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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS OF THE UZBEKISTAN NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

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Annotation. This article analyzes the achievements, legal foundations, and future prospects of the Uzbekistan national football team on the international stage. It highlights the successes of the "White Wolves," who have rapidly become one of the strongest teams in Asian football since independence, including their performances in the AFC Asian Cup, positions in the FIFA rankings, and the international results of youth national teams. The article also examines the development of football infrastructure, protection of athletes' rights, and expansion of international cooperation based on the Law "On Physical Education and Sports," Presidential Decrees, and resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers. Furthermore, the study covers the future objectives of Uzbek football, such as qualifying for the FIFA World Cup, improving the quality of the domestic championship, developing the coaching system, and preparing the younger generation in accordance with international standards.

Keywords: Uzbekistan national football team, White Wolves, AFC Asian Cup, FIFA ranking, youth national team, Law on Physical Education and Sports, football infrastructure, international cooperation, World Cup, sports policy, prospects and objectives.

On June 5, 2025, the Uzbekistan national football team achieved a historic milestone by qualifying for the FIFA World Cup final stage for the very first time.

This success was secured during the Asian qualifying round for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, in a crucial match against the UAE national team in Abu Dhabi, which ended in a 0–0 draw. The result allowed Uzbekistan to secure one of the top positions in its qualifying group and earn direct entry into the final stage.

This national achievement had previously been accomplished among former Soviet Union countries only by Russia and Ukraine, making Uzbekistan the first Central Asian nation to reach the World Cup.

Throughout the qualification process, Uzbekistan played a total of 12 matches, suffering only one defeat, and collected 21 points to finish second in the group (with Iran taking first place).

In the final stage of qualification, the team delivered another memorable performance: on June 10, 2025, they defeated Qatar 3–0 at home, concluding the campaign in glory. Eldor Shomurodov, Igor Sergeev, and Azizbek Turgunbaev scored the goals in that victory.

Uzbekistan's qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup is regarded not only as a sporting achievement but also as the realization of a long-cherished national aspiration. This triumph came after eight unsuccessful attempts during the years of independence, symbolizing the team's steady growth and the results of the country's sports policy.

From the history, the Uzbekistan national football team, popularly known as the "White Wolves," has become one of the most promising teams in Asian football within a short period after gaining independence. Having played its first international match in 1992, the team currently participates regularly in competitions organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and is steadily strengthening its position among the top teams in the FIFA rankings. The national team has reached the quarterfinal and semifinal stages of the AFC Asian Cup several

times and has also gained significant experience in introducing young players to the international arena. These achievements are closely connected with the legal and institutional framework established in Uzbekistan in the field of sports. In particular, the Law "On Physical Education and Sports," Presidential Decrees, and resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers have created favorable conditions for the development of national sports, the strengthening of football infrastructure, and participation in international competitions. The activities of the Uzbekistan Football Association are also regulated within this legal framework, serving as a solid foundation for the national team's international success. Therefore, the current achievements of the Uzbekistan national team are not only the result of the efforts of players and coaches, but also a reflection of effective state sports policy and strong legal support. In the future, through further development of football infrastructure, support for young talents, and expansion of international cooperation, the national team is expected to achieve even greater success.

A national football team is an official team composed of the strongest and most skilled football players representing a particular country in international competitions. The national team is formed by the country's football federation and is recognized by FIFA and regional football confederations. The main mission of the national team is to defend the honor of the state, enhance the country's sporting prestige on the international stage, and promote football among the population. At the same time, the national team plays an important role in attracting the younger generation to sports, fostering a sense of patriotism, and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The squad of a national team usually consists of 23–26 players, who are selected as goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, and forwards. In the selection process, players' physical fitness, technical and tactical skills, match experience, discipline, and ability to work as part of a team are taken into account. Footballers called up to the national team may be playing in domestic leagues or in foreign clubs. The national team is managed by the head coach, who determines the game strategy, organizes training sessions, selects players, and prepares the team for competitions. Along with the head coach, assistant coaches, doctors, fitness specialists, and analysts also work with the team. Tactically, the team strives to maintain a balance between defense, attack, and midfield play. In modern football, pressing, fast attacks, combination play, and effective use of set pieces are considered essential.

National football teams participate in the FIFA World Cup, Asian, European, African, and American continental championships, the Olympic Games, and various international tournaments. Through these competitions, teams demonstrate their skills, gain experience, and secure their place in sports history. The success of the national team has a positive impact on the development of football in the country, increases young players' interest in the sport, and contributes to the overall sports culture. The national football team is not only a sports team but also a significant symbol of national unity, pride, and patriotism. It promotes a healthy lifestyle in society, educates young people in the spirit of discipline, diligence, and teamwork, and represents the country on the international stage.

After gaining independence, the Uzbekistan national football team quickly became one of the strongest teams in Asian football. Having played its first international match in 1992, the team has since been a regular participant in competitions organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The national team has reached the quarterfinal stage of the AFC Asian Cup several times, with one of its greatest achievements being reaching the semifinals in 2011. This result is considered one of the most significant successes in the history of Uzbek football. In addition, the team has achieved high positions in the FIFA rankings; in 2006, it reached 45th place, strengthening its status among the leading teams in Asian football. The national team's biggest victory was recorded in 1998 against Mongolia with a score of 15:0, while the heaviest

defeat occurred in 2000 against Japan with a score of 1:8. These results clearly reflect the team's experience and stages of development on the international stage.

Youth national teams are also achieving significant successes on the international stage. For instance, the Uzbekistan U-20 national team reached the quarterfinals of the 2023 World Cup, while the U-23 national team won the Asian Championship and secured qualification for the Olympic Games. These achievements confirm the promising future of Uzbek football. The Law "On Physical Education and Sports," Presidential Decrees, and resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers contribute to the strengthening of football infrastructure. Therefore, the achievements of the national team are not only the result of the hard work of players and coaches but also a reflection of the effective implementation of state policy.

The Uzbekistan national football team has become one of the strongest teams in Asian football and participates successfully in major international competitions. Through youth national teams, a solid foundation is being laid for the future. Although the Uzbekistan national team has achieved certain successes on the international stage, specific objectives have been set to reach even higher levels in the future. These objectives are closely linked to the development of football infrastructure, the improvement of the coaching system, and the preparation of the younger generation in accordance with international standards.

The greatest prospect for Uzbek football is to qualify for the FIFA World Cup. To achieve this goal, it is important to improve the quality of the domestic championship, create a competitive environment, and attract foreign (legionnaire) players. In addition, the success of youth national teams is expected to provide the senior national team with a new generation of strong players.

Among future objectives are strengthening football infrastructure, constructing modern stadiums and training facilities, expanding the coaching and scientific-methodological base, and ensuring the protection of athletes' rights. By enhancing international cooperation and establishing strong ties with major clubs and football academies, Uzbek players should have the opportunity to regularly play in foreign leagues.

In conclusion, the prospects of the Uzbekistan national football team are closely linked to qualifying for the World Cup, preparing the younger generation for international competitions, and strengthening football infrastructure. Consistent efforts in these areas will contribute to further solidifying the position of Uzbek football on the global stage.

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