

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's football coach Afshin Ghotbi named the national team's players on Sunday for two warm-up games against Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bahrain.

Iran is scheduled to play Bosnia on August 12 in Sarajevo. Ghotbi's team will also play Bahrain on August 31 in Manama.

Three experienced Iranian players, namely Mehdi Mahdavi, Ali Karimi and Vahid Hashemian, who announced their retirement from the national team, have not been called up by Ghotbi.

Iran's squad:

Keepers: Mehdi Rahmati, Vahid Taleblu, Misagh Memarzadeh, Rahman Ahmadi

Defenders: Hadi Aghily, Jalal Hosseini, Ali-Reza Mohammad, Mohammad Nosrati, Hossein Kabi, Farshid Talebi

Midfielders: Javad Nekounam, Farzad Ashoobi, Ehsan Hajsafi, Mehrzad Madanchi, Mojtaba Jabbari, Andranik Teymourian, Hossein Kazemi, Khosro Heydari, Pejman Noori, Iman Mobali, Ferydoon Zandi.

Strikers: Masoud Shojaei, Arash Borhani,

Kia, Karimi and Hashemian left off Iran's roster



Mojtaba Zarei, Mohammad-Reza Khalatbari, Iran, who prepares for Asian Cup qualifications, is in Group 5 along with Singapore, Thailand and Jordan. The team tops the group with four points with a victory over Singapore and a draw against Thailand.



Wenger believes Arshavin can make difference for Arsenal

LONDON — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger believes Andrei Arshavin will have a major influence on the upcoming season and could make the difference in ending the team's trophy drought.

The 28-year-old Russian came off the bench to score two goals in Arsenal's 2-1 pre-season victory Saturday over Atletico Madrid in the Emirates Cup.

"He knows how English football works," Wenger said. "He knows as well that now he's part of the team from the start. I believe the team knows as well how important (he is) and how big an impact he can have on the results."

Arshavin arrived from Zenit St. Petersburg in January and it took time for him to settle into the team. He improved considerably late in the season, including scoring four goals in one match against Liverpool in April.

He was cup tied for the Champions League, but now will be available for all competitions from the start of the season.

Wenger evaded questions about whether Arshavin would play a more central role this season, simply saying "he can." The manager doesn't want to heap too much pressure on Arshavin, but is confident he will be a key influence.

"He has what you cannot give to a player," Wenger said. "He understands when there is danger, when there's an opportunity. In the final third, he's certainly dangerous."

Arshavin proved that Saturday, running on to a cross from Cesc Fabregas to the back post and volleying past goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo in the 86th minute. Atletico equalized two minutes later after German Pacheco beat an offside trap and slotted past goalkeeper Vito Mannone. TV replays showed Pacheco may have been marginally offside.

But Arshavin pounced on a poor headed backpass from Atletico defender Tomas Ujfalusi, tapped the ball around Asenjo and then slid it inside the net from an acute angle for the winner in the 90th.

Wenger doesn't feel an urgent need to go on a spending spree after selling striker Emmanuel Adebayor and defender Kolo Toure to Manchester City. He says he has enough attacking options, pointing to Arshavin and midfielder Tomas Rosicky, among others.

Wenger said any new players will be brought in before the team's pre-season ends at Valencia next Saturday. There has been speculation over several players, including the possible return of former captain Patrick Vieira.

Rosicky returned against Barnet last month after 18 months out with hamstring and knee injuries. He didn't feature in the three following matches because of a minor setback, but played the first half Saturday and had a goal disallowed after another player was ruled offside.

"I'm pleased and cautious with him," Wenger said. "He has not played for 18 months and I'm not a dreamer. I think if he gets through the next two months without a setback, we have (progressed in) the battle. But it's not won yet."

Arsenal finished fourth in the Premier League last season, spending several weeks in fifth place and under threat of losing out on a Champions League place for this year. The team hasn't won a trophy since the FA Cup in 2005. The Gunners last won the league in 2004.

(Source: Canadian Press)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Milan reject Chelsea Pirlo bid



ROME (AFP) — AC Milan have turned down a seven-million pound (8.27million euro) offer from Chelsea for Italian international midfielder Andrea Pirlo.

Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said the bid from the English Premier League side, now coached by former Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti, was "unsatisfactory".

"The offer of seven million pounds plus Claudio Pizarro is not satisfactory...under these conditions Pirlo is not for sale," Galliani told Sky Sport Italia.

Mason reverses decision to retire



BALTIMORE (Reuters) — Veteran wide receiver Derrick Mason has reversed his decision to retire and turned up at the Baltimore Ravens' training camp Saturday.

"It was a tough decision, but I think it was a good decision for me to come back,"

Mason who had announced his retirement on July 13, told the Ravens' website (www.baltimoreravens.com).

"I still have an intense fire inside me, and I want to play," the 12-year veteran added. "My family and I wanted to finish it out the right way. I felt like I had left something undone."

Mason, 35, has caught 790 passes for 10,061 yards and 52 touchdowns during his career.

Tiger moves ahead in Buick



Tiger Woods fired a sizzling 65 to take a one stroke lead going into the final round of the Buick Open at Warwick Hills.

The world number one was eight off the pace after an opening 71 but Friday's 63 got him back into the tournament and another fine round that saw him make eight birdies and a single bogey has put him in line for a 69th PGA Tour win.

Woods was handed the advantage when Michael Letzig, who was leading by one, double-bogeyed the closing hole.

However, it will be the second time this year Letzig has partnered Woods in the final round of a tournament, and he will be hoping to do better than at Memorial when Woods' 65 took him to victory while Letzig slumped to a 75.

(Source: Skysports)

Fans flock to remember Sir Bobby



Tearful football fans flocked to Newcastle's St James' Park to pay their respects to Sir Bobby Robson, following his death on Friday at the age of 76.

Hundreds braved rain to lay flowers and sign a book of remembrance at the stadium.

The first tier of the Sir John Hall Stand was covered with shirts, scarves, flags, banners and flowers laid by grieving fans.

Families stood tearfully as a steady procession of well-wishers added to the colorful pitchside tribute.

They spoke movingly of the way in which Robson had affected their lives and their love for a man who had been an inspiration to them.

(Source: Skysports)

Iran advances to next round of FIVB Junior Volleyball

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PUNE, India — Iran swept Egypt in its last preliminary round match of the 2009 FIVB Men's Junior Volleyball World Championship on Sunday.

Iran defeated Egypt 3-1 (25-9, 19-25, 25-21, 25-20) and advanced to quarterfinal round as the first team. Iran had already defeated Belgium and China respectively in Group B.

"I am so happy because of the three successive victories in the preliminary round. Of course we are not finished yet and want to reach the final. Thanks to Iranian fans who attended the match and supported us against the Egyptians," Mostafa Karkhaneh said in the post-match news conference.

Iranian woman futsaller linked to Spanish team

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TEHRAN — Behnaz Khayyat may be the first Iranian woman futsal player who plays abroad.

The Tejaratkhaneh Hormozgan keeper has been linked to a Spanish futsal club. The name of the team has not been mentioned.

"There is no limit to transfer Iranian women futsal players to foreign countries but they have to be allowed to play with full hijab," the vice-president of Iran's Football Federation said on Sunday.

"I don't think there is any problem because she is a keeper and they have to play with full cover," Farideh Shojaei added.

Iran bound for FIBA Asian Championship

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's basketball team will leave Tehran on Monday morning to take part in the 25th FIBA Asia Championship for men, slated for August 6 to 16 in Tianjin City, China.

The defending champion has been drawn along with Uzbekistan, Kuwait and Taiwan in Group B. Iran is scheduled to play Taiwan in its opener on August 6.

The Persians will play Uzbekistan and Kuwait in the following days.

Phelps reels in Cavic to stay butterfly king

ROME (Reuters) — Michael Phelps used his powerful shoulders to perfection to overhaul big rival Milorad Cavic and steal back his 100 meters butterfly world record in an enthralling final at the world championships on Saturday.

The Olympic great was trailing in fourth after 50 meters with Serbia's Cavic leading the pack but the roars of the Roman fans spurred the American on to retain his title in style.

His long arms reached out to touch the wall first in 49.82 seconds, beating the 50.01 Cavic had laid down as a marker in Friday's semi-finals.

Phelps lost his big battle with Germany's Paul Biedermann in the 200 freestyle final on Tuesday but rose to the occasion against Cavic, who took 50 butterfly gold on Monday.

A major rivalry between the pair is now burgeoning. "It's almost literally like a straight showdown, like boxers going face to face at the weigh in," Phelps said.

"It's kind of cool for the sport. I have a feeling this battle is going to go back and forth for a while."

Cavic, wearing a soon-to-be banned Arena suit deemed quicker than Phelps' Speedo, added: "When I hit the 50 he was



much closer than I expected.

"Michael Phelps is Michael Phelps. He does what he does and he did."

The victory gave Phelps his fourth gold of the meet following triumphs in the 200 butterfly, the 4x100 freestyle relay and the 4x200 freestyle relay, with the defeat by Biedermann the only blemish in a scaled-down programme.

He chose to compete in fewer races than normal in the Foro Italico open pool after only just returning from a six-month break at the U.S. trials in Indianapolis last month, where he set a previous 100 butterfly record.

After 35 suit-aided world records in the previous six days, and a morning trip to visit Pope Benedict for some top swimmers, Saturday's session started slowly with Australia's Marieke Guehrer causing a surprise by winning the women's 50 butterfly.

Brazil's Cesar Cielo Filho then completed a freestyle double by adding the 50 title to the 100 crown he won on Thursday, but the lack of world records was puzzling the spoilt crowd.

Zimbabwe's Kirsty Coventry duly delivered by gliding home in two minutes 04.81 to seize gold in the 200 backstroke.

FC Barcelona tops Galaxy

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Pedro Rodriguez and Jeffren Suarez scored to give FC Barcelona a 2-1 exhibition victory over the Los Angeles Galaxy in front of 93,137 fans at the Rose Bowl on Saturday night.

David Beckham scored for the Galaxy. He received a mixed reception when the starting lineups were introduced and was booed by the predominantly pro-Barcelona crowd virtually every time he touched the ball.

The crowd was the largest for a soccer game in the United States since the 1994 World Cup.

Suarez, who replaced Lionel Messi at halftime, broke a 1-1 tie in the 67th minute. Sergio Busquets sent a through ball to Suarez, who scored from 13 yards.

Rodriguez gave Barcelona a 1-0 lead in the 11th minute when he converted the deflected rebound of Messi's shot from 4 yards.

Beckham tied it in the 45th minutes with a 26-yard free kick that curled into the upper-left corner.

Moyes : No respect from City

Everton boss David Moyes claims Manchester City are not showing enough respect in their pursuit of Joleon Lescott.

City have failed with two bids for the England international, but are tipped to increase their offer to £22million in an attempt to land Lescott. Reports in Sunday's newspapers have also suggested Lescott is willing to hand in a transfer request at Goodison Park in order to secure his move to City.

However, Moyes is unhappy with City's chase for the former Wolves centre-half and believes the Toffees' Premier League rivals should be more respectful. He told the Sunday Mirror: "It's about showing respect and we're not being shown that."

"I'm sure if I was (City boss) Mark Hughes, with all the money he has, I would try to buy the best players."

"But we try to go about it in a different fashion. I would think I would go about my business in the way I've always done."

Moyes added: "I've always tried to contact the managers and show respect to them in terms of transfers - and no matter how much money I might have to spend I would always want to keep that up."

(Source: Skysports)