

Ronaldo sidelined for a month with broken hand



SAO PAULO — Ronaldo will be sidelined at least a month after breaking his hand in a league match over the weekend.

Doctors said Monday the Brazilian forward broke two bones in his left hand after a fall 20 minutes into Corinthians' 3-0 loss to Palmeiras on Sunday.

Ronaldo could miss up to eight Brazilian league matches because of the injury.

Corinthians doctor Paulo de Faria says Ronaldo will miss four to five weeks because of the injury, and further exams would determine whether surgery was needed. "The hand is still very swollen," Faria said. "We will have to conduct more exams. The recovery time with or without surgery is the same, but the surgery may be more effective."

Ronaldo, less than five months into a successful return from the third serious knee injury of his career, had to be replaced after falling at Prudentao Stadium in Presidente Prudente.

Ronaldo was trying to dribble past Palmeiras

midfielder Souza when he was bumped and lost his balance.

He tried to soften his fall, but ended going down awkwardly on top of his hand. Ronaldo stood up and left the pitch on his own, but was holding his hand in obvious pain.

He later appeared near the field with his left arm supported by a brace. Ronaldo entered Sunday's match as Corinthians' top player, having scored six goals in five matches.

He was thriving in his comeback, and had already helped Corinthians win the traditional Sao Paulo state championship and the Brazilian Cup.

(Source: ESPN)



Estaki on verge of joining German handball team



Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's Allahkaram Estaki is taking part in training sessions of VfL Gummersbach handball team for the purpose of joining the team.

The 21-year-old Iranian international player is to train for the next three months at VfL Gummersbach, according to coach Sead Hasanefendic.

"I'm very happy here in Gummersbach. I would be the first Iranian player who joins a European team, but I still have a very long way to go," said Estaki.

Despite his young age he has played 36 international matches for his country.

Gummersbach is fourth in the Handball-Bundesliga (HBL). A total of 18 teams participate in HBL.

Vick reinstated conditionally, may play by Week 6

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Quarterback Michael Vick has been reinstated to the NFL on a conditional basis and a decision on his return to action will come by the sixth week of the regular season, Commissioner Roger Goodell said.

Vick, who completed a 23-month criminal sentence for bankrolling a dogfighting ring, was free to sign with an NFL team, participate in practice and play in the final two preseason games.

A decision on his return to regular-season competition would be based on the progress he makes in a "transition plan" laid out by the commissioner at a news conference.

"I will decide within the first six weeks of the regular season when and whether he will be reinstated to play," Goodell told reporters.

Goodell said he would evaluate how Vick conducted himself in terms of court-mandated conditions and promises the former Pro Bowl quarterback made to him in a four and a half hour meeting he had with him last week in the New York area.

Vick said he was grateful for the chance to play again.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Commissioner Goodell for allowing me to be readmitted to the National Football League," the 29-year-old said in a statement.

Vick played six seasons with the Atlanta Falcons but was released by the club following his conviction and indefinite suspension by the NFL.

"I fully understand that playing football in the NFL is a privilege, not a right, and I am truly thankful for the opportunity I have been given," he said.



Maradona: Messi reminds me of me

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina coach Diego Maradona says Lionel Messi's importance to the national team is reminiscent of himself.

"Messi is my Maradona. There is no other player more important than Messi," Maradona said in Monday's edition of sports newspaper Ole. "I could say that in my team, there is Messi and 10 others."

Messi, one of the best players in the world, has never performed as well with Argentina as he has with Barcelona, which won an unprecedented triple of Champions League, Spanish league and Copa Del Rey titles last season.

"I love working with him," Maradona said. "He makes everything seem easy. He's got the ball stuck to his foot, part of his body. It's like, here comes his foot and the ball as well. This is something I haven't seen in any other player, and I've seen lots of players."

Maradona joked that the Barcelona star is so famous now, he can't be bothered to return his calls.

"He's impossible to reach," Maradona said. "It's easier to speak with (U.S. President Barack) Obama than with Leo."

Argentina hosts Brazil on Sept. 5 in a crucial World Cup qualifier. Brazil leads South American qualifying with 27 points. Argentina is in fourth place with 22. Only the top four teams automatically reach next year's tournament in South Africa. The fifth-place team faces a playoff with the No. 4 side from the North, Central and Caribbean region to advance.

Argentina also has qualifying games remaining with Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

"We have four very tough games, but we are aiming at the Brazilians. Brazil is the team to bring down," Maradona said. "(Brazil) is a team that plays well, that has talent, that has luck, and that has played so well for so long that it has many World Cups."

"But we are Argentina -- you can't forget that!" Maradona again suggested it was unlikely that playmaker Juan Ramon Riquelme would be re-called to the team.

The 31-year-old Riquelme retired from international football in March, saying he and Maradona did not get along. Maradona had criticized Riquelme's play and overlooked him for several friendlies after being selected as coach in November.

Julio Grondona, the head of the Argentine football federation, has tried to intervene and bring Riquelme back on the team.

However, Maradona said the situation is "closed, although nothing is definite."

"But Riquelme has many things to explain to the players and staff," Maradona added.

City agree fee with Arsenal for Toure

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has confirmed Kolo Toure could be on his way to Manchester City as the clubs haggle over a fee for the Ivorian.

Mark Hughes is still desperate to land a big-name defender before the start of the Premier League season, and switched attention to Toure once his high-profile move for Chelsea captain John Terry collapsed.

The 28-year-old could now fly back from Arsenal's pre-season tour of Austria to discuss terms and have a medical. Wenger said the next 24 hours were potentially decisive. He told Arsenal TV: "We will see what's happening in the next 24 hours, nothing is decided yet."

"We have seven centre-backs and I am in the position where I have to play some in midfield but of course Kolo is a very good player and we will see what will happen in the next 24 hours."

(Source: ESPN)

Aghily to join Freiburg

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Sepahan of Isfahan defender Hadi Aghily is set to join Bundesliga's Freiburg football team.

The 27-year-old Iranian international has traveled to Germany to take part in the club's medical tests.

He will be the second Iranian Freiburg player after Ferydoon Zandi who was a member of the team from 2000 to 2002.

Aghily was part of the Persepolis youth academy, but he left the club for Saipa in 2001. After three years he moved to Sepahan where he won the Hazfi Cup. He also played in AFC Champions League final in 2007.

Aghily played in FIFA Club World Cup in 2007 and has capped for Iran 32 times.

Olympic 1500-meter champ Ramzi faces doping panel

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — Olympic 1,500-meter champion Rashid Ramzi faced a disciplinary hearing Monday to explain why he tested positive for the blood-boosting drug CERA after the Beijing Games.

The Morocco-born Bahraini was one of five athletes whose cases were heard by the International Olympic Committee panel. They were caught this year in new tests using blood samples taken at the games. All deny doping.

The others are Italian cyclist Davide Rebellin, who won silver in the road race; German cyclist Stefan Schumacher; Croatian 800-meter runner Vanja Perisic; and Greek race walker Athanasia Tsoumeleka.

A sixth athlete, women's weightlifter Yudelquis Contreras, was initially found positive in the retesting process. But the Dominican Olympic Committee cleared her last month after the "B" sample came back negative.

The IOC can strip athletes of their results and medals and ban them from the 2012 London Olympics.

Disciplinary panel member Denis Oswald said rulings were expected when the IOC executive board meets in Berlin on Aug. 13-14.

"Some of the cases have to go to the executive board and the intention is to announce all the results together," Oswald told the Associated Press after the nearly seven-hour session. "There's quite a lot of arguments and we now have to study them."

Ramzi emerged from IOC headquarters with his lawyer, Maurice Suh, about 90 minutes after the hearing started. Suh, whose previous clients in doping cases include former Olympic 100-meter champion Justin Gatlin and cyclist Floyd Landis, outlined the runner's defense.

He said the new test for CERA was not certified when Ramzi's sample was tested; that the test produced a negative "B" result for another athlete; and documents to explain how the sample went from Beijing to the laboratory in Paris were missing.

"The utmost care should be taken to ensure that the process is fair to Mr. Ramzi," Suh said.

Rebellin's lawyer, Fabio Pavone, said through a translator his client has "always been a clean athlete and he intends to demonstrate that. He is confident because he has nothing to hide."

Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic signs five-year Barcelona contract

BARCELONA, Spain — Zlatan Ibrahimovic signed a five-year contract with Barcelona after passing a medical test on Monday.

The Sweden striker completed the Spanish champions' most expensive transfer, a 46 million euro (€56.3 million) move from Inter Milan. He was presented to more than 40,000 fans at Camp Nou stadium wearing the No. 9 Barcelona jersey.

The 27-year-old Ibrahimovic is contracted at Barcelona through to 2014. He has a buy-out clause at 250 million euros (€385 million).

Barcelona's Cameroon striker, Samuel Eto'o, is set to join Inter as part of the deal, while Belarus midfielder Aleksandr Hleb

Iranian duo fencers suffer swine flu

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Two Iranian fencers have caught swine flu, according to Iran's Sports Medicine Federation president.

Karamollah Alimoradi said on Tuesday that Farnoush Aipoor and Azam Bakhti, two Iranian girls who took part in the 1st Youth Asian Games in Singapore last month, were rushed to Isfahan's Al Zahra Hospital.

"These two fencers will be dismissed from the hospital but kept under observation. We have not received any news about swine flu cases among other Iranian athletes," he stated.

Iran's National Olympic Committee has recently announced they will not allow their athletes to participate in the 1st Asian Martial Arts Games due to swine flu scare.



Schumacher said he was "hopeful" after a 90-minute hearing.

"I have to fight for my rights because I know I didn't do anything wrong," the German said.

Schumacher's lawyer, Michael Lehner, said he argued that the testing in the Paris laboratory did not follow World Anti-Doping Agency standards.

"They took the same people (to work on) the 'A' and 'B' samples so the results are not valid," Lehner said.

Perisic and Tsoumeleka were represented by lawyers.

The panel was chaired by IOC vice president Thomas Bach of Germany, and included Switzerland's Oswald, Gerhard Heiberg of Norway and Frank Fredericks, the former Olympic sprinter from Namibia.

The IOC can disqualify athletes from the games though suspensions must be imposed by an Olympic sport's international governing body. Under new IOC rules, any athlete caught doping and banned at least six months cannot compete in the next Olympics.

The athletes tested positive for CERA, an advanced version of the endurance-boosting hormone EPO, when a new lab test became available following the Olympics. The drug also was found in tests of backup samples, allowing the IOC to open disciplinary cases.

Ramzi was the first gold medalist from Beijing caught using performance-enhancing drugs. He gave Bahrain its first Olympic track and field gold medal with victory in the 1,500. If Ramzi is stripped of the victory, Asbel Kiprop of Kenya stands to be upgraded from silver to gold. Nicolas Willis of New Zealand would go from bronze to silver, and fourth-place finisher Mehdi Baala of France would get the bronze.

Rebellin finished second behind Spain's Samuel Sanchez. If he loses his medal, Switzerland's Fabian Cancellera would move to silver and Russia's Alexander Kolobnev to bronze.

Tsoumeleka, who won the Olympic 20K walk gold in 2004, Perisic and Schumacher did not win medals in Beijing.

The IOC previously disqualified nine athletes for doping at the Beijing Games. They included Ukrainian heptathlete Lyudmila Blonska who was stripped of her silver medal, and North Korean shooter Kim Jong Su, whose silver and bronze medals were revoked.

Three of those nine cases are still under appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.



will go on loan to the Italian club for one season.

"I haven't come to replace Eto'o because I'm a very different player," Ibrahimovic said. "I'm going to work to the maximum to demonstrate you haven't made a mistake in signing me. Thanks to Inter Milan for allowing me to sign for Barcelona. This is a very big day for me."

Barcelona said Ibrahimovic has a broken finger on his left hand and will require surgery. The injury happened during Inter's last friendly, against Chelsea in Los Angeles last week.

"It will require setting surgically, which will be done tomorrow at noon," technical secretary Txiki Beguiristain said.

(Source: AP)