

## UAE team leaves for Tehran for Saipa match

TEHRAN (FNA) — The United Arab Emirates' Al Wasl football squad left on Monday for Iran to meet Saipa Club in the second match of the Asian Champions League at the Saipa Club stadium in Tehran on Wednesday.

Al Wasl will be looking to compensate by clinching the three points after losing their first match last Wednesday to Iraqi club Al Quwa Al Jawiya 1-0.

The Iranian club drew 1-1 with Kuwait Club in the match held at Kuwait Stadium. Playing at home, Saipa will be looking for victory to top Group B and qualify for the quarterfinals.

One club from each group will reach the last eight.

The Al Wasl coach, Brazilian Ze Mario, said the match will not be easy and they will have to win if they are to qualify for the quarters.

"I have said before that this is a very tough tournament. The defeat which we suffered at home has left us with no alternative but to win Wednesday's match in Iran or at least not lose it," said Ze Mario.

The Al Wasl delegation to Tehran will be headed by Walid Al Shaibany, the club general secretary, along with technical, administrative and medical staff.

## Federer finds his feet as Haas halts red-hot



INDIAN WELLS, California (AFP) — World number one Roger Federer, in search of his first title of 2008, took no chances Sunday as he moved smoothly into the third round of the Indian Wells Masters Series.

The top-seeded Swiss, who enjoyed a first-round bye, defeated Spain's Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-3, 6-2 in his first ATP outing since a first-round ouster at Dubai last week.

Federer, who has put his quiet start in 2008 down at least in part to a bout of mononucleosis, is hoping a return to the California desert, where he won the title three years in a row from 2004-2006, will be the tonic he needs.

"I haven't played much, this is the difficulty," he said. "Every first round you play at a big tournament is always a bit of pressure if you're number one seed. I wasn't nervous or anything ... you just have a tendency to be a bit more unsure because you don't know the conditions that well yet."

Unsure or not, Federer was never in trouble, and he said he could probably have made the win more impressive if he hadn't stuck to a conservative game plan.

"I wouldn't play too risky," said Federer, who was shocked in his opening match here last year by Argentina's Guillermo Canas. "I could have taken more chances today and could have won even more easily, but the way it went I was very happy."

While Federer began to gather steam, red-hot Andy Roddick was cooled off by Germany's Tommy Haas.

Haas, 29, used a break in each set to defeat sixth-seeded Roddick 6-4, 6-4, displaying an array of crisp passing shots and asserting himself when it mattered most.

"Today was one of the matches where I won the majority of the important points," Haas said. "When I broke him, I really played some great points, backhand and forehand passing shots and forehand lobs. That was really the only difference today."

## Iran's women football squad practice for Asian Cup



TEHRAN (FNA) — Iran's women football team practice for the final round of 2008 Asian Cup in Vietnam, where they are slated to attend matches against the hosts, Myanmar and Taiwan in their group.

## Iran to participate in Istanbul Rally

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Iran's Motorcycle and Automobile Federation has announced the country's drivers would participate in Istanbul Rally 2008 for the second time.

Three professional participants and their co-drivers will compete in Group N category on public roads or off-road areas and run on a point-to-point format.

The Iranian team is made up of

Ali Marandian, Sina Saeedi, Mohammad Qal'e-Bani, Alireza Arab, Saeed Arabian and Arash Ramin-Yekta.

The Istanbul Rally, scheduled to start on Friday April 4 and finish in the afternoon on Sunday April 6, will open this year's Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) season in spectacular style.

The IRC will feature two new rallies in Portugal and Spain this year.

## Barcelona fails to impress with Almeria draw

MADRID (AFP) — On Samuel Eto'o's 100th appearance for the club, Barcelona missed a golden opportunity to make inroads on leaders Real Madrid when Almeria twice came from behind to secure a 2-2 draw on Sunday.

After Real's surprise 1-0 slip-up at Deportivo La Coruna 24 hours earlier Barcelona, who had Gabriel Milito sent off in the second half, could have cut the gap on the defending champions to five points.

But with this stalemate Frank Rijkaard's side are seven adrift with 10 games to go.

Serb teenager Bojan Krkic put Barcelona into an early lead, the 17-year-old pouncing on a rebound after Almeria keeper Diego Alves failed to adequately deal with Andres Iniesta's shot from outside the area.

Almeria, who had mustered just the one point from their last three games but who could count Real Madrid among their victims, drew back level off a setpiece which exploited some lax Barca defending.

The totally unmarked Ruben Pardo took to the air to flash an angled header past Victor Valdes.

The former Real Madrid defender celebrated by taking an imaginary swing at a golf ball that would have impressed Tiger Woods.

Almeria teed themselves up for a second goal shortly after when a cross caused panic in Barca's back line with Valdes having to rush back and tip the ball over his cross bar.

Rijkaard then introduced substitute Thierry Henry into the mix in the 54th minute.

The France striker was only on the pitch for a matter of seconds before racing down the left wing to pull the ball back and cross to Samuel Eto'o who fired past Alves from the centre of the box.

Barca, missing a host of familiar names including Lionel Messi and

Ronaldinho, were down another man when Argentinian Milito was sent off in the 72nd minute after picking up a second yellow card.

Any hopes though that Barca may have had to hold on to their lead were dashed six minutes from time when Kalu Uche exploited another defensive blip on the part of the visitors to head home past Valdes.

On Saturday an own goal by defender Pepe consigned Real to defeat at Deportivo. Real turned up on the north west coast seeking to end a winless run there stretching back to the 1991/92 season.

Deportivo's Felipe rounding Real defender Miguel Torres on the left, his goalbound shot taking a deflection off fellow Brazilian Pepe's outstretched leg with that unscripted intervention wrong-footing keeper Iker Casillas. Deportivo are lying in 13th position, two points off the drop zone.

Sunday's other action saw Villareal defeat Real Zaragoza 2-0 to follow up their historic Nou Camp victory last weekend with Nihat Kahveci and former Manchester United player Giuseppe Rossi with a second half penalty bagging the points.

That left third-placed Villareal two points behind Barcelona. Getafe celebrated being pitted against Bayern Munich in the UEFA Cup quarter-finals with a come from behind 2-1 success over Racing Santander.

Racing took the lead via Ebi Smolarek's 54th minute effort but Nigerian Ikechukwu Uche and star midfielder Jaime Gavilan struck back on 65 and 74 minutes to push Getafe up two spots into eighth. The game between Valladolid and Osasuna ended goalless.

In Sunday's late game Atletico Madrid climbed up to fourth with a 3-0 defeat of bottom side Levante.

## Hijab allowed in Asian karate games

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Iran has succeeded in gaining the International Karate Federation's approval for women to compete in the Asian games wearing hijab.

The decision to allow women to participate in the Asian championships while adhering to the Islamic dress code follows talks between IKF officials and Iran's Karate Federation Chief Behzad Katiraei in Morocco, Fars news reported.

Now Iranian women have six months to prepare for taking part in the Asian championships to be held in Malaysia.

However, negotiations on whether Iranian women can take part in international competitions while modestly covered still continue.

## Onuoha keeps City's European dream alive

MANCHESTER, England (AFP) — Nedum Onuoha's first goal for Manchester City clinched a 2-1 win over Tottenham on Sunday to put his side's push for a UEFA Cup place back on track.

City had been sliding down the table in alarming fashion after a fine start to the campaign. But they halted a dismal run of one win in eight matches thanks to a stirring second half revival at Eastlands.

Trailing to Robbie Keane's sublime first-half strike, Sven Goran Eriksson's men got the benefit of a fortunate offside decision to equalise through Stephen Ireland before Onuoha headed the winner.

The young defender had gone 66 games without getting on the scoresheet but he broke his duck at just the right time to keep City in with a shout of earning a European spot.

Tottenham had been unlucky to go out of the UEFA Cup at PSV Eindhoven in midweek, but their season is in danger of ending in anticlimax after a result that ended any chance of a late surge towards the top six.

The League Cup winners nearly took a fourth minute lead when Keane exchanged passes with Aaron Lennon and turned Onuoha before curling a shot just wide of the far post.

Jermaine Jenas tested City keeper Joe Hart for the first time with a long-range free-kick. The England midfielder then failed to hit the target when he steered Keane's pass over the bar.

Jenas was causing City all manner of problems and his astute pass gave Steed Malbranque a shooting opportunity, only for the French winger to blaze over.

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