



Sharapova pulls out of Olympics

By The Associated Press

Maria Sharapova will miss the Beijing Olympics because of a right shoulder injury.

The three-time Grand Slam singles champion said on her Web site Thursday that an MRI exam and other medical tests showed she has two small tears in tendons in her shoulder.

The right-handed Sharapova pulled out of the WTA tournament in Montreal because of the shoulder on Wednesday night — after winning a nearly three-hour match in which she double-faulted a whopping 17 times.

She was examined by a trainer midway through the three-set victory. "After yesterday's match, I knew there was something seriously wrong with my shoulder," Sharapova said in a posting on her Web site under the headline: "No chance of me competing in Beijing."

The Aug. 11-17 Olympic tennis tournament lost another top player earlier Thursday, when 2006 Australian Open runner-up Marcos Baghdatis of Cyprus withdrew because of a wrist injury.

Others who won't play in Beijing for various reasons include past Grand Slam singles champions Andy Roddick, Amelie Mauresmo and Mary Pierce.

Sharapova has been bothered off-and-on by her right shoulder for some time, and she pulled out of a tournament in March because of it.

"This is something that needs a lot of time to heal, which really hurts me to say that I have to miss the Olympics," she said on the Web site Thursday. "I'm currently packing up really quick to hop on the plane and head to (New York) for a second opinion, but I wanted to let all of you know first that there's no chance of me competing in Beijing. The timing is so unfortunate and this makes me more sad than anything."

Sharapova was briefly ranked No. 1 this season and is currently No. 3.

By skipping the Olympics, she will have more time to rest ahead of the U.S. Open, the year's last Grand Slam tournament, which begins Aug. 25.

Indonesia wins dragon boat title

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Indonesia's dragon boat racing team has come in first in the 2008 Club Crew World Championships now being held in Malaysia.

The Indonesian squad snatched the gold medal in the 2,000-meter event on Thursday.

Macao stood second place; the Iranian dragon boat team finished third and took home the bronze medal.

Teams from 11 Asian countries have participated in the competitions in Penang, Malaysia (July 31 to August 3).

The Iranian women's dragon boat squad stood in sixth place among the nine teams in the 2,000-meter event. The Indonesian women's team came in first.

The Iranian side was scheduled to compete in the 500-meter event on Friday.

The Club Crew World Championships are held every two years.

Khalili wins Iran's Golden Ball

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Persepolis striker Mohsen Khalili has been named as the best Iranian player in the last season.

Out-of-favor striker Khalili has been selected by Iranian journalists and experts in a vote organized by Iran Football News Agency.

Afshin Ghotbi, who inspired Persepolis to win Iran's Premier League (IPL) title after six years, has also been named as the best coach and Saeid Mozaffari-zadeh was elected as the best referee for the second time.

Seyyed Mehdi Rahmati, Mes goalkeeper, won the best keeper prize while Saipa's Seyyed Jalal Hosseini and Karim Bagheri of Persepolis have been named as the best defender and midfielder of the season.

Also, Tehran-based Persepolis claimed the best team award.



Turkey wins 2008 wrestling title, Iran finishes second



The Turkish Greco-Roman wrestling team has clinched the title at the 2008 FILA Junior World Wrestling Championships in Istanbul on Wednesday while Iran finished second with 50 points.

The Turkish side won the championship after gaining 59 points. Iran stood in the second place with 50 points followed by Azerbaijan with 33 points.

Iran's Saeed Abdevali snatched the only gold medal for the Iranian squad in the 66 kg category after defeating his Serbian opponent 2-1 Wednesday.

Iran's three silver medals were earned by Bashir Babajanzadeh (120 kg), Reza Assadpour (50 kg) and Mohammad-Reza Akbari in the 96 kg category.

Yadollah Arab-Jafari, competing in the 74 kg class, brought home a bronze medal.

Another Iranian wrestler, Babak Qorbani, failed to win any medals after refusing to compete with an Israeli rival.

Some 600 wrestlers and 300 trainers from 58 countries took part in the event at the Abdolpeykan sports hall between July 29 and 30.

(Source: Press TV)

Nadal advances to threaten Federer's top ranking

CINCINNATI, Ohio (AFP) — Rafael Nadal shifted into position to seize the No. 1 ranking with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/0) defeat of Tommy Haas only hours after Roger Federer opened the door with a Cincinnati Masters defeat.

In the wake of his Thursday third-round win over the German, Nadal stands three victories away from taking the ATP top spot from Federer. If he claims the title on Sunday, the deal is sealed.

Croatia's Ivo Karlovic defeated Federer 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 7-6 (5/7) to open the door to the change at the top after four and a half years of Federer's reign.

"Roger today was very unlucky in the third set," Nadal said. "He only lost two points on the last set, that's terrible for the tennis."

"Right now I know I'm in a good position, because Roger has to win everything from here, from Olympics to US Open."

"But I don't think too much right now. I only think about trying to improve my game for tomorrow."

Nadal, who defeated the 26-year-old Swiss in an epic Wimbledon final and won a fourth Roland Garros title, has been chasing Federer all season.

The 12-time grand slam winner has owned the top ranking for 235 weeks, fourth longest in the record books.

"It's disappointing, losing without getting broken, but it's not the first player it has happened to, especially to a guy like Ivo," Federer said after losing the first match in his career where his service was never broken.

Blatter says he was misquoted in calling Ronaldo a 'slave'

HANOI (AFP) — FIFA president Sepp Blatter said Friday he was misquoted in media reports citing him as calling Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo a "slave."

Blatter last month called on the English club to release the Portuguese player if he wanted to join Real Madrid, rather than hold him against his will.

"I have never said that Ronaldo is a slave," Blatter said during a Vietnam visit, where he was inaugurating part of a youth football training ground.

"What I said is slavery is with the young people — youngsters that European clubs are trying to get, 13, 14 and 15 year old young boys — and bring them to the big clubs. This is my expression, this is modern slavery."

"I have never mentioned that for Ronaldo. But the press ... they have distorted it. Ronaldo is not a slave."

He added that FIFA would not play a role in any dispute over Ronaldo.

"Let them work in peace now," Blatter said. "Cristiano Ronaldo and Man-

chester United and Real Madrid, they can solve this problem. For the time being, we have nothing to say."

Blatter also again stressed that clubs should release under-23 footballers to play in the Olympics, in line with FIFA rules.

"This principle has been made by the FIFA congress in the year 1988," he said. "It has worked for 20 years and nobody has ever put into question that the player under 23 shall be released."

"Now we have problems with two

it's hard.

"It's a tough trip we've got up in front of us now, going back to China and coming back to the Open."

"I'm looking forward for the next two tournaments. Those are really the ones that can make this season from a good one to a great one again. I hope I can manage to pull off something in the next couple of weeks."

Novak Djokovic and Ernests Gulbis set up their second battle in as many months by reaching the quarter-finals while Scot eighth seed Andy Murray put out Russian Dmitry Tursunov 6-3, 6-3.

Third seed Djokovic, riding his best run of form in the steamy American midwest, swamped his second straight Italian opponent as he crushed Andreas Seppi 6-1, 6-2 a day after beating Simone Bolelli in two tie-breakers.

Serbian Djokovic, 21, and Latvian teenager Gulbis hung out as kids when they attended the tennis academy of Niki Pilic in Munich.

Gulbis reproduced his French Open form over luckless James Blake, sending the veteran US seventh seed down to a 6-4, 1-6, 6-3 upset.

"I haven't played against top 10 players so much in my career, so beating one of them gives me more confidence," said the world number 53, who still seeks his first career ATP final.

"I knew that he's a tougher opponent on hard court than he is on clay, so I was a little bit nervous, but as the match went on I played pretty well in the beginning, though I lost my concentration in the second set."

clubs in Germany and one in Spain, but you have seen that the two Brazilian players — Rafinha and Diego — they will play tonight here, they are with their team."

Vietnam and Brazil were later to play a friendly in Hanoi.

"We are confident that finally the clubs they will understand that it is right for these players to go to the Olympic Games," Blatter said. "It is not only a question of solidarity. It's also a question of right."

Iran b-ballers finish fourth in Diamond Ball

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's Basketball Team finished fourth on Friday in The FIBA Diamond Ball Basketball Tournament held in Nanjing, China.

Iran lost 75-46 to Asian powerhouse China. The team began the tournament with a loss to Argentina and then shocked Serbia after beating the team 72-70.

Argentina defeated Australia 95-91 and won the championship. Australia and China came second and third respectively.

Besides Iran, the 2008 Diamond Ball Tournament attracted the reigning Olympic champion Argentina, African champion Angola, Australia, Olympic host China and 2002 FIBA World Champion Serbia.

Jabbari on brink of joining Grenoble Foot 38

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Mojtaba Jabbari is on the verge of joining Grenoble Foot 38 on a free transfer.

Iranian international playmaker is now in France for signing a deal with the French League 1 newcomer.

He has participated in the Grenoble's medical test and will likely join the team next week.



He inspired Esteghlal of Tehran to win the Iran's League Cup last season.

Scolari welcomes Chelsea's Russian test

MOSCOW (AFP) — Hot foot from their successful Asian tour Chelsea continue their pre-season preparations under new coach Luiz Felipe Scolari with a game against Lokomotiv Moscow here Friday.

AC Milan face Sevilla also on Friday with the winners meeting in Sunday's Railways Cup final.

Ahead of the clash with Lokomotiv Scolari told a press conference: "We are following our plan of preparations for the Premier League season."

"I'm really glad that I have a chance to test my team against serious opponents ahead of the its start."

"We came here to prepare the best possible way for the season-opening match with Portsmouth. It's my dominating idea for the moment."

The Brazilian added: "We played three good games in China but those were not strong games. Here we will face much more strong opponents."

"We will start against against the hosts Lokomotiv and then will face either Milan or Sevilla. It's very useful experience. Now I'm already sure about 85 percents of my first line-up. I hope after this tournament I'll be completely sure about it."

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon also praised the hosts for their invitation adding that this time he was hoping to achieve success in Moscow after last season's Champions League final loss to Manchester United.

"The feedback I received from the teams that competed last year was that the organisation was excellent and the teams participating were of a very high standard," Kenyon said.

"So when we got asked to participate it didn't take long to say yes!" he added. "I hope this time we will be more successful here."