AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2026™

TECHNICAL REPORT



CONTENTS

03 MESSAGE FROM THE AFC PRESIDENT

04 STORY OF THE TOURNAMENT

22 THE WINNING COACH

27 TECHNICAL TOPICS

35 GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

41 TALKING POINTS

44 TEAM TALK

48 TEAM PROFILES

61 AWARDS

63 ALL-STAR SQUAD

68 RESULTS

71 REFEREEING

77 EXTRA TIME

84 AFC COMMITTEES

87 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS





MESSAGE FROM THE
AFC PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

It is with immense pride that I present the Technical Report for the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, which can be characterised as a resounding testament to the remarkable progress we have made under the AFC's Vision and Mission.

From the record-breaking 44,379 spectators who attended the opening match at Perth Stadium, to the staggering 74,397 fans who made their voices heard at the Final at Stadium Australia, this tournament captured the hearts of more than 350,000 fans across Australia and millions more across the globe, setting new benchmarks for excellence, ambition, and technical quality across the Continent.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Football Australia for their world-class hosting, which provided the perfect stage for our footballers to shine, and we also extend our highest commendation to the Japan Football Association, whose unwavering commitment to technical excellence and youth development has once again set the model standard for the Continent, culminating in their well-deserved third title.

We must also congratulate China PR, DPR Korea, Korea Republic and the Philippines for joining our two finalists in qualifying for the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2027, and we wish both Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan the very best of success in the Inter-Confederation Play-offs.

This report, meticulously compiled by our Technical Observers Team, provides a comprehensive analysis of the emerging trends, tactical innovations, and rising standards that defined this tournament. It serves as both a historical record and a practical roadmap for our Member Associations to translate these elite-level insights into sustained growth at all levels of the game.

In every way, the 21st edition of the competition was a fundamental turning point in the transformation of the women's game across our Continent, and a big part of this is attributed to the unity of the Confederation in ensuring that each iteration of our flagship competitions surpasses the last edition through the introduction of new initiatives and cutting-edge innovations.

The 2026 tournament saw the full-scale implementation of the Video Assistant Referee and Digital Substitution System across all matches for the first time, ensuring unparalleled precision for our largest cast of match officials, whose remarkable ascendency and journey are also captured in this report.

Furthermore, the introduction of the dedicated Live Match Data Application, Electronic Performance & Tracking Systems and Football Data Platform provided coaches and technical observers with real-time, high-fidelity data, allowing for a more nuanced evaluation of player biometrics and tactical transitions than ever before.

Indeed, this spectacular celebration was the result of many hands coming together—from volunteers and staff members to officials, partners and of course, our passionate fans—each playing an indispensable role in ensuring its definitive success.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the AFC Women's Football Committee and the AFC Technical Committee for their strategic guidance, and the AFC Referees Committee for ensuring the highest standards of officiating throughout the competition.

My thanks also go to the AFC's sponsors and commercial partners and members of the media, whose vital support continues to drive the growth of the women's game in Asia.

The AFC remains steadfast in its commitment to providing the platforms and resources necessary for every girl and woman across Asia to thrive, and as we look forward to the 2029 edition in Uzbekistan, I am confident that the technical foundations laid in Australia will inspire the next generation of Asian talent to reach even greater heights.



Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President



STORY OF THE TOURNAMENT

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2026™



The AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™ was held from March 1 to 21, 2026, with matches played across the host cities of Perth, Gold Coast, and Sydney.

Japan emerged champions following a 1-0 win against Australia in the Final at Sydney's Stadium Australia.

The two losing Semi-finalists, China PR and Korea Republic, as well as Playoff winners DPR Korea and the Philippines, qualified for the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027.

Meanwhile, Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan advanced to the Inter-Confederation Playoff, where an additional two tickets to the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027 were available.

GROUP A

Korea Republic topped Group A on goal difference ahead of Australia after both sides finished on seven points.

Korea Republic, the 2022 runners-up, defeated the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Philippines by 3-0 margins before playing to a thrilling 3-3 draw with Australia in their final group tie.

Australia, champions in 2010, defeated Philippines 1-0 and IR Iran 4-0 before fighting back to hold Korea Republic, with Alanna Kennedy equalising in the eighth minute of time added on at the end of the second half.

The Philippines also advanced to the Quarter-finals as one of the two best third-placed teams, with their 2-0 defeat of IR Iran taking them through.





GROUP B

Defending champions China PR dominated Group B from the first kick of the ball, defeating Bangladesh 2-0 in their opening match.

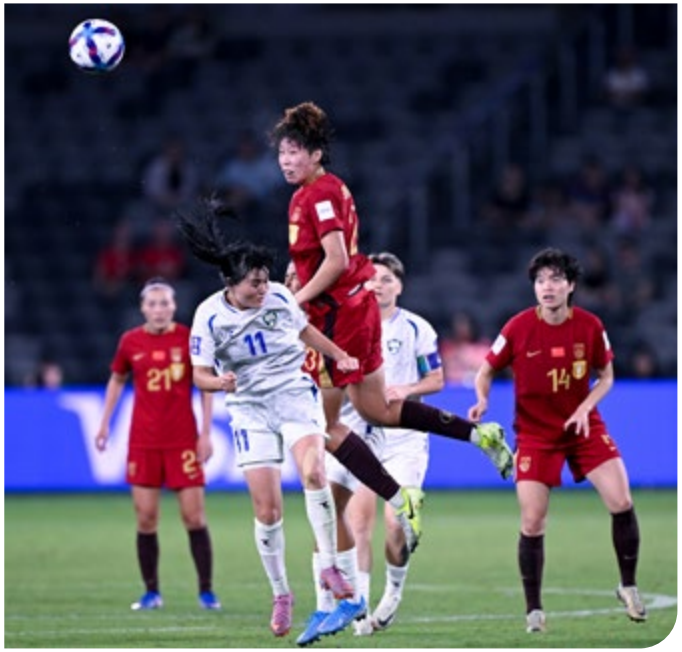
That was followed by a 3-0 win against Uzbekistan, with the nine-time champions then impressing in their 2-1 defeat of a spirited DPR Korea.

DPR Korea, seeking a fourth title, opened their campaign with a 3-0 win against Uzbekistan, with Myong Yu Jong netting a hat-trick.

Another impressive performance saw them cruising 5-0 past Bangladesh and despite their 2-1 loss to China PR, DPR Korea held their own throughout the intense match.

Uzbekistan, appearing on the Continental stage for the first time in 23 years, clinched a spot in the Quarter-finals as one of the two best third-placed sides, with their 4-0 victory against tournament debutants Bangladesh securing their Knockout Stage ticket.





 GROUP STAGE

GROUP C

Japan were in a class of their own in Group C, sailing to the top spot with three wins.

A 2-0 victory against Chinese Taipei in their opening match was followed by an astounding 11-0 defeat of India, with Hinata Miyazawa and Riko Ueki scoring hat-tricks.

A routine 4-0 win against Vietnam confirmed the two-time champions as the group winners, with Chinese Taipei joining them in the Quarter-finals.

Victories against Vietnam (1-0) and India (3-1) secured three-time winners Chinese Taipei their Knockout Stage spot.









QUARTER-FINALS

AUSTRALIA 2 - 1 DPR KOREA

Australia progressed to the Semi-finals after a hard fought 2-1 win against DPR Korea.

Surviving early pressure from three-time winners DPR Korea, Australia took the lead in the ninth minute after Sam Kerr dispossessed An Kuk Hyang and crossed the ball into the area.

Chae Un Yong's half clearance landed nicely for Alanna Kennedy, who side-stepped the midfielder before netting with a rasping drive past goalkeeper Yu Son Gum.

DPR Korea had chances to draw level, including an effort from Hong Song Ok that saw the ball hit the right post in the first half of stoppage time.

It would prove to be a costly miss as Australia doubled their lead two minutes into the restart, with Katrina Gorry's pressure on Kim Song Gyong allowing Kerr to burst into the box before finishing with a thumping left-footed finish.

DPR Korea responded by taking the game to Australia but could only pull one back through Chae in the 65th minute as Australia advanced.











CHINA PR 2 - 0 CHINESE TAIPEI (A.E.T.)

Despite dominating the tie at the Perth Rectangular Stadium, China PR could not cross the finish line in 90 minutes, with wayward finishing and valiant goalkeeping by Chinese Taipei's Cheng Ssu-Yu taking the tie into extra time.

The nine-time champions dictated the tempo from the start with Wu Haiyan setting up Shao Ziqin for a header, only for the forward to pull her effort wide of the left post.

Chinese Taipei had what would prove to be a rare opportunity in the 13th minute when Chen Yu-Chin surged forward and found Chen Jin-Wen, who mistimed her glancing header from close range.





It was all China PR from there on with Zhang Xin and Wu Chengshu threatening, while Wang Shuang saw her long range effort easily dealt with by Cheng.

Wang Shuang did have the ball in the net in the 39th minute, only for it to be ruled out for a handball by the forward in the buildup.

The second half continued in the same vein, with Wurigumula linking with Shao, who clipped her effort just wide.

A rare Chinese Taipei foray upfront in the 54th minute saw Hsu Yi-Yun releasing Jin-Wen through on goal, but the midfielder's looping attempt over Peng Shumeng sailed over the bar.



At the other end, Cheng kept Chinese Taipei in the game, first denying Shao's header in the 72nd minute, then pulling off another fine save to stop Zhang Rui's headed effort from inside the six-yard-box.

China PR's tale of missed chances continued until the end of regulation time with Yao Wei striking the bar, but they finally found the opening in the fourth minute of extra time as Shao collected Wang Shuang's neat layoff and floated the ball beyond the despairing Cheng and into the right corner.

Cheng then saved Wurigumula's spot-kick but was beaten again after teammate Chen Ying-Hui inadvertently deflected Jin Kun's cross into the back of the net as China PR put the tie to bed.

QUARTER-FINALS

KOREA REPUBLIC 6 - 0 UZBEKISTAN

In a meeting between the 2002 runners-up and a side appearing in the Knockout Stage of the Continental showpiece for the first time, Korea Republic took the lead through Son Hwa-yeon in the ninth minute, with the forward running onto Choe Yu-ri's pass and unleashing a low shot which deflected off Dilrabo Asadova and looped over goalkeeper Maftuna Jonimqulova.

Jonimqulova was forced into action again in the 19th minute, getting down to her right to parry Son's glancing header from Choe's cross, but the Uzbekistan custodian was helpless a minute later when Ko Yoo-jin lashed home from distance into the top corner.

The second half got off to a cagey start but Korea Republic soon got into their stride again as they added to their advantage in the 57th minute when Jonimqulova punched Jung Min-young's corner delivery into the path of Park Soo-jeong, who smashed home the rebound.

It became 4-0 in the 72nd minute after Zarina Mamatkarimova was dispossessed, with crisp passing opening up space for Ji So-yun to sidefoot the ball into the bottom corner.

Korea Republic added another 13 minutes later when Ji produced a wonderful through pass for Kang Chae-rim, whose effort was blocked by Jonimqulova only for Lee Eun-young to be on hand to tap in the loose ball.

The East Asian side capped a fine performance in stoppage time after Lee was tripped in the box by Rukhshona Usarova with Jang Sel-gi stepping up to slot home the resulting penalty.









JAPAN 7 - 0 PHILIPPINES

Japan immediately seized control of the tie as they peppered the Philippines' goalmouth with wave after wave of attacks.

However, they found Nina Meollo in inspired form, with the Philippines custodian denying Yui Hasegawa, Kiko Seike and Mina Tanaka.

Japan's relentless pressure finally paid off in the 45th minute when, following a chaotic barrage of attempts from Seike and Toko Koga, Tanaka managed to nod the ball into the net.

Almost immediately after, Japan doubled their lead when Honoka Hayashi's corner found Koga in a perfect position to head home.

Meollo denied a couple of Japan attempts in the opening minutes of the second half but there was nothing the 21-year-old could do to stop Remina Chiba slotting the ball home off a cross in the 63rd minute.

Japan further extended the lead three minutes later when Manaka Matsukobo beat three defenders before sending a composed finish into the right corner.

With 15 minutes still left on the clock, the East Asians then made it five when Momoko Tanikawa's corner was first met by Tanaka and in the ensuing scramble, Tottenham Hotspur defender Koga avoided a throng of white shirts to net her second.

The sixth goal for Japan came courtesy of Tanikawa who, assisted by Risa Shimizu, sent the ball into the bottom right corner from the centre of the box in the 86th minute with Riko Ueki completing the scoring seconds after coming on.









SEMI-FINALS

CHINA PR 1 - 2 AUSTRALIA

In a showdown between two sides who had both impressed en route to making the Semi-finals, Shao Ziqin and Wurigumula led China PR's attack in the absence of the suspended Wang Shuang, while Steph Catley returned to the Australian lineup alongside Kyra Cooney-Cross.

Australia were the first to threaten in the fifth minute when Caitlin Foord delivered a precise cross into the box to Mary Fowler, who angled her shot over the bar.

The East Asian side nearly broke through five minutes later when Wurigumula wriggled through the left channel before teeing up Zhang Linyan, but the Beijing Jingtan Football Club midfielder shot straight at Australia goalkeeper Mackenzie Arnold.

That miss came back to haunt China PR in the 17th minute when Fowler orchestrated a fine move to release Ellie Carpenter on the right before setting up Foord, who finished with a powerful drive into the bottom left corner.

Australia's lead, however, lasted a mere seven minutes when Clare Hunt misjudged Yao Wei's deflected cross, allowing Zhang to break into the box only to be brought down by Arnold.

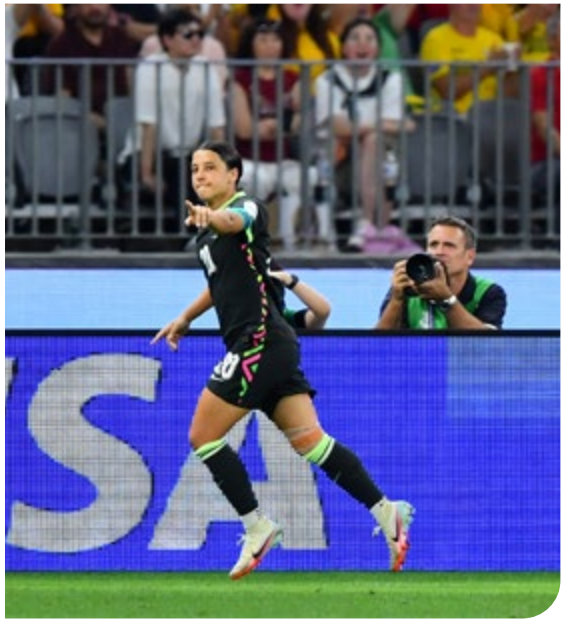
Zhang made no mistake from the spot, sending Arnold the wrong way in the 26th minute as the tie remained finely poised heading into the break.

China PR started the second half on the front foot but Australia, pushed by their fans, regained the lead in the 58th minute after Foord played a perfectly timed through ball to Sam Kerr, who surged past her marker before beating China PR goalkeeper Peng Shimeng with a sublime effort from an acute angle.

With the minutes ticking away, China PR sent on Jin Kun, Li Qintong and Liu Jing but could not find a breakthrough as Australia held firm to seal the victory and book their place in the Final for the fourth time in six editions.







KOREA REPUBLIC 1 - 4 JAPAN

Japan dictated the tempo from the start and should have taken the lead in the seventh minute following a delightful team move which saw the ball land at Yui Hasegawa's feet, but the midfielder squandered her effort.

That was a prelude of what was to come, with Japan opening the scoring in the 15th minute. Heavy pressing forced a mistake from Kim Shin-ji with Fuka Nagano pinching the ball off the Korea Republic midfielder in the penalty box before squaring for Riko Ueki to sidefoot home her sixth goal of the tournament.

A rare Korea Republic attack presented Park Soo-jeong an opportunity to equalise four minutes later but she dragged her shot wide while at the other end, Aoba Fujino dribbled into space only to send her effort sailing over the bar.

A moment of brilliance in the 25th minute saw Japan double their advantage when Maika Hamano wriggled away from two markers near the corner flag and drove into the box before rifling the ball into the roof of the net from an acute angle.

Japan had two goals disallowed following VAR reviews and despite stronger resistance from Korea Republic after the break, widened their advantage in the 75th minute as goalkeeper Kim Min-jung's decision to come off her line to clear Momoko Tanikawa's corner delivery saw her misjudge the flight of the ball, allowing Saki Kumagai to nod home unchallenged.

Korea Republic pulled one back three minutes later when Park found Kang Chae-rim, who controlled the ball before turning to fire home into the bottom corner as Japan conceded for the first time in the tournament.



Japan, however, ended any remaining hopes Korea Republic had of mounting a comeback in the 81st minute following a quick break, with substitute Remina Chiba driving a low shot past Kim to emphatically send the two-time champions into the Final.







PLAYOFFS

UZBEKISTAN 0 - 2 PHILIPPINES

Second-half goals from Angela Beard and Jaclyn Sawicki secured the Philippines a 2-0 win over Uzbekistan in their FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027 playoff.

The victory sealed the Philippines a second consecutive FIFA Women's World Cup ticket while Uzbekistan advanced to the Inter-Confederation Playoffs, which offered another two seats at the global showpiece.

Philippines applied the early pressure, with Sara Eggesvik cutting past Dilrabo Asadova and Zarina Mamatkarimova before pulling her shot from above the box just wide of the left post.

Goalkeeper Maftuna Jonimqulova then frustrated the Philippines with a smart intervention in the 21st minute, thwarting Beard's deep cross cum shot from a set-piece before Uzbekistan turned up the pressure.

Lyudmila Karachik first tried her luck from distance, firing over the bar in the 24th minute before showing composure moments later to feed Mamatkarimova, whose effort from inside a crowded box was comfortably gathered by Philippines' custodian Olivia McDaniel.

The Philippines enjoyed a dream start to the second half, taking the lead two minutes into the restart after Jael Guy curled a pinpoint cross which found Beard, whose volley saw the ball strike the crossbar before bouncing over the line.

The Southeast Asian side struck their second in the 52nd minute after Guy delivered another curling cross to Sawicki, who planted a looping header over Jonimqulova and into the bottom right corner with the Philippines then comfortably seeing out the win.









CHINESE TAIPEI 0 - 4 DPR KOREA

DPR Korea booked their FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027 ticket with a 4-0 win against Chinese Taipei.

Hong Song Ok starred with a hat-trick as DPR Korea sealed a return to the global showpiece for the first time since 2011 while Chinese Taipei advanced to the Inter-Confederation Playoffs.

DPR Korea went on the offensive from the start with Hong angling her shot over the bar in the third minute, while Chae Un Yong pulled her effort from inside the box wide moments later.

The East Asian side stayed compact in a low defensive block with Cheng Ssu-Yu pulling off a fine save to deny Ri Hak in the 16th minute before Chen Jin-Wen came to the custodian's rescue a minute later after she spilled the ball.

The breakthrough for DPR Korea finally arrived in the 32nd minute when Kim Kyong Yong supplied the cross for Hong to power home a header past a rooted Cheng to give DPR Korea a deserved advantage heading into the break.

Chinese Taipei's hopes of mounting a fightback were dashed four minutes into the second half following a well orchestrated move on the left, with Choe Il Son setting up Hong to finish with a thumping header.

DPR Korea went further ahead in the 52nd minute with Jon Ryong Jong sending a cross for Kim at the far post to nod home before Hong completed her hat-trick in the 68th, finishing Ri Myong Gum's deflected shot with a powerful finish from inside the box.

Chinese Taipei could have pulled one back in the 75th minute but Chen Yu Chin struck the crossbar from distance, as DPR Korea saw out the convincing victory.







FINAL

JAPAN 1 - 0 AUSTRALIA

Maika Hamano's strike proved to be the difference as Japan defeated Australia 1-0 in the Final to emerge as the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™ champions.

The midfielder's glorious first-half goal in front of a record breaking crowd of 74,397 at Stadium Australia meant Japan were crowned Asian champions for the third time, following triumphs in 2014 and 2018 - both also at Australia's expense.

Urged on by their fans, Australia fashioned the first opportunity after only two minutes when Mary Fowler latched onto a raking pass from the back and found Caitlin Foord in the box, who teed up Sam Kerr for the strike that was tipped away by Ayaka Yamashita.

The Japanese custodian was called into action again in the 11th minute after Fowler outmuscled Toko Koga and sent Foord racing clear into the box, but the Arsenal forward hit her effort straight at Yamashita.

Against the run of play, Japan found the opening goal in the 17th minute after Hamano was left with space to turn outside the box before unleashing a swerving shot that saw the ball curl away from a diving Mackenzie Arnold and settle in the bottom corner.

Japan then seized control but were almost caught being too casual at the back when Yamashita's underhit clearance went straight to Foord, who saw her shot deflected off the covering Hana Takahashi.

A quick break in the 43rd minute presented Japan a chance to take a bigger lead into the break when Kyra Cooney-Cross misheaded Hamano's cross to Hikaru Kitagawa, but an alert Arnold got down quickly to save the low strike from the left-back.

Australia could have gone into the break level when Kerr found Foord in the box, only for the latter to drag her attempt wide.



The open contest continued in the second half with Japan having a sight at goal after a Hamano backheel released Kitagawa into space to hit a first-time cross, which Riko Ueki nodded wide.

Australia increasingly began to dominate and on the hour mark, Cooney-Cross pinched the ball off Fuka Nagano on the halfway line and tried to lob it over Yamashita but it lacked the pace to trouble the Japan goalkeeper.

With five minutes left of regulation time, Japan put their bodies on the line to block efforts from Emily van Egmond and Kerr, with Yamashita also producing a fantastic save to stop Alanna Kennedy's header as they kept Australia at bay to lift the coveted trophy for a third time.

Australia's Kennedy, who had been spectacular throughout the tournament, was named the Most Valuable Player.

Ueki emerged as the Top Goal Scorer, with the Japanese star finishing the tournament on six goals while Yamashita took the Best Goalkeeper honour.







THE WINNING COACH

THE WINNING COACH

CHALLENGING THE WORLD

When he took over from Futoshi Ikeda at the beginning of 2025, Nils Nielsen became the first foreign coach to take the helm of Japan's women's team.

For the 54-year-old Dane, backed by rich major-tournament experience with the national teams of Denmark and Switzerland, the challenge was to add to the 1-0 victories over Australia that earned the Nadeshiko their brace of titles in 2014 and 2018 – and he succeeded in completing the hat-trick.

In Sydney, he sat down with Rae Dower, one of the AFC's Technical Observers at the final tournament, and AFC's head of women's football, Bai Lili. Here is a highly abbreviated and edited version of their long conversation that took place before the announcement of his departure from the role.

How would you evaluate your team's development and overall performance across the tournament?

"We only had four days' preparation. Because of the window, we couldn't get the players before, so we decided not to play matches before the tournament and, instead, to train and then try to build up the necessary game model over the first two Group-Stage games. We succeeded with that and managed to use everybody in the squad, which was also nice.

"But, for us, that's not really so strange, because we always do that. If somebody is tired, the second-best player in that position is actually a better choice. The differences are small in our squad. We don't have players who act like big-name stars, but we do have very good players and that helps us a lot when it comes to making sure nobody's overplayed."





THE WINNING COACH

Compared to the other three Semi-finalists, the route to get that far had maybe demanded less intensity than some of the other matches, such as Australia playing Korea Republic or China PR versus DPR Korea. How did you mentally prepare for the step up to a more intense, physical game?

"I think everybody was aware that if they wanted to win the tournament, they would need to step up. We have the advantage that every training session is tough. It is sometimes more difficult for them than playing the games, honestly. Once they are in the team, they know they can perform. They have good players to play with. We have a clear concept that they need to try to follow, and, if there is one thing Japanese players are good at, it is to be disciplined about those things so they feel really good when they get to start. They feel confident and ready to go."

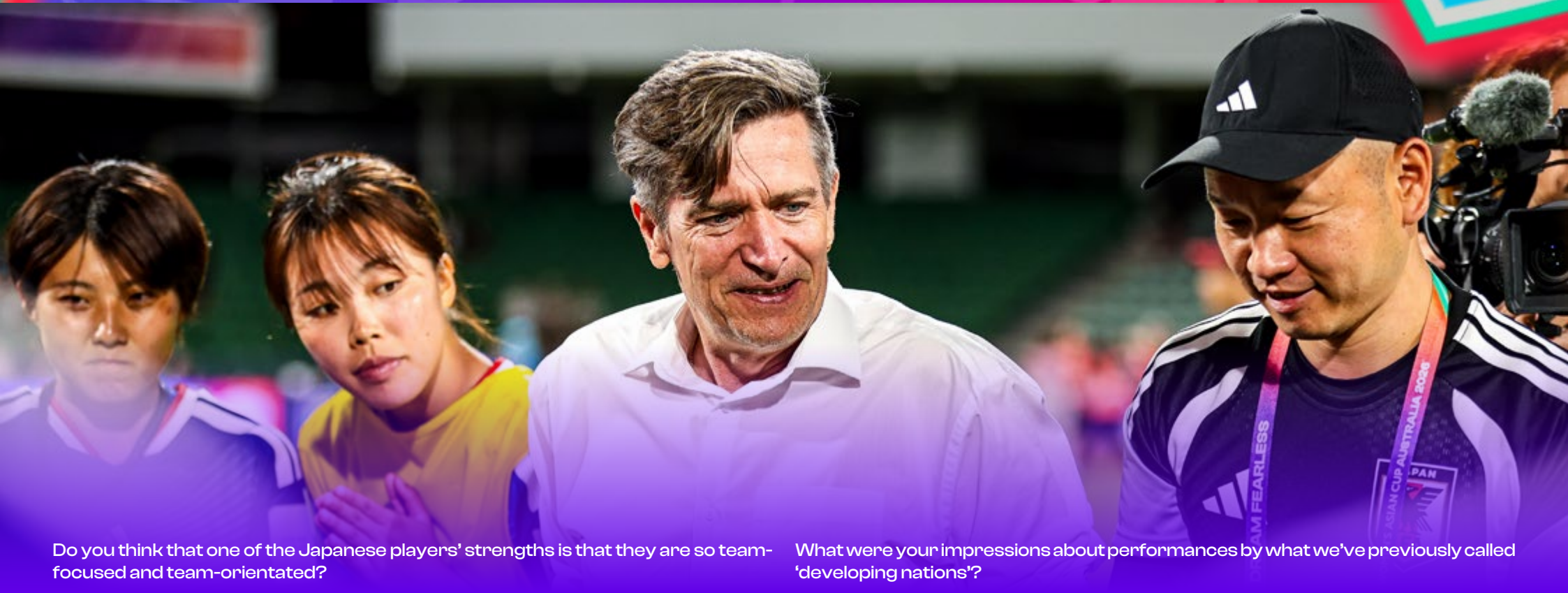
Almost all your players are based overseas. How do you manage that integration from different playing environments?

"All the players know when they come to the national team, it's a privilege for them. So, they really enjoy being here, seeing their friends. Obviously, the game model is different. The role they have in the team here is perhaps sometimes more enjoyable for them, because many of the Japanese players in foreign clubs end up in the same role. They are often easy to use as the 'flow players' in the team. They are not the 'star players', but in some ways they are perhaps even more important than the star players.

"When they come here, many of them have different roles. It takes a few days to get into it, but they really enjoy being around the other Japanese girls, to speak Japanese, have Japanese food and stuff like that. So, it's not difficult to integrate them. When they go abroad, it can be tough if you have minor injuries, if you have difficulties with a different culture and you don't really have anyone to support you. It's something the players need to understand and some of them learn the hard way. Without interfering with anything, we can help them out a little bit but, with every window, another 10 players from Japan go abroad somewhere, and it becomes increasingly difficult. As long as they know that we are in their corner, it helps them to feel a bit more safe."



 THE WINNING COACH



Do you think that one of the Japanese players' strengths is that they are so team-focused and team-orientated?

"I think it is a strength but it can also be a limitation. American players, for example, have a special character. Like they know they're good, they know they are stars, they know they have to perform and that everything is riding on them. It's easier for the Japanese to blend in and not be the ones everybody's looking at. It is more comfortable – but being comfortable is not always what gets you the big titles. Sometimes you need to go beyond that. I can give you an example. When we won the SheBelieves Cup last year, there was a major individual honour for Mina Tanaka as the best player in the tournament. If that had been a player from another country, they might have been talking about themselves and how good they were, blah, blah, blah. Mina talked about the other players and how well the team served the ball to her! She didn't talk about herself. It wasn't one player winning, it was the team. And they actually like it that way. Yeah, like every other young person, they like to have a bit of attention, but they don't like to have attention they don't deserve. You can be tough, but very humble about your own skills at the same time. It is fantastic to work with that kind of player. I can only say I'm very proud of them, that they have that inside all of them, without exception."

What were your impressions about performances by what we've previously called 'developing nations'?

"I'm happy that FIFA Women's World Cup qualification is going to be separated from the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ – which is a tournament that deserves respect by itself. Because the approaches to some games were more about limiting defeats than trying to get a result. Some teams used a low block and sometimes a very, very, very low block with 11 players inside the penalty area. There were many buses parked ...

"I'm happy to see that they could make it hard for bigger teams. But it is easier to learn how to defend like that when you don't have to cover and you are not ambitious enough to actually go to the other end. It's too far and you have to run back. Then, when playing the other kind of matches, they were more open, tried new things, and became more interesting to watch. There were good individuals playing in their own penalty box when they would normally shine higher up the pitch. It's about finding a balance between damage limitation and allowing your top players to show their full potential. That's the next step forward. It's fine to defend with everything you've got. But you also need some ideas about how to go for goal."

THE WINNING COACH



Before the tournament, did you expect teams to play like that?

"No. I was expecting some low blocks – but not that low! In the first game, we were a bit too hesitant about getting in there. But from the second game on, we managed to find ways to cut through their defending and then it became easier to score. We told our players that, whenever we had a chance to break through on the side, they needed to go for it and deliver crosses in front of the goal. If you don't, we're not going to score. And then, of course, against India we just scored all the time. I felt for them, but once we got going, we just couldn't stop."

Looking ahead, you've obviously already made your thoughts known about how the AFC could develop, or how the teams could develop a little bit more. But in global terms of Asia wanting to bridge gaps with some of the other confederations, what are your thoughts on the future of our women's football?

"I think many of the players are similar to the Japanese. They have the size, the shape that actually fits the game really well. They can be really quick and they can think really fast. So, I think there is a bright future in that sense, but also there is a lot to level up in terms of being confident when they come on the pitch. On the one hand, you need to accept that it's okay to be second-best. But if you are 100% ready and you know you have to perform in a certain way, it's much easier to take the next step forward and get the results. If not, the risk is that you will always feel happy to be second-best.

"I have been lucky enough to work with world class players around the world. But it all comes down to the same thing, for both men and women. They may have limitations inside themselves, but they can work individually on it and become better that way. If there are cultural issues, you sometimes have to work on it as a team, because it's too difficult for one person to work on themselves. How do we build a team ready to once again challenge the world? That's the target. But how do we do it? We need to work together to find the best way to eliminate limiting factors."



TECHNICAL TOPICS

TECHNICAL TRENDS

It was a tournament where the coaches needed to be, in the nicest sense of the word, bipolar. Or, according to the dictionary definition, they had to be prepared to 'vacillate between two extremes'. Those not regarded as favourites for the title were obliged to focus on out-of-possession play when taking on the teams the AFC Technical Observers referred to as the 'traditional powerhouses'. Then switch to more expansive strategies when looking for victory against less potent opponents. The coaches of the benchmark teams were challenged to find routes through deep defensive blocks when playing the outsiders and then upgrade intensity when taking on fellow powerhouses who, to use boxing terminology, were prepared to stand toe-to-toe and trade punches. It made for a tournament rich in material for coach education courses.

Collective Pressing (KOR v JPN)

LOW BLOCK VERSUS HIGH PRESS

There was a sharp contrast between the teams who sat deep in a compact low block to protect their goal and those who played on the front foot, holding a high line and pressing aggressively in opposition territory to win the ball back quickly and control tempo and possession.





The scene was set by the Philippines, when they took on the hosts in the opening game of the tournament; they had 15% of possession and played 119 passes to Australia's 679, with 47% of them over a distance of 30 metres or more. They started in a mid-block but gradually dropped deeper as pressure increased. The Technical Observers noted: "limited opportunities to build attacks due to Australia's dominance in possession and forward progression mainly through long passes or clearances. After losing possession, the team quickly reorganised defensively with midfield players sprinting back towards central defensive areas and the back line dropping slightly to protect the space behind. There was no attempt to press high. Instead, the priority was to delay the opponent's progression and to regroup." The Philippines typified the 'bipolar' approach, going on to have 15% and 23% of the ball against Japan and Korea Republic, but 53% against the Islamic Republic of Iran and 47% in the FIFA Women's World Cup Playoff against Uzbekistan.



In many of the Group Stage fixtures, one team relied mostly on low defensive structures, focusing on staying compact, protecting central areas, making it difficult for opponents to play through them and adopting a clear survival strategy based on discipline, structure, and quick defensive transitions.

On the other hand, the top teams like Japan and DPR Korea took a completely different approach by pressing high and keeping their defensive line advanced. Their aim was not just to defend, but to control the game by winning the ball back as quickly as possible. Japan, usually playing in a 1-4-3-3 formation, showed a very organised pressing structure combined with strong positional play. In the Quarter-final against the Philippines, they dominated possession and spent most of the game in the attacking third. Their front three led the press by forcing play into wide areas, while the midfield pushed up to shut down spaces, and the defensive line stayed near the halfway line to keep the team compact. After struggling in the first half to break down Chinese Taipei's defensive block in their opening fixture, Japan broke the deadlock with a diagonal into the box after an elaborate spell of possession – and went on to give a masterclass in the art of dismantling defensive blocks by hitting 27 goals in five games thanks to whirlwinds of off-ball movement; varied attacking on the flanks or through the middle; and fluent one- or two-touch combination play with panache and creativity.

TECHNICAL TOPICS



DPR Korea stood out for having one of the most intense pressing styles in the tournament. Their game was built on immediate high-energy pressure after losing the ball, and midfield pressing based on individual marking. This was especially apparent in their Quarter-final against Australia, where their aggressive approach allowed them to control possession, create more chances and dominate territory.

Build up from the Back (CHN v AUS)

FORWARD THINKING

The contrasts extended into the realm of build-up play in a tournament where some teams showed a marked preference for a direct style based on long balls while others opted for a more structured build-up from the back, even when the opponent high-pressed aggressively.

Against Japan, 60 per cent of the passing by Chinese Taipei and the Philippines was long; Vietnam posted 50 per cent and India 37 per cent. Only Korea Republic and Australia set out to play their way through them. By contrast, until their 12 per cent in the Final, Japan's usage of the long pass had never exceeded six per cent. During the Group Stage, the Technical Observers commented, the long ball or clearance from the back was standard practice against the leading contenders as teams prioritised damage limitation. More structured build-up play became more apparent in the Knockout Rounds.

The common denominator among the top teams was a more measured usage of long passing – although China PR resorted to a more direct style against DPR Korea and Australia. Japan could, again, be cited as the benchmark for mixing short and long passing, often inviting opponents to press them high and then showcasing their level of technique in tight spaces and playing their way through the press with a degree of composure, capitalising on the spaces between lines created when the opposition's front players were lured forward. When Japan broke the opponent's first line and received in midfield, the ball-carrier was immediately supported with well-angled off-ball movement. Likewise, Australia were alert to the possibility of direct attacking – as illustrated by the through pass which produced their winner in the Semi-final against China PR.



Fluid positional interchanging during build-up play was another feature shared by the top teams, with midfield rotations; well-developed relationships between wingers and full-backs; front players making diagonal runs to create spaces in the channels; and midfielders dropping deep to receive, create overloads, distribute to the wide areas or drive forward into spaces between lines.

"This meant multi-tasking and workloads," the Technical Observers noted, "and one of the features of the tournament was the high level of physical conditioning – even coping with the demands of the afternoon matches when the heat was an influential factor."

TECHNICAL TOPICS

THE FULL-FORWARD

The final tournament provided a further demonstration of the evolution of the full-back into key attacking catalysts, responsible for providing width, stretching defensive structures, creating numerical overloads and contributing directly to the creation of scoring opportunities. The most successful teams utilised this role in different ways, with Australia and Japan offering two distinct but highly effective models.

Australia's playing style favoured a vertical approach in which full-backs functioned as primary attacking weapons. Right-back Ellie Carpenter was in perpetual motion, consistently involved in advanced positions, providing constant width in the final third and executing overlapping runs beyond the wingers. The role extended to delivering early crosses and cut-backs from areas close to the bye-line, while also acting as key outlets during transitional moments. In the Semi-final against China PR, Carpenter repeatedly overlapped on the right side, combining effectively with Mary Fowler and Caitlin Foord to create 2v1 overloads that stretched the defensive line. On the opposite flank, Kaitlyn Torpey played a crucial role in initiating the attacking sequence that led to the decisive goal scored by Sam Kerr. The contributions by the two full-backs increased crossing volume, forced defensive units to shift laterally and opened central spaces for forwards to exploit. Overall, Australia's model was defined by pace, directness, and verticality, with full-backs operating almost as additional wingers in attacking phases.

In contrast, Japan preferred a more structured and positional approach, where the full-backs were integral elements in controlling the game and manipulating defensive systems, particularly against low blocks. Players such as Risa Shimizu and Moeka Minami operated with high tactical intelligence, supported





closely by midfielders like Yui Hasegawa and wide players such as Aoba Fujino. Japan's primary attacking principle was based on maximising pitch width to destabilise compact defensive structures. The full-backs positioned themselves high and wide along the touchline, while the wingers adjusted their positioning by either staying wide to isolate defenders or moving inside to create space for overlapping runs. This horizontal expansion was effective in forcing defensive lines to stretch, increasing the distances between defenders and gradually distorting the compactness of the low block.

One of Japan's key strengths was their ability to create numerical superiority in wide areas. On the right side, combinations between the right-back, central midfielder and winger often generated 3v2 overloads, providing multiple passing options and creating defensive disorganisation. Rather than relying on predictable patterns, Japan employed fluid rotational movements, including overlaps to draw defenders wide, underlaps into half-spaces to penetrate central channels, and positional support where the full-back maintained width to allow interior runs from wingers. This variability made their attacking structure highly adaptable and difficult to defend against, particularly for teams operating in low blocks. Whereas Australia used them as direct, high-impact attacking outlets, Japan utilised them as intelligent positional players. Both approaches underlined the growing importance of full-backs in shaping attacking dynamics and reflected the tactical progression in women's football across Asia.

Ball Possession & Combination Play (KOR v JPN)

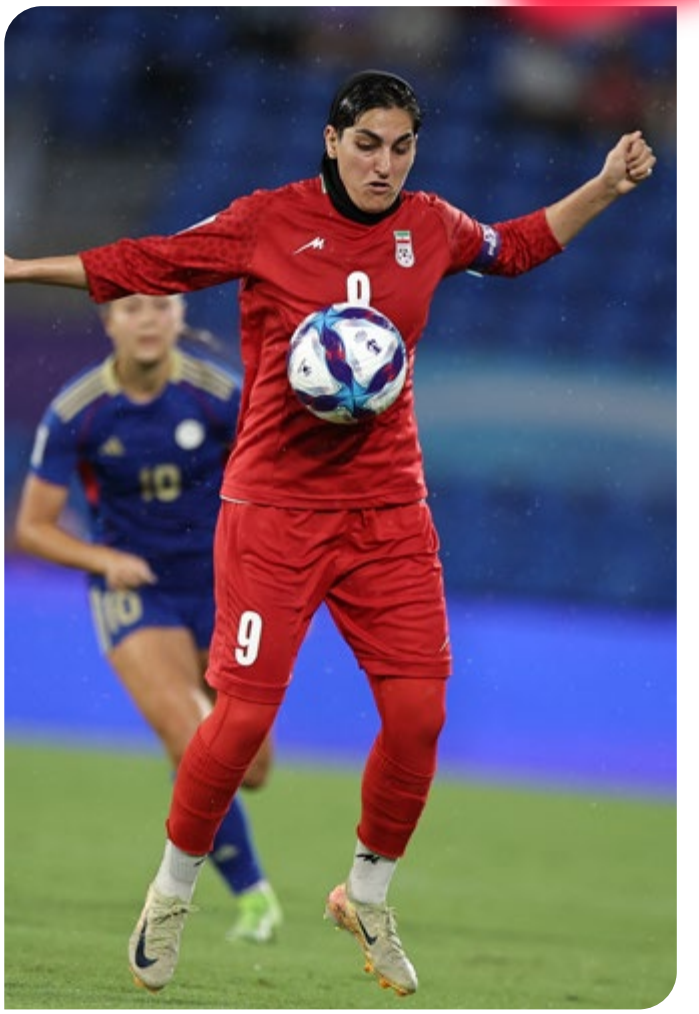
THE WIDER PICTURE

The interlocking topic is that crosses provided almost a quarter (24% to be precise) of open-play goals. That sentence might provoke a shrug of the shoulders and a feeling that it is not exactly headline news. The relevance of the statistic, however, is that it represented a sizeable reduction on the 31% at the previous edition and did not seem to tally with the amount of impressive wing play seen during the tournament in Australia. The explanation is that the pattern had changed. Goals derived from cut-backs (conspicuous by their absence during the 2022 edition) and diagonals into the box from deeper positions had increased – to the extent that, overall, 43% of open-play successes stemmed from wing play. As a post-script, it could also be mentioned that in the two FIFA Women's World Cup Playoffs, five of the six goals were created by crosses – four of them put into the net by headers. Including these in the statistics would raise the final balance to 46% of open-play goals.





Once again, Japan set the benchmarks for effective wing play by converting 10 crosses, three diagonals and two cut-backs – a reward for over 200 deliveries in their six games. DPR Korea also averaged 30 crosses per game but converted them into only three goals in their four matches – and then doubled their tally by scoring from three of 52 crosses in the Playoff against Chinese Taipei. The champions demonstrated that the trend is clearly towards greater variety in their supplies from the wide areas and the points of delivery, rather than reliance on the traditional high cross. Nils Nielsen's players not only excelled in their technical ability in crossing the ball but also their decision making in selecting the right type of delivery and their vision of the game – looking up to select the teammate and the target area. They also excelled, incidentally, at preventing opponents from hurting them with wing play. Until Australia succeeded in delivering 17 open-play crosses in the Final, the champions had restricted their opponents to eight crosses in five matches.



A final talking point in terms of youth development was raised by Jael Guy during the Playoff fixture against Uzbekistan. The Philippines' number seven supplied the two crosses from the right wing that earned their berth at the FIFA Women's World Cup – the first with her left foot; the second with her right. How important is it to work on the ability to cross the ball with either foot?





THE ALL-ROUND GOALKEEPER

The list of candidates for the AFC's Goalkeeper of the Tournament award had an unusual look about it. It featured two from each of the Semi-finalists. The coaches' confidence in the abilities of the goalkeepers in their squads created opportunities to assess 23 of them. The AFC Technical Observers detected a continued improvement in general standards and noted that the goalkeepers of dominant teams such as Japan, China PR, Australia, and Korea Republic had low involvement, as their teams controlled possession and territory. In these scenarios, the goalkeeper's role shifted from traditional shot-stopping to supporting build-up play, organising the defensive line and maintaining positional balance. Their actions were mainly proactive and controlled, with minimal exposure to high-pressure defensive situations.

In contrast, the goalkeepers of less dominant teams were required to deal with very high workloads due to sustained attacking by opponents. They were in almost continuous defensive action against shots, crosses, and 1v1 situations. In many cases, they also acted as sweepers and key defensive leaders, managing space behind the defensive line and making critical decisions under pressure. For example, goalkeepers such as Olivia McDaniel (Philippines) and Elangbam Panthoi Chanu (India) needed to contribute multiple shot-stopping and defensive actions, often becoming the most influential defensive players on the pitch.

In more balanced matches, such as those involving IR Iran, Philippines, Korea Republic, and Uzbekistan, goalkeeper involvement was moderate, with responsibilities distributed between defensive actions and participation in build-up play. These goalkeepers were required to adapt between phases, contributing both to defensive stability and transition support.

Overall analysis highlighted that goalkeeping is not only an individual function but an integral part of team structure and match dynamics. The top teams sent clear messages to coaches involved in youth development that the role now demands high levels of involvement in build-up play. Japan's Ayaka Yamashita, voted Goalkeeper of the Tournament, displayed excellent technique with her feet in advanced positions with good vision of open spaces and accurate distribution to teammates. Likewise, Philippines keeper Olivia McDaniel was a key player in launching attacking moves with precise long passing to the middle-to-front players and taking high positions to support build-up play. Chinese Taipei's head coach Prasobchoke Chokemor, after his team had kept a clean sheet until extra-time during the Quarter-final against China PR, commented: "good goalkeeping is crucial in helping to control the tempo of the game, and a 0-0 scoreline after 90 minutes shows the progress we have made. I have to give credit to all the work being done by our goalkeeping coaches."

TECHNICAL TOPICS

COUNTER PRODUCTIVE

"Systematic counterattacking at pace was conspicuous by its absence in a tournament where defence-to-attack transitions did not stand out among the most salient features." That sentence appeared in the Technical Report on the final tournament in 2022 where counterattacks had provided only six of 70 open-play goals. Australia told a different story. Attacks in reply to attacking play by the opposition accounted for 15 goals – 21% of the open-play tally.



On the face of it, this might not raise eyebrows, bearing in mind the frequent reliance on deep defensive blocks. But, overall, it was the teams higher up the ranking who were more effective with structured counterattacking. As the Technical Observers remarked: "less dominant teams, such as Bangladesh, Chinese Taipei, Uzbekistan, IR Iran or the Philippines, often set out to use counterattacks as their main attacking strategy. However, they struggled to execute them effectively. Most ball recoveries occurred in deep defensive areas, with players positioned far from the opponent's goal. As a result, transitions frequently became clearances or long balls rather than structured counterattacks. The absence of nearby passing options, combined with the opponent's counter-press, meant these teams were unable to progress quickly or create goal-scoring opportunities." In other words, scenarios where all outfielders were packed into the penalty area left no outlet for counters. Nils Nielsen, after Japan had beaten Vietnam, endorsed this impression. "They were quite good in the final third. But against us, they didn't get there. We did prepare for it – but they never came."

Despite their preference for holding a high line which made them a potential victim for fast counter-attackers, Japan's counter-pressing was so effective that, during the run to the Final, they restricted their five opponents to eight attempts and conceded one goal – illustrating benchmark ability to successfully counter the counter.

Classic Counterattack (CHN v AUS)

The tournament's successful counterattacks were evenly shared among the three categories: five classic counters from deep positions; five collective breaks after midfield regains; and five goals following counter-pressing in advanced areas. Bangladesh – who had announced counterattacking intentions of their own by leaving two players upfield when defending corners – were caught out by two classic counters that gave Uzbekistan their first and third of four goals. In both cases, through passes penetrated a high, short-staffed back line. However, most of the counterattacking success stories were written by the best teams. DPR Korea's mid-to-high pressing earned them two collective and one advanced counter against Bangladesh; Australia beat DPR Korea with a swift strike after a high regain; Korea Republic earned their fourth goal against Uzbekistan with a fast combination after high ball-winning; and Japan sealed their 4-1 win against Korea Republic thanks to a fast break on the right and a diagonal towards the other flank which allowed Remina Chiba to put the result beyond doubt.

Nevertheless, the takeaway message from the tournament was that the more defence-minded sides failed to trouble their opponents with well-structured counterattacking from deep positions.

Collective Counterattack (PRK v CHN)



SUBCONSCIOUS?

Squad lists of 26 players had been introduced during the Covid-affected edition in 2022 and remained in place four years later. The presence of 15 players on the bench gave coaches a broad spectrum of options – and 257 substitutions were made during an event where high squad rotation emerged as the norm.

Bolstered by comfortable scorelines and a universally high-standard squad which permitted substitutions without loss of quality, Nils Nielsen had given playing time to 25 of the Japan squad before the end of the Group Stage. By contrast, after DPR Korea had beaten Uzbekistan 3-0 in their opening game (with two penalties and a rebound), Ri Song Ho openly admitted: "I knew there was a difference in quality between the first team and the reserves, but I didn't expect it to be this big." Significantly, he made only two changes during the Quarter-final defeat by Australia. In the meantime, one of the talking points of the tournament was the decision by Uzbekistan's Kotryna Kulbyte to prioritise the FIFA Women's World Cup Playoff and to make eight changes for the Quarter-final against Korea Republic. "We already did our job here by reaching the Quarter-finals," she explained. "But we dreamed of reaching the FIFA Women's World Cup."





The Technical Observers noted that the vast majority of substitutions were about 'fresh legs' rather than tactical adjustments. But there were also shrewd changes of player profiles that made an impact on performances and outcomes. The 60th-minute introduction of Uzbekistan's Dildora Nozimova, for example, who, according to the Technical Observer's notebook: "made a major offensive impact and, within six minutes, scored two goals". Or China PR's changes in the Quarter-final against Chinese Taipei which "increased attacking intensity and helped to break the deadlock in extra-time". Or the half-time introduction of IR Iran's number nine, Zahra Ghanbari, who gave her team "more control in transition play" against the Philippines. Or the 64th-minute entry of Japan's number eight, Kiko Seike, who, apart from sealing the 2-0 win over Chinese Taipei, "introduced a different attacking profile with a more physical aerial threat".

The bottom line is that the presence of more than half of the players on the bench meant that team selection, substitutions and squad-management issues during a lengthy tournament acquired extra weighting in the coaches' workloads.

THE MIND GAME

After DPR Korea's Quarter-final defeat by Australia, Ri Song Ho reflected: "after conceding two goals, the team was not mentally prepared to recover. After this match, my thinking is that mental preparation is as important as physical preparation." Nilufar Kudratova, scorer of the goal that made history by taking Uzbekistan into the Quarter-finals, commented: "at half-time our head coach told us to stay calm and to follow our tactical plan, reminding us that composure would help us play more effectively. We carried that approach into the second half, playing with more control and less emotion – which improved our overall performance."

Amid all the excitement generated by the tournament in Australia, it was easy to understate the importance of mindsets, emotions and philosophies. Victory for Japan again underlined the relevance of a clear playing philosophy, which invites comparisons with Spain, serial title-winners at senior and age-limit levels on European and world stages. As Nils Nielsen said when asked about how to bridge the gap between Asia and some other Confederations, "it is all about actually feeling emotionally safe in order to perform. It is not a big thing in Asia, but it should be if you want to develop the game even further. You can be good as a group, you can have a great concept, you can be physically, technically and tactically really well prepared. But if your mind is not right, if your head is not right, you're not going to be able to perform at your best."



GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

UNEVEN GROUND

Factual evidence doesn't always provide the whole truth. It was a fact that, at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ in 2026, goalscoring declined by 10% in comparison with the previous edition. It was a fact that the average of goals per game fell from 4.16 to 3.64. But it was also a fact that the 2022 figures were distorted by Australia's 18-0 victory over Indonesia, while, in 2026, the closest approximation was Japan's 11-0 win against India. In Australia, two of the 12 contestants – Japan and Korea Republic – supplied half of the goals, while Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran went home without scoring any. In other words, the facts can be misleading or confusing at a tournament where goalscoring was so unevenly shared.

Talking about confusion – or, rather, avoiding it – it should be pointed out that, for the purposes of comparison, the goalscoring statistics do not include the six goals scored in the two FIFA Women's World Cup Playoff matches, which, strictly speaking, did not form part of the AFC Women's Asian Cup™.

The other 25 games played in Australia produced 91 goals compared with 104 in the same number of fixtures in 2022, when the final tournament was first expanded to 12 teams.



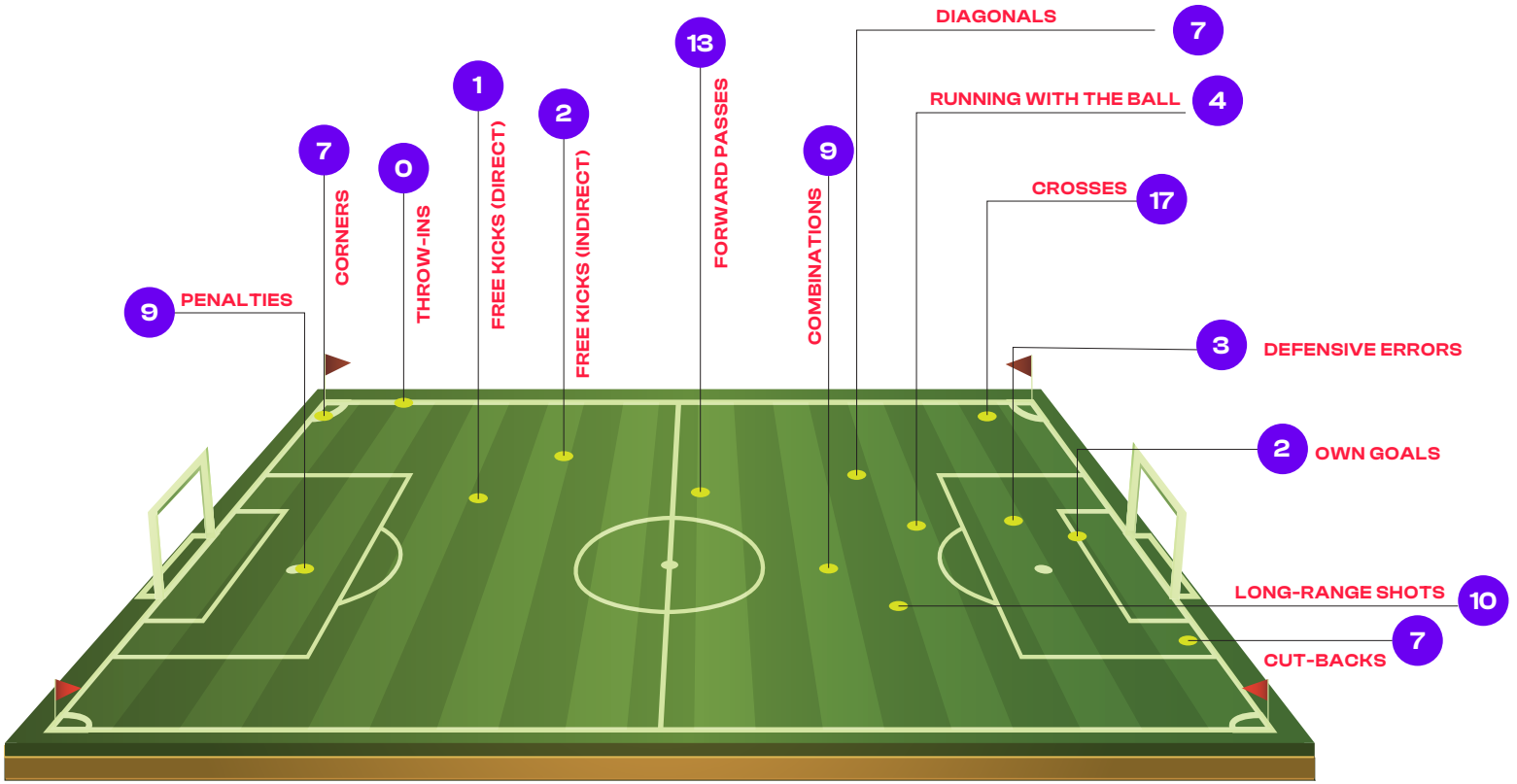


In Australia, 64 of the goals hit the net during the 18-match Group Stage, and 27 in the seven Knockout Stage ties. A thought-provoking fact is that there were only seven games where both teams scored: two of India's three matches and three involving the host nation – including the 3-3 against Korea Republic that was the only drawn game in the entire tournament. There were also seven matches where one of the teams generated no goal attempts. At the other end of the scale, champions Japan had 172 strikes at goal and were, by a considerable margin, the leading scorers, with a tally of 29 goals in their six games, including only one penalty. Their closest followers were Korea Republic (16) and Australia (12).

Even though averages could be misleading on such uneven terrain, they indicated that the accuracy of finishing had improved in relation to the previous tournament with, overall, an efficiency ratio of one on-target delivery per 2.6 attempts. Excluding penalties, it required 8.39 attempts to score a goal while, roughly, two out of five on-target finishes ended up in the net – figures that could be used to corroborate the impression, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, that goalkeeping standards are steadily improving.

The goalscoring chart breaks down the 91 goals into categories.

GOALSCORING ANALYSIS



GOALS FROM SET PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Corners	Direct from / following a corner	7
Free kicks (direct)	Direct from a free kick	1
Free kicks (indirect)	Following a free kick	2
Penalties	Spot kick (or follow-up from a penalty)	9
Throw-ins	Following a throw-in	0

TOTAL GOALS SCORED : 91

GOALS FROM OPEN PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Combinations	Wall pass / combination move	9
Crosses	Cross from the wing	17
Cut-backs	Pass back from the bye-line	7
Diagonals	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	7
Running with the ball	Solo run and close-range shot / pass	4
Long-range shots	Direct shot / shot and rebound	10
Forward passes	Through pass or pass over the defence	13
Defensive errors	Bad back-pass / mistake by the goalkeeper	3
Own goals	Goal by the opponent	2

SET PLAYS

The use (or, maybe, misuse) of dead-ball situations emerged as one of the salient features of the tournament. Set plays, which at the 2022 event had accounted for 33% of the goals, declined sharply to 21% – a statistic which prompts further comment in the Talking Points section of this report. The figure also fell well below the 28% posted in club football during the previous season's AFC Women's Champions League™. In Australia, every one of the five categories of set plays registered a downturn in comparison with the previous final tournament in India.

In addition, nine successes from 10 spot kicks meant that penalties accounted for 47% of the set-play goals (compared with 36% in 2022 and 20% in the AFC Women's Champions League™). As a result, 'analysis' of dead-ball successes boils down to comments on a meagre tally of 10 goals.

The solitary goal from a direct free kick, for instance, was Manisha Kalyan's tremendous left-footed delivery from a right-of-centre position which cannoned off the crossbar over the Chinese Taipei goal line to put India momentarily level during their 3-1 defeat.

The first of the only two successes derived from indirect free kicks was Korea Republic's third goal against IR Iran, headed into the net by centre-back Ko Yoo-jin. The other produced a goal that proved to be crucial – not only in the match but also in the shape of the tournament. From a central position, the ball was played to the right and then passed back inside for Wang Shuang to clinch China PR's vital 2-1 victory over DPR Korea.



With the throw-in proving unproductive (the Philippines were among the teams who sometimes used the long throw as an attacking weapon), the other set-play goals were the seven derived from corners – a tally which halved the number posted in 2022.

The Technical Observers noted a greater preference among the top teams for the short corner, which often created 2v1 situations against defending teams who were reluctant to send additional players out of the central area. One of the successes was China PR's final goal in the 3-0 win against Uzbekistan, when a corner played short on the right was crossed left-footed for midfielder Li Qingtong to head home. One of the more traditional deliveries produced Australia's fourth goal against IR Iran, midfielder Alanna Kennedy's back-post header after a corner on the right. There were also second-phase rewards when corners were partially cleared – such as Japan's fifth goal against the Philippines when the ball was re-crossed after a clearance or the first of Australia's equalisers against Korea Republic.

Defending teams, the observers remarked, generally preferred to set up a solid block in the box with a tightly-packed mix of zonal and 1v1 marking. And the statistics suggest that this generally gave them the upper hand. Seven goals from 204 corners in 25 matches signified a success ratio of 1:29 (compared with 1:19 in 2022).

OPEN PLAY

Deliveries from the wide areas were, once again, the most fertile ground for open-play goalscoring to flourish. But the shifting pattern of wing play was sufficiently eye-catching to warrant discussion in the Technical Topics section of this report. At the same time, the number of goals derived from combination moves almost doubled in relation to the previous tournament in India. But the fact that Australia scored three while Japan and Korea Republic contributed two apiece tells us once again that the playing surface was far from level. The other nine contestants shared just two goals directly attributable to combination play.

As the Technical Observers pointed out, possession teams emerged as the dominant force in Australia, with Japan averaging 74.2%, DPR Korea 65.6%, Korea Republic 63.1%, Australia 61.6% and China PR 59.7%. Yet again, the figures can be deceptive, however, as they fluctuated when the top teams played each other. DPR Korea were the only team to have a greater share of the ball in every match yet lost their two games against China PR and Australia, totalling only 12 on-target attempts – prompting the Technical Observers to comment that "they excelled at maintaining possession but struggled to convert the opportunities they created".

Japan set the benchmarks with an average of 11 on-target shots and 4.8 goals per game, ahead of Korea Republic's 9 and 3.2. Japan also excelled at breaking defensive lines, averaging over 27 line-breaks per match ahead of DPR Korea and Korea Republic (both 17), China PR (15.6) and Australia (13).

At one point, Australia's head coach Joe Montemurro was asked to comment on the return of Sam Kerr and Mary Fowler after long-term injuries.

"We try to give them the space to be the best they can be," he responded. "Because they are players who can create things out of nothing."

The importance of soloists within team frameworks was illustrated by crucial goals. Kerr weighed in with the interception that set up the opener against DPR Korea and then conjured up a stunning finish to score the second. Japan's Yuzuki Yamamoto opened the floodgates against India with a magical left-footed shot from the right. Her team-mate Maika Hamano conjured up a solo run and finish that put her team 2-0 up in the Semi-final against Korea Republic, prior to the piece of individual magic which rounded off a collective attack and won the Final.

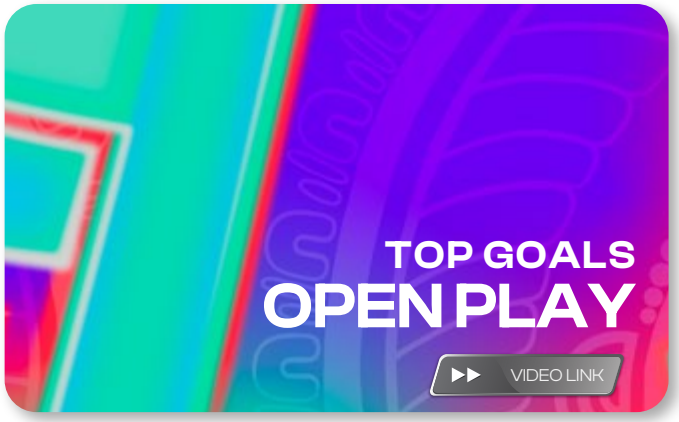
Through passes led to 18% of the tournament's open-play goals – one of them the perfectly-weighted delivery by Caitlin Foord which allowed Kerr to seal Australia's 2-1 Semi-final win against China PR. Curiously, successful strikes from long range were less frequent than they had been in 2022 when 15 goals had signified 21% of the open-play total. In Australia, this fell away to 10 goals and 14%.





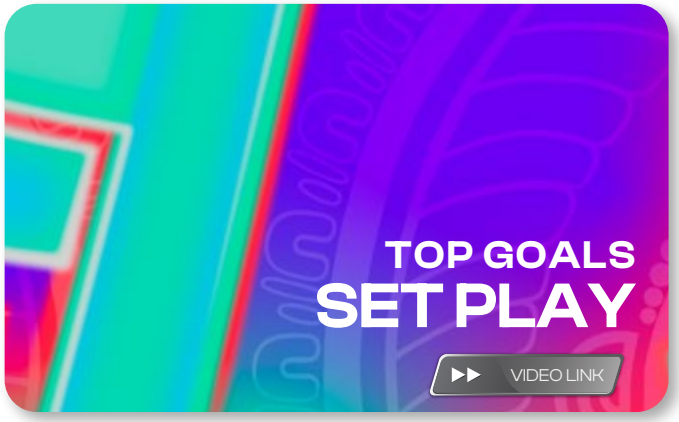
Shooting from distance, nonetheless, generated some crucial goals. Spectacular examples included Park Soo-jeong's right-footed shot to the top corner that put Korea Republic 2-0 ahead against the Philippines; or the strike by Wang Shuang, rounding off a move initiated by the goalkeeper, which allowed China PR to break the deadlock against Bangladesh. The cool, unchallenged lob into the top corner by Ko Yoo-jin that put Korea Republic 2-0 up in the Quarter-final against Uzbekistan was a prime endorsement of the value of long-range shooting against a deep defensive block.

And it was fitting that the goal which decided the title was the inswinging right-footed strike from outside the penalty area by Japan's Hamano, strategically switched to the left wing for the Final against Australia.



OPEN PLAY

Ranking	Player	No.	Country	Match	Time	Type
1	Maika Hamano	17	Japan	Japan v Australia	17'	Long-range shot
2	Yuzuki Yamamoto	16	Japan	India v Japan	4'	Solo effort
3	Alanna Kennedy	14	Australia	Australia v DPR Korea	9'	Solo effort
4	Kang Chae-rim	23	Korea Republic	Korea Republic v Japan	78'	Cross
5	Park Soo-jeong	13	Korea Republic	Philippines v Korea Republic	15'	Long-range shot



SET PLAY

Ranking	Player	No.	Country	Match	Time	Type
1	Manisha Kalyan	16	India	India v Chinese Taipei	39'	Direct free-kick
2	Ko Yoo-jin	5	Korea Republic	Korea Republic v Islamic Republic of Iran	75'	Indirect free-kick
3	Saki Kumagai	4	Japan	Japan v Korea Republic	75'	Corner kick
4	Li Qingtong	14	China PR	Uzbekistan v China PR	76'	Short corner kick
5	Alanna Kennedy	14	Australia	Islamic Republic of Iran v Australia	58'	Corner kick



TALKING POINTS

HOW TO MAKE ROOM AT THE TOP?

Let's face the facts. The final tournament confirmed that five teams are still ahead of the field. The four Semi-finalists and DPR Korea accounted for 77 of 91 goals (or 81 of 97 if you include the FIFA Women's World Cup Playoffs) and only failed to win when they played each other. The 21 goals they conceded were all scored by the other four members of the elite quintet.

The AFC Technical Observers were quick to acknowledge a distinct improvement in quality and technical ability among the developing teams in addition to tactical awareness and discipline. But what more needs to be done if they are to join the high five on the top rungs of the ladder?

Coach Education evidently has an important role to play, especially in the youth development categories of academies, clubs and national teams. In Australia, the coaches of the participating teams unanimously underlined the value of the top-level experience gained at the final tournament. This, in turn, highlighted the importance of competitions – domestic and international at both club and national team levels – especially bearing in mind that most of the participants' football is played at their clubs where standards of technique, intensity and competitivity are crucial. How significant was it that, among the 29 players who appeared in the Final, only one was home-based? All the others were playing their club football in Europe or the USA, and 22 of them were in English teams.





The Technical Observers, feeling that standards are undoubtedly improving, wondered whether expanding the final tournament to 16 teams would help. Apart from simplifying the criteria for proceeding from the Group Stage to Quarter-finals, would it give the developing teams a more attractive mix of fixtures against the benchmark-setting teams and games against opposition of a similar calibre? What else can be done to help bridge that gap between the top five and the rest of the field?



TIME TO REVIVE THE DEAD BALL?

After his China PR team had come back to beat DPR Korea 2-1 in one of the tournament's watershed fixtures, head coach Ante Milicic commented: "when I first took this job and made the analysis, I knew set-piece attacking and defending needed a lot of work. We worked a lot on it, not just on the training ground but also in the video room. We have players with good deliveries and players who can time their runs really well". His team's comeback goals came from a free kick and a partially-cleared corner.

At a tournament which, penalties apart, produced only 10 set-play goals (seven corners and three free kicks), his words prompted reflections about whether other coaches always match his attention to this aspect of the game. Success from dead-ball situations is based on the equation of good delivery, effective movement and brave, efficient finishing. And, of course, without the first, the other two elements become irrelevant.

TALKING POINTS



To what extent can the massive downturn in set-play goals be put down to improvements in opposing teams' defensive mechanisms? In the meantime, have attacking mechanisms been allowed to gather rust? What needs to be done to make attacking set plays a genuine threat to opposing defences?

The technique of striking a dead ball is a skill that can only be honed by assiduous, regular practice on the training ground. Is the growing scarcity of set-play successes in national team tournaments down to lack of attention to this art at clubs and youth academies? In this day and age of set-play coaches, is training-ground work focusing more on movement and finishing than on the quality of dead-ball deliveries?

AUSTRALIA AND BEYOND

"This tournament has been a spectacular showcase of the progress of the Asian women's game." The words of the AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa after the spectacular Final in Sydney, were endorsed by General Secretary, Datuk Seri Windsor John: "This edition of the Confederation's flagship women's national team competition has redefined the women's game and truly been a world-class spectacle. I congratulate the teams, the Local Organising Committee and, of course, the fans for making the tournament a landmark event in the AFC's history."

The organisers in Sydney, Perth and the Gold Coast certainly deserve a round of applause and several encores for the way they promoted the event in the streets, on television, on radio, in the press and on social media. So do the fans for their enthusiastic response. And the players of Australia and Japan for offering them a Final that was an advertisement for women's football in Asia. The record attendances and viewing figures demonstrated that the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ can attract massive audiences.

Although the images from Australia are still fresh, the final tournament is now history. So, the talking point is now about what can be done to build on the world-class spectacle in Australia and maintain or increase the momentum of women's football throughout the Confederation. What are the essential ingredients for sustained growth?

Football people might immediately comment that a good national team in the host country is a great booster of public interest and enthusiasm. But this is not an issue restricted to football people.



The promotion of women's football is a question of investing time, money and creativity in keeping the game in the foreground of the public gaze. It means making sure women's football regularly appears on screen. It means publicity. It means strong branding. And football people are not alien to the cause. In Australia, for example, the Technical Observers were concerned to see that, with added time, the match between DPR Korea and Uzbekistan had a duration of 106 minutes and 44 seconds. But the ball was rolling for 42 minutes and 53 seconds – just over 21 minutes in each half. If there is investment in attracting fans to the stadium or to a screen, entertainment value on the pitch is a pertinent factor.

Within the Confederation, there is a huge diversity of parameters. For instance, head coach Marziyeh Jafari pointed out: "football in IR Iran is newborn and we need to participate in these great tournaments".

What can we do at national and regional levels to build on the success of the great tournament in Australia?



TEAM TALK

"In the first half, we were a little too static and that made it harder to create clear chances, especially with so many players inside the penalty area. There wasn't much space. In the second half, we found better solutions with more movement and better support between the players. Defensively, we were not really challenged and the players kept their concentration. At half-time, we discussed how to open them up with different types of runs and what adjustments we might need if we didn't score early in the second half."

Japan head coach Nils Nielsen after their opening match against Chinese Taipei

"We participated in this tournament after more than 10 years. That gap has made us realise that despite our success at U17 and U20 levels, the senior level is very different. We need more experience and we need key players to help us move forward successfully. That is one of the biggest lessons we learned from this tournament."

DPR Korea head coach Ri Song Ho





"I think the important thing for us is that we need our players to constantly shine on the international stage. This is not just about reaching the Quarter-finals. It is about carrying out our responsibility to showcase our quality so that every young girl in the Philippines will dream of playing for the national team."

Philippines head coach Mark Torcaso

"Our team participated in a great tournament. We had so many young players who were playing for the first time at this level of competition, and also some experienced players. I think they did their best and played very nice football. We need to participate in these great tournaments. It is a very good opportunity for us to play these tough games. It helps us get better step by step."

IR Iran head coach Marziyeh Jafari



"We managed to hold Japan for more than 20 minutes, but, in the second half, we no longer had the strength to keep up, especially as they attacked frequently through the middle and down both flanks, delivering many crosses into the box. Women's football in Southeast Asia is developing and teams like Vietnam and the Philippines have been competing closely. The aim is to keep pushing the development of women's football in the region and bring it to a higher level."

Vietnam head coach Mai Duc Chung after elimination by Japan

"After conceding the goals, the team was not mentally prepared to recover, and perhaps lacking in experience. We were in passive mode and we couldn't solve the problems we were facing on the pitch, so we had to accept defeat and learn from it. I think that mental preparation is as important as physical preparation. When we have those two factors ready, we will be prepared to play any match."

Ri Song Ho after DPR Korea's defeat against China PR



"We will go back and continue working to improve ourselves. There is still a gap, and we need to work hard and look ahead to the next challenge. If we can have more possession, we can start to build better attacking patterns. We want to keep improving, playing with high pressing like Japan and Korea Republic and continue developing our style."

Chinese Taipei head coach Prasobchoke Chokemor

"It's a historical moment, not just to take part here, but to advance from the Group Stage. I believe this achievement will have an impact back home, inspiring the young generation and influencing decisions in the country. It's not only about us – it's about the Uzbek people, the community and the growth of women's football."

Uzbekistan head coach Kotryna Kulbyte after qualification for the Quarter-finals



"They are on a different level to us. We need to accept that and keep our feet on the floor. Korea are great on rotation with mobile players on the wings. Their switching play was also very good and sometimes we had issues with that. They are impressive, but no complaints against my team."

Kotryna Kulbyte after the Quarter-final defeat by Korea Republic

"Sometimes it feels like going into a fight with one arm tied behind your back. So of course the final result is disappointing, but we played some really good football at times, and I have nothing but praise for the girls. I'm very proud. They've come a long way."

Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler

"We saw that Japan are a really strong team and, as a head coach, I learned a lot from the match. We believed that if we could keep a clean sheet in the first half, we would have a chance in the second, because we had a lot of players to change the atmosphere. But after conceding twice, it was difficult. We're in a period of regenerating the team, so I'll keep looking for young players for the national team. For the ones that we brought to this tournament, this is a great learning experience for them to keep improving."

Korea Republic head coach Shin Sang-woo after the Semi-final defeat by Japan

"I saw a team that ran hard for all 90 minutes. I didn't see anyone showing signs of fatigue when some of our opponents were struggling with fitness at times. There was a lot to learn from the games, particularly about staying attentive in key moments. We will take these lessons forward and continue to improve as we move ahead. Just qualifying for the competition and fighting for a chance to play in the FIFA Women's World Cup is a big step forward, and I think the future of Indian women's football is very bright."

India head coach Amelia Valverde



"Before extra-time, the message was to keep moving the ball, to be patient but also get into better positions to cross, while remaining aware of the threat on transitions."

China PR head coach Ante Milicic after the Quarter-final against Chinese Taipei went to extra-time

"Where we managed to win the game was in the little moments – in how we transitioned when losing or winning the ball and kept our shape. We knew they'd have a lot of the ball and that there were areas where they could hurt us. Shape and organisation were key. We didn't create much and had to resist a lot. But that's part of tournament football."

Australia head coach Joe Montemurro after the Quarter-final against DPR Korea

"I think our performance was okay, given the quality of our opponents. We pressed at times but in the end, it was the individual quality which was the difference. I am very proud of these girls for their performances. They are open to new ways of learning and training. I am always looking to improve the team. The games are a lot quicker now and there are a lot of new faces. After this tournament, I have a good idea about what is lacking."

Ante Milicic after the Semi-final defeat by Australia





"In the end, a fantastic goal separated the teams. I'm proud that some of the ideas that we tried to instil happened on the biggest stage against one of the best teams in the world. I had 26 warriors who understood our approach. For us, this has been an excellent journey, playing top teams, testing ourselves in tournament football. We need more regular top international competition to allow the next group to be given the opportunities to play in front of big crowds and in difficult conditions. I'm excited for the current batch but the next batch is also exciting."

Joe Montemurro after the Final against Japan

"If you turned out the lights in the stadium so nobody could see anything, these players could still pass the ball to each other."

Japan's Nils Nielsen after lifting the trophy



TEAM PROFILES

AUSTRALIA

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	MACKENZIE ARNOLD	25-02-1994
12	CHLOE LINCOLN	04-01-2005
18	MORGAN AQUINO	04-08-2001
DEFENDER		
2	COURTNEY NEVIN	12-02-2002
3	WINONAH HEATLEY	18-06-2001
4	CLARE HUNT	12-03-1999
5	JAMILLA RANKIN	09-05-2003
7	STEPHANIE CATLEY	26-01-1994
14	ALANNA KENNEDY	21-01-1995
21	ELLIE CARPENTER	28-04-2000
24	CHARLIZE RULE	16-02-2003
MIDFIELDER		
6	CLARE WHEELER	14-01-1998
8	KAITLYN TORPEY	17-03-2000
10	EMILY VAN-EGMOND	12-07-1993
11	MARY FOWLER	14-02-2003
13	ALEXANDRA CHIDIAC	15-01-1999
15	KAHLI JOHNSON	18-02-2004
19	KATRINA GORRY	13-08-1992
23	KYRA COONEY-CROSS	15-02-2002
16	HAYLEY RASO	05-09-1994
FORWARD		
9	CAITLIN FOORD	11-11-1994
17	AMY SAYER	30-11-2001
20	SAM KERR	10-09-1993
22	MICHELLE HEYMAN	04-07-1988
25	HOLLY MCNAMARA	23-01-2003
26	REMY SIEMSEN	10-11-1999



FORMATION:

1-4-3-3



COACH JOE MONTEMURRO (AUS)



Joe Montemurro took on his first major head coach job in 2014 with the Melbourne Victory FC women's team before helming Melbourne City and leading them to the first W-League title in their maiden season in 2016.

He then guided English Women's Super League side Arsenal to the 2017 FA Women's League Cup and the 2018/19 league title, Juventus to the 2021/22 Supercoppa Italiana, Serie A and Italian Cup, and Lyon to the 2024/25 French Premiere Ligue crown.

Taking charge of the Matildas in 2025, the former midfielder steered the hosts to the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™ Final, where they lost by a solitary goal to Japan.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-3-3 with a possession-based approach, building through the thirds and using wide areas with strong crossing
- Can also switch to quick counterattacks, using speed and physicality to exploit space behind the defence
- Like to build up through the thirds, frequently interchanging players across the midfield and front third
- Comfortable attacking in wide areas, creating 2v1 overlaps with fullbacks getting high and crossing into the penalty area where they have good aerial danger in Sam Kerr and Alanna Kennedy
- Also look to set pieces as a strength to create goalscoring opportunities with aerial dominance
- High pressing to regain possession quickly; shift into a compact mid-block when needed, with strong confidence in 1v1 defending
- Look to apply immediate pressure on the ball carrier to win the ball back quickly
- Look to play fast, early counterattack and exploit space behind their opponent

BANGLADESH

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	RUPNA CHAKMA	02-01-2004
22	SWARNA RANI MANDAL	06-06-2006
23	MILE AKTER	14-09-2006
DEFENDER		
2	SHEULI AZIM	20-12-2001
3	SHAMSUNNAHAR	31-01-2003
4	AFEIDA KHANDAKER	18-11-2006
5	KOHATI KISKU	05-09-2005
21	NABIRAN KHATUN	18-12-2006
26	MST SUROVI AKTER ARFIN	05-06-2008
MIDFIELDER		
6	MONIKA CHAKMA	15-09-2003
7	SAPNA RANI	09-05-2006
8	MARIA MANDA	10-05-2003
9	ANIKA RANIA SIDDIQUI	25-05-2005
14	MST HALIMA AKTHER	06-04-2005
15	MOST MUNKI AKHTER	05-12-2008
16	UNNOTI KHATUN	30-12-2005
17	RITU PORNA CHAKMA	30-12-2003
24	AIRIN KHATUN	10-01-2005
25	UMEHLA MARMA	14-08-2007
FORWARD		
10	TOHURA KHATUN	05-05-2003
11	MOST SULTANA	18-05-2002
12	SAURAVI AKANDA PRITY	31-12-2009
13	ALPI AKTER	31-12-2010
18	SHAHEDA AKTER RIPA	08-12-2005
19	MST SAGORIKA	01-12-2007
20	SHAMSUNNAHAR	30-03-2004



FORMATION:

1-5-4-1



COACH

PETER BUTLER (ENG)



With more than 450 appearances in the English Football League and Premier League as a midfielder, Peter Butler has coached clubs across Southeast Asia, as well as national teams such as the men's sides of Botswana and Liberia.

The former West Ham United midfielder took charge of the Bangladesh women's national team in 2024 and created history by leading them to the 2024 SAFF Women's Championship title.

The 59-year-old, who also serves as head coach of the Bangladesh U20 women's side, secured Bangladesh's first-ever qualification for the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ by winning all three qualifying games to reach Australia 2026, where they bowed out at the Group Stage.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-5-4-1 formation that attempts structured build-up but struggles to maintain possession under pressure; prone to turnovers when pressed
- Adopt a direct approach against stronger teams, playing long balls to a lone striker with support arriving underneath
- Direct forward play (long ball) from goalkeeper or defender as preferred attacking option
- Rotate midfield players in build up play
- Occasional combination play, supported by a few players with strong technical quality
- Aggressive pressing, look to win the ball back as soon as possible
- Tenacious in the challenge, showing good speed in chasing opponents to shut down opportunities
- Often did not project a straight defensive line, allowing opponents to get in between or behind lines and play through them
- Look to counterattack quickly for goal scoring opportunities, tactically leaving 2 players up when defending corner kicks and directly countering
- Apply aggressive, immediate pressing on the ball carrier, while quickly retreating into compact, low block

CHINA PR

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	ZHU YU	23-07-1997
12	PENG SHIMENG	12-05-1998
22	CHEN CHEN	26-06-1993
DEFENDER		
2	WANG YING	18-11-1997
3	CHEN QIAOZHU	08-09-1999
4	WANG LINLIN	04-08-2000
5	WU HAIYAN	26-02-1993
20	ZHANG CHENGXUE	02-12-1995
21	LI MENGWEN	28-03-1995
25	LYU YATONG	04-11-1996
MIDFIELDER		
6	ZHANG XIN	23-05-1992
7	WANG SHUANG	23-01-1995
8	YAO WEI	01-09-1997
11	WU CHENGSHU	26-08-1996
14	LI QINGTONG	14-04-1999
15	WANG AIFANG	15-01-2006
16	LIU JING	28-04-1998
17	XIE ZONGMEI	26-04-2006
18	TANG JIALI	16-03-1995
19	ZHANG LINYAN	16-01-2001
26	ZHANG RUI	17-01-1989
FORWARD		
9	WURIGUMULA	26-08-1996
10	WANG YANWEN	27-03-1999
13	JIN KUN	04-10-1999
23	SHAO ZIQIN	24-02-2003
24	YUAN CONG	17-04-2000



FORMATION:

1-4-4-2 / 1-4-2-3-1



COACH ANTE MILICIC (AUS)



A prolific scorer in Australia's National Soccer League, Ante Milicic was the assistant coach of Australia's men's national team from 2014-2018 and also served as the head coach of their U20 side for a year from 2018.

The 52-year-old then joined the Australian women's national team as assistant coach from 2019 to 2020, leading them to the Round of 16 at the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019. After two seasons with A-League club Macarthur FC, the former Sydney United star returned to the international stage as he took the reins of China PR in 2019 and led them to the Semi-finals of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, where the reigning nine-time champions suffered a 2-1 defeat against hosts Australia.

KEY FEATURES

- A structured and cohesive team that utilises varied attacking patterns, supported by key players with complementary strengths; uses both 1-4-4-2 and 1-4-2-3-1 formations
- Build up play through the middle third with target player Shao Ziqin as the focal point at the front; fluid positional interchange between forwards and wingers
- Aggressive attacks from both wide areas
- Powerful use of set pieces
- Operate in a high-to-mid block with strong physical duels
- Central compactness, effective ball recovery in midfield; solid aerial ability
- Apply immediate counter-pressing after losing possession, aiming to regain the ball quickly
- Look to counterattack rapidly, targeting space behind opponents, while also being comfortable slowing the game down and rebuilding through structured play

CHINESE TAIPEI

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	WANG YU-TING	27-05-2001
18	WU HSIN-NI	16-11-2005
23	CHENG SSU-YU	25-09-1989
DEFENDER		
2	CHANG CHI-LAN	18-09-1996
3	SU SIN-YUN	20-11-1996
4	LIN YU-SYUAN	26-02-2003
5	PAN SHIN-YU	03-05-1997
6	TENG PEI-LIN	06-10-2002
14	WU KAI CHING	14-11-1999
20	CHEN YING-HUI	05-10-1998
22	HUANG KE-SIN	18-07-2003
24	PAN YEN-HSIN	18-02-1996
MIDFIELDER		
9	HSU YI-YUN	29-04-1997
10	SAKI MATSUNAGA	26-12-1995
13	CHAN PI-HAN	27-04-1992
15	TSENG YUN-CHING	14-02-2000
17	CHEN JIN-WEN	13-06-2003
25	WANG HSIANG-HUEI	28-09-1987
FORWARD		
7	TING CHI	02-06-1995
8	LI YI-WEN	20-09-2005
11	HE,JIA-SHIUAN	07-05-2005
12	PU, HSIN-HUI	12-09-2005
16	LIU YU-CHIAO	14-12-2005
19	SU YU-HSUAN	21-02-2001
21	CHEN YU-CHIN	05-08-2007
26	YANG, HSIAO-CHUAN	23-09-2005



FORMATION:

1-4-2-3-1



COACH PRASOBCHOKE CHOKEMOR (THA)



Thailand's assistant coach at the 2010 edition of the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ in China PR, Prasobchoke Chokemor was also assistant and goalkeeping coach for Thailand's U23 men's national team and head coach at Thailand's Customs United in 2023.

Having been involved in both the men's and women's U17 and U20 national team set-ups in Chinese Taipei for around two years, Prasobchoke was put in charge of the senior side in August 2025 on an interim basis which turned permanent a month later.

At the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, the three-time champions' run ended in the Quarter-finals after being defeated by China PR in extra time before they fell to a 4-0 defeat to DPR Korea in the Playoffs.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 formation with strong defensive organisation and compactness, relying on direct long balls and wide play, while creating most attacking opportunities through transitions
- Attempt to build from the back, using short passes between the goalkeeper and centre-backs while full-backs push higher to provide width
- Players rotate positions to create passing options and support attacking phases
- Adapt to pressure by playing direct, using long passes toward forwards or into space behind the defensive line
- Compact and disciplined structure, mainly in mid-to-low blocks, focusing on protecting central areas, forcing play wide, and maintaining good vertical compactness
- Coordination between lines and pressing consistency can be inconsistent under pressure
- Transition quickly by applying immediate pressure after losing possession and play forward early when regaining the ball, mainly using direct passes to exploit space

DPR KOREA

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	PAK JU MI	01-07-2003
18	YU SON GUM	08-11-2003
21	KIM JONG SUN	13-10-2003
DEFENDER		
2	RI MYONG GUM	01-01-2003
3	RI KUM HYANG	22-04-2001
5	AN KUK HYANG	25-03-2001
14	HWANG YU YONG	13-04-2006
15	JO POM MI	26-03-2003
23	RI HYE GYONG	24-04-1999
MIDFIELDER		
4	OH SOL SONG	30-06-2004
6	AN POK YONG	10-01-2002
7	MYONG YU JONG	29-08-2003
9	KIM SONG GYONG	12-02-2005
12	HONG SONG OK	21-08-2003
13	JON RYONG JONG	25-07-2004
16	SONG CHUN SIM	29-05-2002
20	CHAE UN YONG	12-04-2004
22	KIM HYE YONG	11-03-2003
FORWARD		
8	CHOE IL SON	01-01-2007
10	RI HAK	12-06-2002
11	HAN JIN HONG	16-02-2002
17	KIM KYONG YONG	02-01-2002
19	SIN HYANG	09-07-2005
24	RI SONG A	22-06-1999



FORMATION:

1-4-4-2



COACH

RI SONG HO (PRK)



A former Rimyongsu FC player, Ri Song Ho has enjoyed an illustrious coaching career, serving in various capacities for DPR Korea's women's teams. Coach at Wolmido FC's women's team before taking over the women's U20 squad in July 2023, he led his charges to the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2024™ title, and then to an historic FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Colombia 2024 victory. He was named AFC Men's Coach of the Year in 2025.

After 16 years of absence from the AFC Women's Asian Cup™, he led the senior side to the Quarter-finals, before defeating Chinese Taipei 4-0 in the playoff to book their tickets to the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-2 with a high-intensity, pragmatic and physically dominant style, combining aggressive pressing with vertical attacking intent
- Strong physicality and discipline, with the whole team working hard, focusing on winning duels rather than keeping possession for long periods
- Look to go forward quickly, using direct passes and aggressive runs to create chances early instead of slowing the game down with long build-up
- Generate high shot volumes through constant pressure and repeated entries into the final third using crosses from wide areas
- Aggressive high press, aiming to disrupt build-up and force turnovers in advanced areas
- Defensive structure is compact but heavily reliant on physical duels and intensity rather than positional control
- Extremely vertical, immediately exploiting space with speed and direct passing after regaining possession
- React aggressively with counter-pressing, often turning transitions into immediate attacking opportunities

INDIA

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	ELANGBAM PANTHOI CHANU	01-02-1996
13	SOWMIYA NARAYANASAMY	25-07-2000
23	SHREYA HOODA	25-05-1999
DEFENDER		
2	SWEETY DEVI NGANBAM	01-12-1999
3	ASTAM ORAON	05-02-2005
5	JULI KISHAN	08-05-1999
8	SANJU YADAV	12-09-1997
14	NIRMALA DEVI	02-03-2003
15	MARTINA THOKCHOM	13-07-2004
21	SARITA YUMNAM	04-02-2002
22	SUSHMITA LEPCHA	19-03-1996
MIDFIELDER		
4	SHILKY DEVI HEMAM	23-11-2005
6	SANGITA BASFORE	12-07-1996
7	SOUMYA GUGULOTH	18-07-2001
9	KARISHMA PURUSHOTTAM SHIRVOIKAR	04-08-2001
16	MANISHA KALYAN	27-11-2001
17	RIMPA HALDAR	06-02-2005
18	JASODA MUNDA	03-04-2001
19	AVEKA SINGH	30-12-2003
20	SANFIDA NONGRUM	26-04-2005
24	BABINA DEVI LISHAM	01-02-2005
25	MALAVIKA PRASAD	12-11-2003
26	KAVIYA PAKKIRISAMY	23-12-2002
FORWARD		
10	PYARI XAXA	18-05-1997
11	GRACE DANGMEI	05-02-1996
12	LYNDA KOM SERTO	28-02-2005



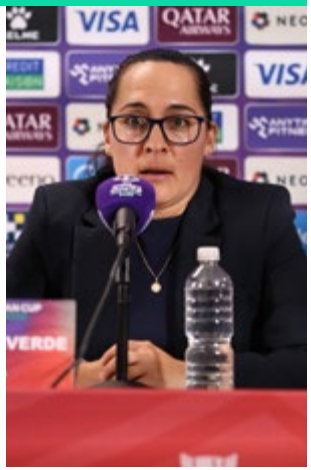
FORMATION:

1-4-4-2



COACH

AMELIA VALVERDE VILLALOBOS (CRC)



A former player for Flores de Heredia and Saprissa in the Costa Rican Women's Premier Division, Amelia Valverde was the assistant manager of Costa Rica's senior and U20 women's national teams before being promoted to head coach of the senior side in 2015, following which she took them to the 2015 and 2023 FIFA Women's World Cups.

Velverde was selected as the head coach of India's national women's team in January, two months prior to the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, where their campaign ended at the Group Stage in the Blue Tigresses' first appearance since 2006.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-2 with an aggressive and direct approach, combining short passing with counterattacks, relying heavily on set pieces, while showing high work rate but inconsistent defensive organisation
- Combine direct play and short passing, relying on counterattacks and set pieces as main sources of goal-scoring opportunities
- Mid to low block defending
- Aggressive pressing on the ball and high work rate, but defensive organisation and coordination often leave spaces between lines
- Rely heavily on quick counterattacks after regaining possession, with immediate pressure when losing the ball, though not always collectively coordinated

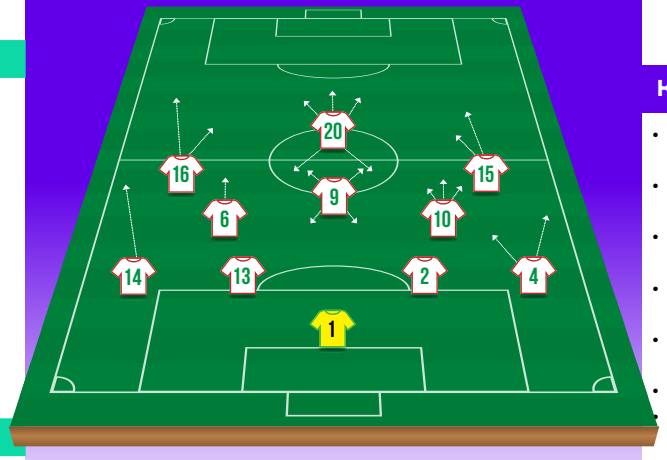
IR IRAN

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	RAHA YAZDANI	01-07-1987
12	MARYAM YEKTAEI	19-06-1993
22	ZAHRA KHAJAVI	08-02-1999
DEFENDER		
2	ATEFEH IMANI	28-07-1996
3	ATEFEH RAMEZANIZADEH	21-04-1992
4	MELIKA MOTEVALLI	06-05-1998
13	FATEMEH AMINEH	03-06-1997
14	FATEMEH MAKHDOUMI	14-02-2001
17	SHAHNAZ JAFARIZADEH	16-03-1994
21	GOLNOOSH KHOSRAVI	12-05-2001
24	KOSAR ANBARI	28-01-1995
25	ZAHRA POURHEIDAR	15-04-1994
26	BEHNAZ TAHERKHANI	22-05-1995
MIDFIELDER		
5	ZAHRA AHMADIZADEH	04-06-1997
6	ZAHRA SARBALI	13-08-1993
8	SHABNAM BEHESHT	30-11-1998
10	FATEMEH PASANDIDEH	08-04-2004
11	MARYAM DINI	12-03-2007
15	MOHADDESEH ZOLFI	16-01-2005
16	FATEMEH SHABAN	04-11-2002
18	SANA SADEGHI	12-06-2000
23	MONA HAMOUDI	11-11-1993
FORWARD		
7	AFSANEH CHATRENOOR	14-04-1998
9	ZAHRA GHANBARI	04-03-1992
19	ROUJIN TAMRIAN	29-12-2005
20	SARA DIDAR	27-11-2004



FORMATION:

1-4-2-3-1 (1-5-4-1)



COACH

MARZIYEH JAFARI (IRN)



The Islamic Republic of Iran's most decorated women's coach, Marziyeh Jafari was named AFC Coach of the Year (Women) at the AFC Awards Riyadh 2025, becoming the first winner of the accolade from her nation.

Widely recognised for leading Bam Khatoon Women's FC to 12 Iranian domestic league titles and a runners-up finish at the 2022 AFC Women's Club Championship™, Jafari helped the Central Asians seal a second consecutive appearance in the Continental showpiece following their debut in 2022, despite taking charge only three months before the Qualifiers. In Australia, Jafari's charges found the going tough as they were unable to advance from the Group Stage.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 (1-5-4-1) formation focussed on quick, direct, high-intensity aggression to move the ball as quickly as possible into the attacking third
- Energetic running movement and ball progression in the final third create positive and dangerous crosses for scoring opportunities
- Rely on direct, penetrative passes to target player/s to secure second ball to progress attack
- Brief moments of spontaneous combination passes to break down defensive line and create scoring opportunities
- Employs low to mid defensive block; patient, compact, and individual marking is observed when using a deep defensive block
- Outstanding goalkeeping and covering the space behind defenders
- Aggressive, committed to winning the ball quickly. Counter-pressing with single or twin players when they had the advantage to try to win the ball
- Collective counterattacking, several players sprint forward with high energy, creating unpredictability in the final third

JAPAN

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	AYAKA YAMASHITA	29-09-1995
12	CHIKA HIRAO	31-12-1996
23	AKANE OKUMA	15-09-2004
DEFENDER		
2	RISA SHIMIZU	15-06-1996
3	MOEKA MINAMI	07-12-1998
4	SAKI KUMAGAI	17-10-1990
5	HANA TAKAHASHI	19-02-2000
6	TOKO KOGA	06-01-2006
13	HIKARU KITAGAWA	10-05-1997
16	YUZUKI YAMAMOTO	01-09-2002
21	MIYABI MORIYA	22-08-1996
22	RION ISHIKAWA	04-07-2003
MIDFIELDER		
7	HINATA MIYAZAWA	28-11-1999
8	KIKO SEIKE	08-08-1996
10	FUKA NAGANO	09-03-1999
14	YUI HASEGAWA	29-01-1997
15	AOBA FUJINO	27-01-2004
17	MAIKA HAMANO	09-05-2004
18	HONOKA HAYASHI	19-05-1998
19	MOMOKO TANIKAWA	07-05-2005
20	MANAKA MATSUKUBO	28-07-2004
24	YUI NARUMIYA	22-02-1995
FORWARD		
9	RIKO UEKI	30-07-1999
11	MINA TANAKA	28-04-1994
25	REMINA CHIBA	30-04-1999
26	MAYA HIJIKATA	13-04-2004



FORMATION:

1-4-4-2 / 1-4-3-3



COACH NILS NIELSEN (DEN)



Boasting a glittering resume, Nils Nielsen was head coach of Denmark's women's national team from 2013 to 2017 and led them to a runners-up finish at the UEFA Women's Euro 2017, before joining the China PR U20 women's team as assistant coach ahead of the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in 2018.

The Dane then went on to coach Switzerland from 2018 to 2022, where they qualified for the UEFA Women's Euro 2022. In December 2024, the 54-year-old made history by becoming the first foreign head coach of Japan's women's national team, beginning his tenure with a 4-0 victory over Australia at the 2025 SheBelieves Cup and closing it by guiding them to their third Asian title at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™ with a 1-0 win over the hosts.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-2 or 1-4-3-3, playing with a clear identity based on keeping the ball and controlling the rhythm; always looking calm, and structured in possession
- Strong ability in keeping ball possession and combination play with quick movement and high-level finishing abilities
- Attack through fluid combinations, short passing sequences, and third-player movements to break defensive lines
- Use the width well, especially through their fullbacks, to stretch the opponent and create spaces inside to exploit
- Rely on compact team structure and intelligent positioning rather than physical dominance
- Press high up the pitch and try to win the ball as early as possible, often close to the opponent's box
- In attacking transition, move the ball quickly with minimal touches, exploiting space through fast combinations and forward runs
- In defensive transition, react immediately with counter-pressing, using anticipation and angles rather than duels to regain possession

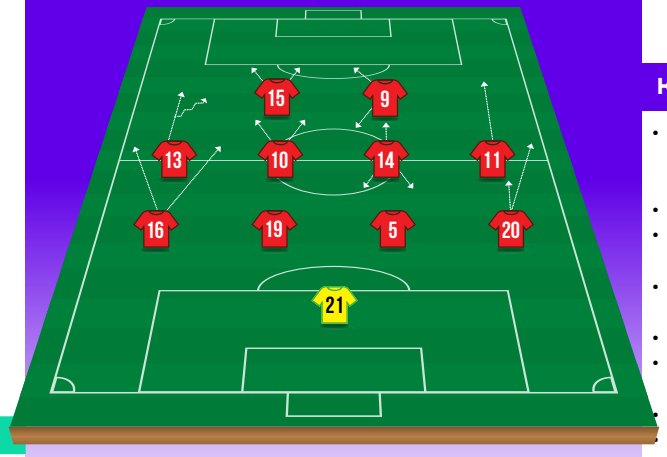
KOREA REPUBLIC

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	WOO SEO-BIN	13-04-2004
18	RYU JI-SU	03-09-1997
21	KIM MIN-JUNG	12-09-1996
DEFENDER		
2	KIM JIN-HUI	07-10-1998
4	SHIN NA-YEONG	09-10-1999
5	KO YOO-JIN	24-01-1997
16	JANG SEL-GI	31-05-1994
19	NOH JIN-YOUNG	03-06-2000
20	KIM HYE-RI	25-06-1990
22	CHOO HYO-JOO	29-07-2000
MIDFIELDER		
3	PARK HYE-JEONG	30-03-2000
8	KIM SHIN-JI	03-05-2004
9	MUN EUN-JU	01-09-2000
10	JI SO-YUN	21-02-1991
11	CHOE YU-RI	16-09-1994
12	SONG JAE-EUN	03-04-1997
13	PARK SOO-JEONG	03-11-2004
14	JUNG MIN-YOUNG	28-09-2000
23	KANG CHAE-RIM	23-03-1998
24	LEE EUN-YOUNG	31-03-2002
25	LEE MIN-HWA	29-10-1999
26	KIM MIN-JI	21-08-2003
FORWARD		
6	CASEY PHAIR	29-06-2007
7	SON HWA-YEON	15-03-1997
15	JEON YU-GYEONG	20-01-2004
17	CHOI YOO-JUNG	25-01-1992



FORMATION:

1-4-4-2



COACH

SHIN SANG-WOO (KOR)



A former player with the likes of Incheon United and Daejeon Citizen, Shin Sang-woo started his coaching career as an assistant coach at Gimhae FC in 2010 before moving to WK League side Mungyeong Sangmu in the same capacity five years later.

The former defender served as the assistant coach at K League 2 side Gimcheon Sangmu from 2022, contributing to their league title win the following year and promotion to the top tier.

Shin was appointed head coach of Korea Republic's women's national team in October 2024 and led them to the Semi-finals of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-2 strategy, playing in a collective style in all four moments using each individual strength; fluid in positional interchanges and combination play in the attacking third
- Constructive build-up play using combination play and width
- Fluid attacking movement in the final third, with players interchanging positions and runs behind the defensive line
- Effective usage of full-backs with overlapping or underlapping to create chances
- Compact and well-disciplined defence with collective movement
- Maintain numerical superiority around the ball to regain possession; occasional intensive high-pressing
- Very rapid transition in both phases
- Quick counterattacking is a major weapon

PHILIPPINES

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	OLIVIA ALEXANDRA MCDANIEL	14-10-1997
18	NINA ANDREA MEOLLO	23-06-2004
22	LEAH BRADLEY	07-04-2009
DEFENDER		
2	MALEA LOUISE CESAR	09-12-2003
3	JESSIKA COWART	30-10-1999
5	HALI LONG	21-01-1995
12	KAYA HAWKINSON	17-04-2000
13	ANGELA BEARD	16-08-1997
16	SOFIA NICOLE WUNSCH	16-02-1999
20	JANAE DEFAZIO	06-09-2001
MIDFIELDER		
4	NATALIE OCA	03-11-2006
6	JACLYN SAWICKI	14-11-1992
7	JAEL GUY	15-08-2007
8	SARA EGGESVIK	28-04-1997
9	CARLEIGH FRILLES	11-04-2002
14	JOURDYN CURRAN	11-05-2003
15	ISABELLA PASION	14-07-2006
17	ARIANA MARKEY	08-06-2007
25	AVA VILLAPANDO	08-05-2008
FORWARD		
10	CHANDLER BLUE MCDANIEL	04-02-1998
11	ANICKA CASTANEDA	15-12-1999
19	ALESSANDREA CARPIO	04-03-2002
21	KATRINA GUILLOU	19-12-1993
23	ALEXA PINO	01-03-2007
24	MALLIE RAMIREZ	01-09-2004
26	PAIGE MCSWIGAN	11-09-2003



FORMATION:

1-4-4-2



COACH MARK TORCASO (AUS)



Appointed Western United Women's head coach in 2022, Mark Torcaso took them to the Grand Final in their debut season and was subsequently named A-League Women Coach of the Year.

He was appointed head coach of the Philippines women's national team in August 2023, and they reached the last eight of the 2022 Asian Games, advanced to Round 2 of the Women's Olympic Football Tournament Paris 2024™ Asian Qualifiers and won a historic SEA Games gold medal in 2025. Despite elimination in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™ Quarter-finals, the Filipinas secured consecutive FIFA Women's World Cup qualifications by bouncing back to claim a direct berth in the Playoffs.

KEY FEATURES

- Play in a 1-4-4-2 formation, using a combination of building up from the back and a direct playing style to progress the ball
- Effective use of long lofted diagonal passes to the opposite wide players
- Goalkeeper's long lofted/direct distribution was the team's strength to progress the attack against stronger opponents
- Assured building up from the back through midfield fluidity, interchanging positions, utilising numerical advantage to progress the ball safely
- Strong, compact, disciplined defensive block; good aerial defending
- Intensive collective midfield pressing against teams of similar calibre
- Always trying to take advantage of shifting quickly in the transition moments
- Direct passes used and forward running to exploit the space behind the opponent's defence line
- Focus on protecting the goal and delaying the opponent's progression

UZBEKISTAN

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	MAFTUNA JONIMQULOVA	26-07-1999
12	KUMUSHOY GULOMOVA	06-11-1999
13	ZARINA SAIDOVA	19-09-2001
DEFENDER		
2	MADINA KHIKMATOVA	09-08-2001
3	KHOLIDA DADABOEVA	12-04-1993
4	SHODIYA TOSHEVA	14-05-1997
6	DILRABO ASADOVA	22-12-1996
11	MAFTUNA SHOYIMOVA	01-01-1999
19	LAYLO TILOVOVA	08-03-1997
20	KAMILA ZARIPOVA	19-11-1998
21	LEYLA ORANIYAZOVA	18-10-2004
22	SEVINCH KUCHKOROVA	28-09-2004
25	RUKHSHONA USAROVA	26-07-2007
MIDFIELDER		
5	SOLIKHA KHUSNIDDINOVA	22-01-1998
8	ILVINA ABLYAKIMOVA	27-04-1995
9	FERUZA TURDIBOEVA	06-01-1994
14	GULZODA AMIROVA	13-10-1999
15	UMIDA ZOIROVA	22-04-1998
16	ZARINA MAMATKARIMOVA	04-03-2004
23	ASALKHON AMINJONOVA	22-04-2007
26	DIYORA BAKHTIYAROVA	29-08-2007
FORWARD		
7	NILUFAR KUDRATOVA	05-06-1997
10	DIYORAKHON KHABIBULLAEVA	15-09-1999
17	LYUDMILA KARACHIK	08-12-1994
18	DILDORA NOZIMOVA	03-11-1997
24	OMINAKHON VALIKHANOVA	04-06-2004

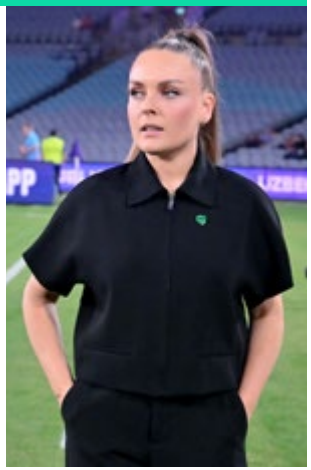


FORMATION:

1-5-4-1



COACH KOTRYNA KULBYTE (LTU)



Kotryna Kulbyte has held several national team roles, serving as assistant coach for Lithuania's women's youth teams and head coach of the women's U15 and U17 national teams from 2021 to 2025.

After serving as assistant coach of the Lithuania women's senior side from 2022 to 2025, the 33-year-old was appointed head coach of the Uzbekistan women's national team in January 2025, whom she led to their sixth appearance at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ – and their first since 2003.

Under her watch, the Central Asians qualified for the Knockout Stage for the first time after finishing the Group Stage as one of the best third-placed teams, and subsequently lost to Korea Republic in the last eight and the Philippines in the Playoffs.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-5-4-1 with an emphasis on solid defence in front of goal and rapidly-launched counterattacks
- Good passing movements in the midfield area; strong commitment and mentality
- Create attacking opportunities in the midfield area through good passing skills and combination play. However, they had few attacking opportunities in games against higher-ranked teams
- Primarily defend in a compact mid-to-low block
- Show tenacious defensive effort, with strong leadership from goalkeeper Maftuna Jonimqulova
- Effective in dealing with crosses
- Show intent to counterattack, with moments of promise
- With consistency and speed in transitions, can further improve their overall efficiency

 TEAM PROFILES

VIETNAM

SQUAD		DATE OF BIRTH
GOALKEEPER		
1	DOAN THI NGOC PHUONG	01-02-1998
14	TRAN THI KIM THANH	18-09-1993
20	KHONG THI HANG	10-10-1993
DEFENDER		
2	LUONG THI THU THUONG	01-05-2000
4	TRAN THI THU	15-07-1991
5	HOANG THI LOAN	06-02-1995
6	NGUYEN THI HOA	28-11-2000
10	TRAN THI HAI LINH	08-06-2001
13	LE THI DIEM MY	23-08-1996
15	TRAN THI DUYEN	28-12-2000
17	TRAN THI THU THAO	15-01-1993
22	NGUYEN THI MY ANH	27-11-1994
MIDFIELDER		
3	TRAN NHAT LAN	01-01-2004
11	THAI THI THAO	12-02-1995
16	DUONG THI VAN	20-09-1994
18	CU THI HUYNH NHU	07-08-2000
19	NGUYEN THI THANH NHA	25-09-2001
21	NGAN THI VAN SU	29-04-2001
23	NGUYEN THI BICH THUY	01-05-1994
FORWARD		
7	NGOC MINH CHUYEN	23-06-2004
8	NGUYEN THI TRUC HUONG	04-03-2000
9	HUYNH NHU	28-11-1991
12	PHAM HAI YEN	09-11-1994
24	NGUYEN THI THUY HANG	19-11-1997
25	NGUYEN THI TUYET NGAN	10-02-2000
26	VU THI HOA	06-11-2003



FORMATION:

1-5-4-1 / 1-3-4-3



COACH MAI DUC CHUNG (VIE)



Former national team player Mai Duc Chung was the first ever head coach of his country's women's national side in 1997 and went on to lead them to six SEA Games gold medals, the 2019 AFF Championship and a historic fourth-place finish at the 2014 Asian Games.

His greatest achievement came in 2022 when the Golden Star Women Warriors qualified for the FIFA Women's World Cup, becoming the first Vietnamese national team - men's or women's - to achieve the feat, while he also became the oldest coach in the competition's history.

At Australia 2026, Vietnam finished third in Group C, narrowly missing out on the Quarter-finals on goal difference.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-5-4-1 or 1-3-4-3, combining discipline and individual strength
- Excellent team bonding with clear playing philosophy and role of each player
- Build-up play with fluid position interchanges
- Assure combination play and effective use of dynamic individual strength
- Ngan Thi Van Su and Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy capable of making a difference in the team's attacking
- Defence formation of 1-5-4-1 with an emphasis on staying compact in the central area
- Patient defensive block with goalkeeper and back line good against crossing
- Quick transition in both phases
- Rapid counterattacks using the flanks



AWARDS



BEST GOALKEEPER
AYAKA YAMASHITA (JPN)

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER
ALANNA KENNEDY (AUS)

TOP GOAL SCORER
RIKO UEKI (JPN)

AFC FAIR PLAY AWARD : JAPAN



ALL-STAR SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS



NO.1 - MACKENZIE ARNOLD
(AUS)



NO.1 - AYAKA YAMASHITA
(JPN)



NO.1 - OLIVIA MCDANIEL
(PHI)

DEFENDERS



NO.21 - ELLIE CARPENTER
(AUS)



NO.6 - TOKO KOGA
(JPN)



NO.7 - STEPH CATLEY
(AUS)



NO.20 - KIM HYE-RI
(KOR)



NO.4 - SAKI KUMAGAI
(JPN)



NO.3 - CHEN QIAOZHU
(CHN)

MIDFIELDERS



NO.10 - JI SO-YUN
(KOR)



NO.10 - FUKA NAGANO
(JPN)



NO.7 - WANG SHUANG
(CHN)



NO.14 - ALANNA KENNEDY
(AUS)



NO.15 - AOBA FUJINO
(JPN)



NO.14 - YUI HASEGAWA
(JPN)

FORWARDS



NO.20 - SAM KERR
(AUS)



NO.9 - CAITLIN FOORD
(AUS)



NO.9 - RIKO UEKI
(JPN)



NO.23 - SHAO ZIQIN
(CHN)



RESULTS

GROUP A

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
KOREA REPUBLIC	3	2	1	0	9	3	6	7
AUSTRALIA	3	2	1	0	8	3	5	7
PHILIPPINES	3	1	0	2	2	4	-2	3
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	3	0	0	3	0	9	-9	0

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
01 Mar 2026	17:00	AUSTRALIA	1-0 (1-0)	PHILIPPINES
02 Mar 2026	19:00	KOREA REPUBLIC	3-0 (1-0)	ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
05 Mar 2026	13:00	PHILIPPINES	0-3 (0-2)	KOREA REPUBLIC
05 Mar 2026	19:00	ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	0-4 (0-3)	AUSTRALIA
08 Mar 2026	19:00	ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	0-2 (0-1)	PHILIPPINES
08 Mar 2026	20:00	AUSTRALIA	3-3 (2-1)	KOREA REPUBLIC

GROUP B

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
CHINA PR	3	3	0	0	7	1	6	9
DPR KOREA	3	2	0	1	9	2	7	6
UZBEKISTAN	3	1	0	2	4	6	-2	3
BANGLADESH	3	0	0	3	0	11	-11	0

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
03 Mar 2026	13:00	DPR KOREA	3-0 (3-0)	UZBEKISTAN
03 Mar 2026	19:00	CHINA PR	2-0 (2-0)	BANGLADESH
06 Mar 2026	13:00	BANGLADESH	0-5 (0-2)	DPR KOREA
06 Mar 2026	19:00	UZBEKISTAN	0-3 (0-1)	CHINA PR
09 Mar 2026	17:00	BANGLADESH	0-4 (0-1)	UZBEKISTAN
09 Mar 2026	20:00	DPR KOREA	1-2 (1-2)	CHINA PR

GROUP C

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
JAPAN	3	3	0	0	17	0	17	9
CHINESE TAIPEI	3	2	0	1	4	3	1	6
VIETNAM	3	1	0	2	2	6	-4	3
INDIA	3	0	0	3	2	16	-14	0

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
04 Mar 2026	13:00	JAPAN	2-0 (0-0)	CHINESE TAIPEI
04 Mar 2026	19:00	VIETNAM	2-1 (1-0)	INDIA
07 Mar 2026	13:00	CHINESE TAIPEI	1-0 (1-0)	VIETNAM
07 Mar 2026	19:00	INDIA	0-11 (0-5)	JAPAN
10 Mar 2026	17:00	JAPAN	4-0 (1-0)	VIETNAM
10 Mar 2026	20:00	INDIA	1-3 (1-2)	CHINESE TAIPEI



QUARTER-FINALS

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
13 Mar 2026	18:00	AUSTRALIA	2-1 (1-0)	DPR KOREA
14 Mar 2026	13:00	CHINA PR	2-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)	CHINESE TAIPEI
14 Mar 2026	20:00	KOREA REPUBLIC	6-0 (2-0)	UZBEKISTAN
15 Mar 2026	16:00	JAPAN	7-0 (2-0)	PHILIPPINES

SEMI-FINALS

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
17 Mar 2026	18:00	CHINA PR	1-2 (1-1)	AUSTRALIA
18 Mar 2026	20:00	KOREA REPUBLIC	1-4 (0-2)	JAPAN

PLAYOFF

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
19 Mar 2026	13:00	UZBEKISTAN	0-2 (0-0)	PHILIPPINES
19 Mar 2026	19:00	CHINESE TAIPEI	0-4 (0-1)	DPR KOREA

FINAL

DATE	TIME	TEAM A	SCORE	TEAM B
21 Mar 2026	20:00	JAPAN	1-0 (1-0)	AUSTRALIA





REFEREEING

1. SUMMARY

A delegation of 45 match officials from various Member Associations (MAs) was appointed for the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™. The group consisted of Referees, Assistant Referees and Video Match Officials (VMOs), and was supported by standby officials to ensure operational continuity throughout the competition.

Reflecting the AFC's continued commitment to developing and promoting women's officiating on the biggest Continental stages, the appointed officials represented a balanced mix of experienced FIFA referees and emerging talents from the AFC Referee Academy pathway, which further demonstrated the Confederation's sustained efforts to strengthen the refereeing landscape across Asia.

Performance and physical standards were overseen by a dedicated team of Referee Assessors and Fitness Instructors, who made sure that match officials maintained the highest officiating standards throughout the tournament.

1.1 AFC MATCH OFFICIALS

Referees	MA
Casey Lisa Reibelt	AUS
Lara Christie Lee	AUS
Dong Fangyu	CHN
Tian Jin	CHN
Mahnaz Zokaee	IRN
Yoshimi Yamashita	JPN
Asaka Koizumi	JPN
Oh Hyeon-jeong	KOR
Kim Yu-jeong	KOR
Veronika Bernatskaia	KGZ
Doumouh Ibrahim Albakkar	LBN
Pansa Chaisanit	THA
Supiree Testhomya	THA
Le Thi Ly	VIE
Assistant Referees	**MA**
Emma Kocbek	AUS
Madelaine Ruth Allum	AUS
Xie Lijun	CHN
Bao Mengxiao	CHN
Riiohlang Dhar	IND
Amal Jamal Nasser Mubarak Badhafari	UAE
Makoto Bozono	JPN
Chihiro Ikki	JPN
Sabreen Awwad Abed Ala'badi	JOR
Park Mi-suk	KOR
Lee Soo-bin	KOR
Heba Saadieh	PLE
Hyon Un Mi	PRK
Supawan Hinthong	THA
Nuannid Donjangreed	THA
Ha Thi Phuong	VIE
Video Match Officials	**MA**
Katherine Margaret Jacewicz	AUS
Mr. Fu Ming	CHN
Law Bik Chi	HKG
Mr. Jumpei Iida	JPN
Mr. Kim Hee-gon	KOR
Mr. Mamdouh Mufareh A Al Shadan	KSA
Mr. Meshari Ali A R Alshamari	QAT
Mr. Muhammad Taqi Aljaafari Bin Jahari	SGP
Mr. Sivakorn Pu-Udom	THA
Khuloud Khudoum Bakhit Juma Alzaabi	UAE
Edita Mirabidova	UZB
Standby Referees	**MA**
Bui Thi Thu Trang	VIE
Zainal Nurul Ain Izatty	MAS
Standby Assistant Referees	**MA**
Bahareh Seifinahavandi	IRN
Munirah binti Ha Ali	MAS
Technical Instructors / Assessors	**MA**
Niu Huijun	CHN
Heba Mohammad Hassan Abed	JOR
Sachiko Yamagishi	JPN
Hong Eun-ah	KOR
Mr. Altraifi Ali Ahmed I	KSA
Mr. Valentin Kovalenko	UZB
Widiya Habibah Binti Shamsuri	MAS
Thein Thein Aye	MYA
Fitness Instructors	**MA**
Zhang Lingling	CHN
Praew Semaksuk	THA

1.2 SUPPORT TEAM

Referees' Liaison Officers (RLOs)

A team of RLOs supported the coordination of all logistical arrangements related to refereeing operations and played an essential role in facilitating communication with the Local Organising Committee and ensuring smooth daily operations for the match officials.

Players' Team: A dedicated local team of players and coaches supported the referees' practical training sessions by simulating realistic match scenarios. This setup allowed match officials to practise positioning, foul recognition and decision-making in match-like situations.

Technical Support: A specialised technical team from the System Technology Provider supported the implementation of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system, along with simulator training sessions and technical operations throughout the tournament.

Medical and Recovery Support: Medical personnel, including physiotherapists and masseurs, were available to assist match officials with recovery, injury prevention and physical maintenance during the competition.

2. PREPARATORY COURSE

From February 22 to 28, match officials engaged in an intensive seven-day preparatory course comprising theoretical sessions, fitness checks, practical Mobile VAR (MVAR) training and simulator sessions, all of which were aimed at equipping the match officials with the technical and physical readiness required for the competition. Additionally, led by technical instructors, Team Arrival Meetings (TAMs) were conducted with participating teams to provide an accurate understanding of how matches would be managed, and player safety and integrity of the competition would be protected during the tournament.

2.1 FITNESS CHECK

All match officials were declared physically qualified to cope with the match demands upon successfully completing the following fitness checks:

- Referees Yo-Yo Intermittent Test (target: 17.8)
- ARIET - Assistant Referee Intermittent Endurance Test (target: 14.5.3)

2.2 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

With the integration of MVAR system and Instant Feedback setup, match officials engaged in a comprehensive practical training programme. The setup provided live technology integration during training sessions and enabled full-scale VAR simulator sessions at the tournament HQ, aiding match officials to be proficient in technology-supported decision-making.

- **MVAR Practical Session:** Under instructors' guidance, 24 players and two coaches simulated real match incidents on a full pitch. Match officials rotated to familiarise themselves with the integration of the VAR technology and to ensure clear communication with the VMOs inside the Video Operations Room (VOR).

- **Instant Feedback Session:** Working on a half-pitch with 10 players, match officials received immediate feedback from dedicated instructors. This allowed for real-time correction of positioning, movement, and foul recognition.

- **Simulator Session:** Practical sessions were conducted in the hotel meeting room, where VMOs participated in simulator exercises. These sessions involved reviewing key match incidents at the Referees' headquarters, with a focus on ensuring quality and accuracy in decision-making, which are essential elements during live matches.

2.3 THEORETICAL SESSIONS

The theoretical sessions were designed to further enhance the technical knowledge of the officials and optimise the level of consistency in their application of the Laws of the Game. Numerous match incident videos were reviewed and discussed to encourage active analysis and reach consensus on key decisions.

At the conclusion of the course, the officials received important feedback and information regarding both fitness and technical aspects to enhance their preparation ahead of matches.

- Technical Topics:
  - Game Management
  - Handball
  - Offside
  - Positioning and Reading of the Game
  - Tactical Fouls
  - Penalty Area Incidents
  - Challenges

- Fitness Topics:
  - Weight control
  - Fitness Check
  - Recovery Exercises



2.4 TEAM ARRIVAL MEETINGS

TAMs, led by technical instructors, were initiated with each participating team to promote a shared understanding and transparency of how matches will be officiated during the tournament. At the same time, the TAMs were aimed at encouraging the teams to protect the image of football by acknowledging the match officials and opponents with respect and fair play.

The session provided the participating teams with recent updates of the Laws of the Game and a wide array of technical topics to ensure the best quality of football throughout the tournament.

Technical Topics:

- Players Safety
  - Challenges
  - Illegal Use of Arms
- Tactical Fouls
  - Stopping a Promising Attack
  - Denying an Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity
- Penalty Area Incidents
- Handball
- Offside
- Protect the Image of Football
  - Respect & Fair Play

2.5 PREPARATION IN NON-REFEREEING TECHNICAL TOPICS

In preparation for the tournament, different functional units' topics were covered to equip referees with the necessary tools and guidance prior to the start of the tournament. These sessions aimed to enhance referees' awareness of the crucial roles and discipline required both on and off the pitch during the competition.

Competition Overview & Match Procedures:

- Encompassed rules, regulations, and procedures governing the competition from start to finish
- Included competition format, scheduling, venues, match operations, and incident management

Football Technology:

- Implementation of VAR technology
- Communication System & Camera Plan
- Replay Operators Introduction
- Digital Substitution Tablet

Sports Integrity:

- Disciplinary procedures
- Prevention of Match-fixing

3. DURING COMPETITION

During the tournament phase, the training programme shifted to an operational cycle, ensuring that match officials remained physically fresh while maintaining a high "technical rhythm" through consistent use of technology.

3.1 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

Daily training was not limited to physical work; it incorporated the MVAR system and Instant Feedback systems to ensure officials remained sharp between match appointments.

- **MVAR Maintenance (Full-Pitch):** To replicate the intensity of the competition, 24 players and two coaches simulated match scenarios, allowing appointed match officials to practice "live" communication and synchronisation between the on-field referee and the VOR.



- **Instant Feedback (Half-Pitch):** Using a 10-player setup, instructors provided real-time "coaching". This allowed match officials to refine their positioning and reading of the game based on trends observed during the tournament.

- **VMO Simulator Drills (HQ):** VMOs continued simulation sessions until Group Stage at the headquarters. These sessions focused on maintaining technical speed with the VAR interface and ensuring consistency in decisions across all refereeing matters.

3.2 MATCH ASSESSMENT

The arrangement of a remote monitoring room at the VAR Centre and on-site referee assessor appointments played a pivotal role in maintaining quality officiating standards.

Remote Referee Assessor: All match footage was analysed live by a remote referee assessor at the Remote Monitoring Room located at the centralised VAR Centre. The video referee assessor tracked the match situations, compiling all relevant details: time and nature of incidents, decisions and sanctions, officials involved, and subsequent inputs for discussions.

Referee Assessor: On-site referee assessors were appointed to observe the performance of match officials live at the venues, who closely monitored the team's officiating capabilities and decisions made throughout the match and provided first-hand feedback.

3.3 MATCH DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

The match debriefings served as a vital learning tool for the appointees, whereby significant incidents from the previous matches were analysed to prepare the officials for upcoming challenges.

By addressing specific match incidents and providing guidance on officiating standards, the instructors highlighted areas for improvement and provided advice to ensure consistency and uniformity in foul recognition and interpretation of the Laws of the Game.

3.4 MATCH PREPARATION SESSIONS

The Technical Observers' Team presented insights related to team tactics, and individual players' styles and behaviors which proved to be beneficial for the match officials' preparation and understanding of football dynamics and trends. Overall, this allowed match officials to gain deeper insights into teams and improve game management and officiating standards.

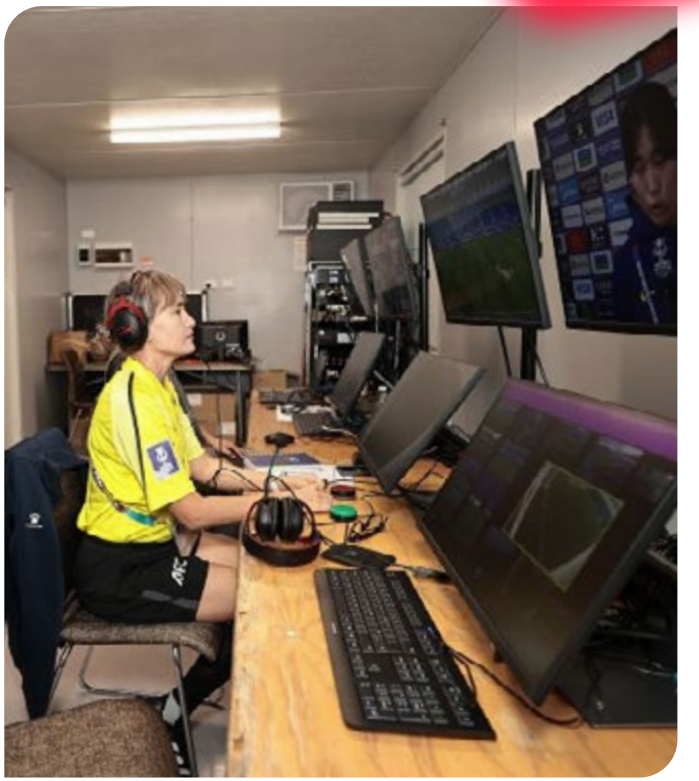
4. VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE IMPLEMENTATION

The VAR system was fully integrated for all 27 matches at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, utilising a centralised operational model, with each match, across all five venues, being operated remotely from the VAR Centre in Sydney, while a backup system was also implemented at each venue to ensure operational stability in case of any technical issues.

4.1 TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SET UP

Venue Integration: The VAR Centre was located at NEP Studios in Sydney, where, despite the distances to the stadiums, there was a seamless, high-speed distribution of raw camera feeds directly from the Host Broadcaster to the VOR. Backup VORs were located within the stadium's broadcast compound in case of any technical issues or signal loss.





System Technology Provider: Hawk-Eye Innovations was chosen to manage the hardware and software interface, ensuring that VMOs had access to synchronised multi-angle replays for precise incident review.

Operational Setup: The VOR was configured to support the VAR and Assistant VAR, providing a controlled environment optimised for rapid communication with the on-field refereeing team.

Referee Review Area (RRA): Each stadium featured a dedicated RRA with a pyramid monitor located next to or behind the fourth official's bench in case any On-field Reviews using the VAR output provided by VMOs.

4.2 VAR IMPLEMENTATION STATISTICS

The implementation of the VAR system across all matches ensured a high level of accuracy in match-changing decisions. The following data summarises the interventions that led to a formal review and subsequent correction.

VAR REVIEW	TOTAL	DECISIONS CHANGED	DECISIONS CONFIRMED
TOTAL REVIEWS	20	16	4
On Field Reviews	13	9	4
Only VAR Reviews	7	7	-
Penalty area incidents reviewed	5	3	2
Goals reviewed	13	13	0
Encroachment by GK in PK reviewed	0	0	-
Potential **Red Card Incidents** reviewed	2	0	2
Mistaken Identity situations reviewed	0	0	-
Average reviews per match	0.74		
1 Review every # matches	1.35		

Matches played: 27





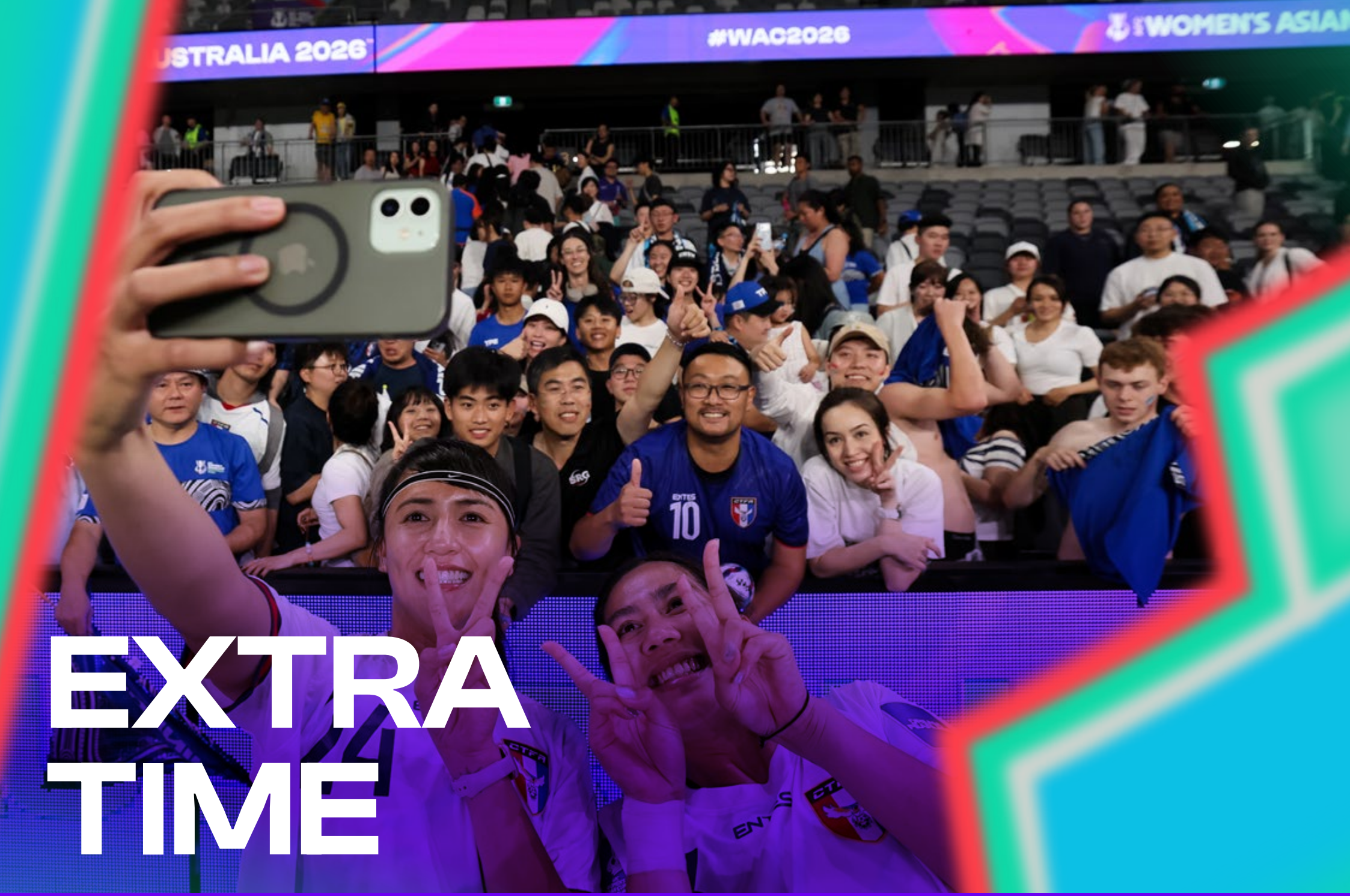
5. TECHNICAL SUMMARY

5.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The referee assessors and instructors' team, through their match reports and close monitoring, rated the match officials' performance as "good". The daily training, match debriefings and other activities and resources organised to raise the refereeing standards contributed significantly to decision-making as the tournament progressed.

5.2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

A total of 62 disciplinary sanctions were issued at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026™, of which 62 were cautions (yellow cards), and zero direct red cards were shown, representing a match average of 2.30 yellow cards.



EXTRA TIME

SQUAD INFORMATION

Team	Average Starting Age (Y, D)	Total Starting XI Changes	Total Players Used	Total Goal Scorers (excl OGs)	Total Games
Australia	28y 250d	15	22	5	6
Philippines	26y 204d	20	22	4	5
Korea Republic	27y 341d	19	26	12	5
IR Iran	28y 178d	8	23	0	3
DPR Korea	23y 36d	5	20	5	5
Uzbekistan	27y 65d	17	25	3	5
China PR	28y 221d	28	25	6	5
Bangladesh	21y 132d	5	18	0	3
Japan	27y 62d	33	25	14	6
Chinese Taipei	26y 105d	2	25	2	5
Vietnam	28y 263d	6	21	1	3
India	25y 301d	6	21	2	3

DISCIPLINARY RECORD

Team	Total Fouls Conceded	Yellow Cards	2nd Yellow Cards	Straight Reds
Uzbekistan	51	13	0	0
China PR	40	10	0	0
DPR Korea	37	8	0	0
Australia	33	5	0	0
Korea Republic	40	2	0	0
Chinese Taipei	22	6	0	0
India	25	5	0	0
Philippines	27	3	0	0
IR Iran	20	4	0	0
Bangladesh	16	4	0	0
Japan	22	0	0	0
Vietnam	12	2	0	0

EXPECTED GOALS FOR

Rank	Team	Expected Goals	Goals	Differential (Goals - Expected Goals)
1	Japan	24.3	29	4.7
2	DPR Korea	14.4	14	-0.4
3	Australia	12.5	12	-0.5
4	Korea Republic	11.2	16	4.8
5	China PR	8.9	10	1.1
6	Chinese Taipei	5.3	4	-1.3
7	Philippines	4.8	4	-0.8
8	Uzbekistan	2.6	4	1.4
9	Vietnam	1.5	2	0.5
10	India	1.3	2	0.7
11	Bangladesh	1.1	0	-1.1
12	IR Iran	1	0	-1

SHOOTING ACCURACY

Rank	Team	Shots	Shots On Target	Shots Blocked	Accuracy
1	Korea Republic	78	44	12	56.40%
2	Philippines	39	22	5	56.40%
3	DPR Korea	88	46	44	52.30%
4	Japan	133	67	39	50.40%
5	IR Iran	8	4	3	50.00%
6	Australia	69	34	21	49.30%
7	China PR	80	37	17	46.30%
8	Uzbekistan	20	9	1	45.00%
9	Chinese Taipei	21	9	8	42.90%
10	Vietnam	18	7	3	38.90%
11	India	20	7	5	35.00%
12	Bangladesh	21	5	4	23.80%

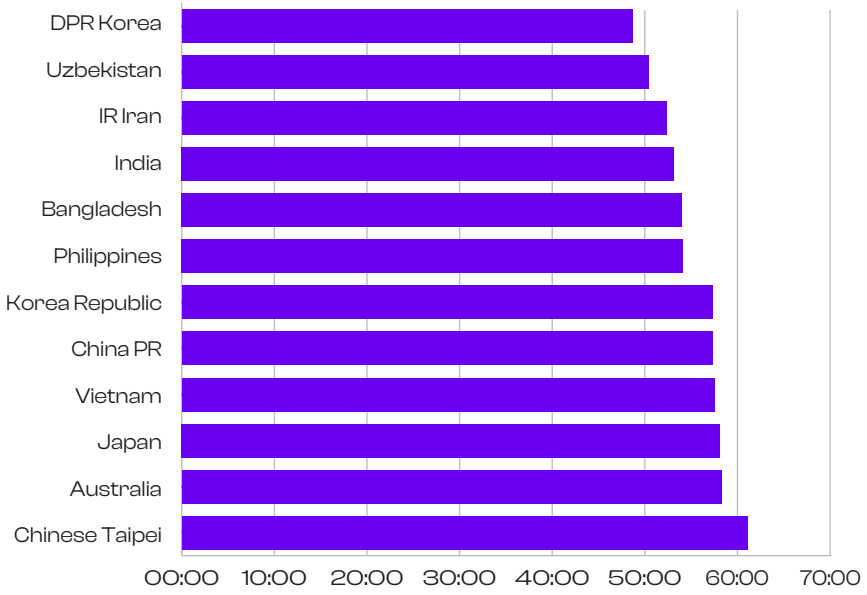
PASSING - FINAL THIRD

Rank	Team	Final Third Passes	Accuracy
1	Japan	2074	82.10%
2	DPR Korea	1046	74.70%
3	Korea Republic	897	73.60%
4	Australia	1020	69%
5	China PR	846	61.80%
6	Vietnam	288	54.90%
7	Chinese Taipei	296	53.70%
8	Bangladesh	207	48.30%
9	India	140	47.10%
10	Philippines	288	43.80%
11	IR Iran	107	38.30%
12	Uzbekistan	247	38.10%

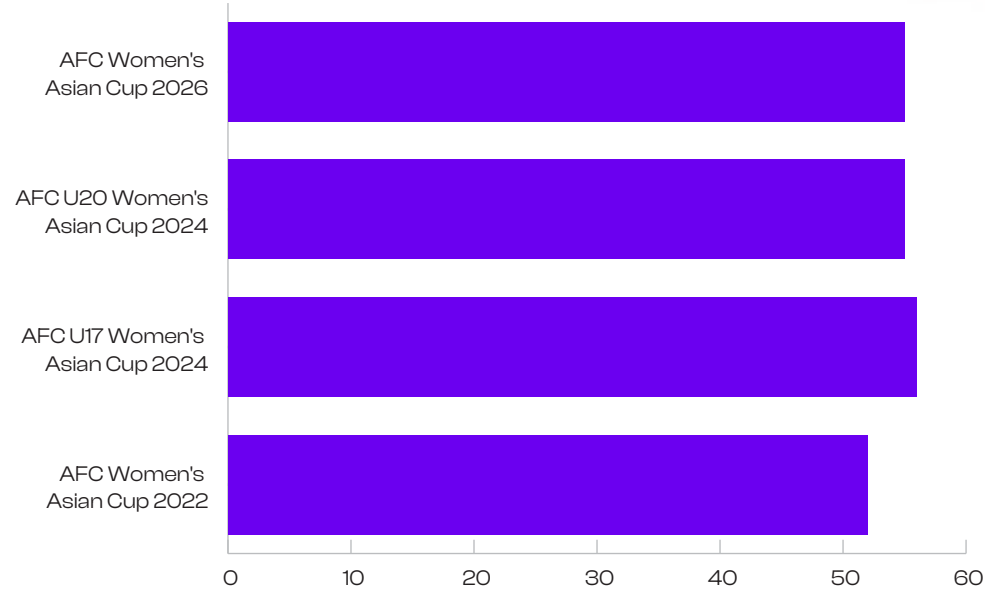




ACTUAL PLAYING TIME



ACTUAL PLAYING TIME (COMPARISON)









KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

674 MILLION
IMPRESSIONS

3,411
TOTAL POSTS

116 MILLION
VIEWS

6
LANGUAGES

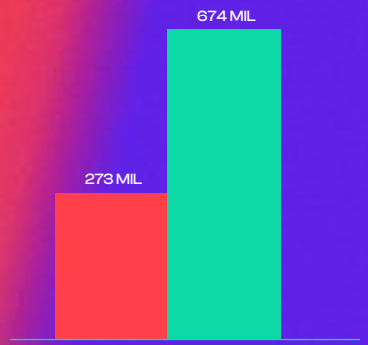
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1,095,459
USERS

3,135,728
PAGE VIEWS

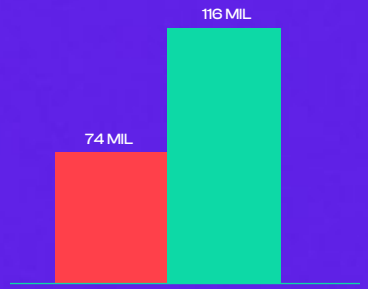
COMPARISON: 2022 v 2026

IMPRESSIONS



▲147% INCREASE

VIEWS



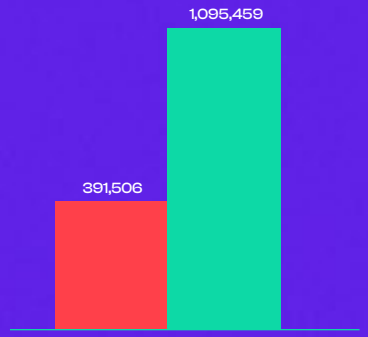
▲57% INCREASE

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP INDIA 2022

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2026

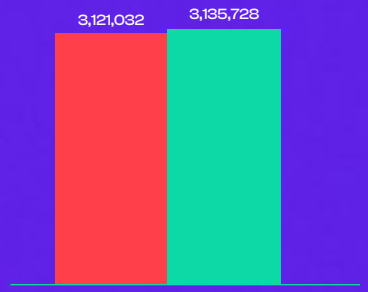
THE-AFC.COM: 2022 v 2026

USERS



▲180% INCREASE

VIEWS



▲1% INCREASE

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP INDIA 2022

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2026





AFC COMMITTEES

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