably goalkeeper Bagher Mohammadi, whose critical saves paved the path to victory. Top scorer Saeed Ahmad Abbasi consistently delivered crucial goals, while Mohammad Hossein Derakhshani brilliantly coordinated attacks. Mehdi Karimi's fighting spirit and strategic presence, alongside Saeed Yousef's creativity, significantly reinforced the team's superiority.

Crucial Year Ahead for Iran's Women's Futsal Team

Iran's women's futsal team concluded 1403 triumphantly, winning the CAFA Championship and preparing for the upcoming Thailand tournament from April 5, 1404. Despite various challenges and controversies, the team organized multiple training camps, culminating in the anticipated CAFA victory.

Instability Under Forouzan Soleimani

However, disappointing performances in China's futsal tournament raised concerns. Poor results led Majid Jalali of the technical committee to announce head coach Forouzan Soleimani's dismissal. The team's future remained uncertain for some time, with Shahrazad Mozafar considered a potential replacement. Eventually, Federation President Mehdi Taj intervened, supporting Soleimani's continuation. Yet, internal conflicts toward year-end reignited speculation about her position.

Disappointing Performance in China

Iran's surprising third-place finish at the China four-nation tournament (competing against Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and China) shocked many observers. Previously dominant internationally, Iran experienced one of its worst performances, sparking criticism over team selection and

alleged favoritism. These concerns raised significant worries for upcoming Asian and global competitions.

Iran's Asian Championship Draw

Iran was drawn into Group B alongside Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Philippines for the upcoming AFC Women's Futsal Championship scheduled for May 5-16 in China. Additionally, FIFA announced the inaugural Women's Futsal World Cup scheduled for November 26 to December 7, 1404, in Manila, the Philippines, with participants from across all continents, marking a significant challenge for Iran's women's team.

CAFA Championship Victory

Iran's women's national futsal team competed in the Central Asian Women's Futsal Championship (CAFA) in mid-February, winning the title for the fourth consecutive time. The team dominated its rivals Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan with decisive, high-scoring victories, securing the championship. Although beneficial for gaining match experience, the tournament lacked the intensity needed as true preparation for major Asian competitions.



Vahid Shamsaei Appointed as Head Coach of Safir Gofteman After National Team Contract Ends

Following negotiations between the CEO of Safir Gofteman Tehran and Vahid Shamsaei, the former head coach of Iran's national futsal team resigned from his position and signed a three-year contract to lead the only representative of the capital in the Iranian Futsal Premier League.

As part of a three-year strategic plan, Safir Gofteman aims to win the Iranian Premier League in 2025, the AFC Futsal Championship in 2026, and the Futsal World Championship in 2027.

A lucrative financial offer and the club's ambitious vision for championship success convinced Shamsaei to join Safir Gofteman. After leading the national team in the Brazil Futsal Tournament and upon the expiration of his contract, he returned to Iran to finalize negotiations with club CEO Mohammad Faeghi and officially sign the agreement.

It has been decided that after the Nowruz holidays, Shamsaei will submit a list of his preferred players to the club's management to facilitate their recruitment.

Iranian Futsal Premier League Expands to 24 Teams

The Iranian Futsal Premier League will feature more teams in the upcoming 2025 season following a decision by the league's board of directors. After two teams from futsal-heavy cities Qom and Mashhad were relegated to the First Division, the league opted to expand its roster. As part of this expansion, in addition to the existing Premier

League spots, the eight teams that reached the playoffs and two additional clubs—Shahrvand Sari and Moghavemat Alborz—have been granted entry into the next season. This brings the total number of participating teams to 24, promising a more competitive and dynamic league.

Iran's National Futsal Team to Compete in AFC Futsal Championship with U-23 Squad

For the first time in its history, Iran's national futsal team will participate in a major tournament with an average squad age under 23.

Although discussions about rejuvenating the national team had been ongoing, the coaching staff has now decided to take significant steps by phasing out aging players and reducing the team's average age to below 23.

This shift is not merely symbolic—it marks a genuine opening for young players to join the national team, offering a promising outlook for Iran's futsal future, particularly with an eye on the next FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Nowruz Interview with Vahid Shamsaei – March 2015

■ How was the past year for you?

2014 was like a Mexican wave—full of ups and downs. The toughest times were dealing with my wife's and father's illnesses, while the best moment was winning the league title with Tasisat Daryaei.

■ How did Iranian futsal perform this year?

There were a lot of highs and lows. On the international stage, we did well in friendly matches and introduced some great young talents, but we failed at the AFC Futsal Championship. The highlight of the year was our dynamic and competitive domestic league.

■ What do you expect from Iranian futsal in 2015?

We have the Asian Championship this year, which serves as the World Cup qualifiers.

In the AFC Futsal Club Championship, we should aim for the title. Hopefully, we will have a strong start and an even stronger finish.

■ Why is there so much tension in Iranian futsal?

Because people in futsal don't truly care about the sport. Friendships are easily broken, and many are more focused on controversies than progress.

■ What will be your prayer at the Haft-Sin table?

The prosperity of my country, the health of its people, and a bright future for my family and me.

■ And your April Fools' joke?

"This year, I will be appointed as the head coach of the national team."



Nowruz Interview with Mostafa Nazari – March 2015

■ Why does Iranian futsal never seem to find peace?

I think we, as members of the futsal community, are to blame. We often speak out for personal interests, and those words end up harming futsal. We need strong management to bring everything under control. The reality is that our futsal is

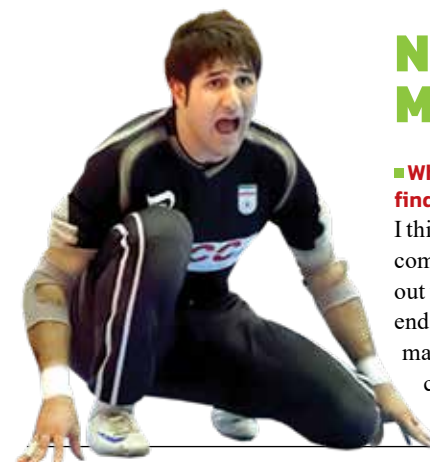
going through a serious decline.

■ What will be your prayer at the Haft-Sin table?

I wish for good health for all Iranians, my family, and my daughter, whose arrival brought me great fortune.

■ And your April Fools' joke?

"Mostafa Nazari has been called up to the national team."



Nowruz Interview with Mohammad Keshavarz – March 2015

■ What was your sweetest and saddest memory of 2014?

The saddest moment for me and the futsal community was the passing of Mr. Hosseinzadeh. He was not only a dear friend but also a dedicated figure in sports, and his loss deeply affected us. This year was so tough for me that I honestly don't recall any sweet memories. (At this moment, Keshavarz points to a few strands of white hair and says, "These are the effects of this year's hardships.")

■ Where were you when the New Year began?

Most years, I spend the Nowruz moment with my family, and 2014 was no exception. We always try to be somewhere close to our parents.

■ Do you have any specific plans for 2015?

No concrete plans yet. I just want to finish

this year, take a short break with my family, and then decide about the future.

■ Do you enjoy giving and receiving Nowruz gifts?

Yes, I both give and receive Nowruz gifts.

■ Who do you give gifts to?

Anyone who visits our home is welcomed and receives a gift.

■ Where do you usually travel for vacations?

Most of our family trips are either to Kish Island or the northern regions of Iran.

■ Do you have any travel plans for this Nowruz?

We've made some plans, but for athletes, everything is up in the air. We'll spend the first week of Nowruz in Tehran visiting family and elders, and hopefully, in the second week, we'll go on a trip.



30 YEARS LATER THIS MONTH

Mohammad Keshavarz has been named head coach of Giti Pasand for the 34th consecutive year

The veteran coach renewed his contract after leading the Isfahan-based team to the league title last season. Giti Pasand remains a dominant force, being the only privately owned club making significant investments and attracting top talent in Iranian futsal, particularly amidst the lack of widespread sponsorship within the sport.

Foreign Assistant Coach for National Team Nears Approval

The hiring process for a foreign assistant coach for Iran's national futsal team is in its final stages. For 32 years, former national team head coach Vahid Shamsaei pushed for the addition of an international coach, but successive futsal committee presidents failed to make it happen. Now, it seems that long-awaited change is finally coming. The federation has held promising talks with several candidates recommended by current national team coach Hamid Moshiri, and if no unforeseen obstacles arise, one of them will soon join the staff—breaking the long-standing spell of failing to recruit foreign expertise.

Division 2 League Expands to 120 Teams

In an effort to promote futsal across all cities in Iran, the second division futsal league will now feature 120 teams, split into 20 groups of six. This expanded edition includes representatives from every province in the country. Among the participating teams are Khash Khash, Chamazkati Rural Administration, Shooyandegi & Pooyandegi Aliabad-e-Katul, and many more.

FUTSAL'S SEVEN "S" SYMBOLS FOR NOWRUZ

1. Safir Gofteman Tehran

The first "S" of the futsal Haft-Sin is Safir Gofteman Tehran, the only Tehran-based club in the Futsal Premier League. Having completed its third season in the top flight, the club is now preparing for its fourth campaign.

2. Seyed Akbar Taghavi

A long-time futsal executive, Taghavi has been with Safir Gofteman since its entry into the Premier League. Previously known for controversies and disputes, he has since transformed into a composed and steady manager within the club.

3. Sarmorabi Team Melli Futsal (National Team Head Coach)

Vahid Shamsaei currently leads the national futsal team. In this issue, we joked about him taking over as head coach of Safir Gofteman for April Fools' Day. However, in reality, his contract runs until the end of the year, and rumors are circulating about a potential departure.

4. Soot-e-Davar (Referees' Whistles)

Referees' decisions are almost always met with complaints from teams, and unfortunately, officiating can sometimes influence match results. However, it's important to remember that futsal referees are hardworking professionals who, like coaches and players, occasionally make mistakes without ill intentions.

5. Sarmayegozaran Futsal (Futsal Investors)

The true backbone of Iranian futsal. In these tough economic times, running a futsal club is a challenging task. Every investor, at any level, who puts their money into futsal deserves recognition and gratitude for keeping this proud yet often overlooked sport alive.

6. Sazeman League Futsal (Futsal League Organization)

The sixth "S" represents the Futsal League Organization, which manages numerous competitions across different levels, including both men's and women's leagues. While the media often criticizes the organization, as the year comes to an end, we take a moment to appreciate its efforts in running futsal leagues efficiently despite all challenges.

7. Salamati Ahali Futsal (The Health of the Futsal Community)

The seventh and final "S" is for the health and well-being of everyone involved in futsal. From players and coaches to referees and executives, we wish them good health and happiness. As the New Year approaches, it's a time for prayers and wishes, and our biggest hope is that 2025 brings success and prosperity to Iranian futsal and all those who dedicate their lives to the sport.

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