

Iran advances to 2010 FIBA World Championship

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TIANJIN, China — Iran narrowly defeated Jordan on Saturday to book a place in the 2010 FIBA World Championship which takes place in Turkey.

The defending champions handled the pressure with better composure and eked out a 77-75 win against a doughty fellow West Asian nation Jordan to book their second successive entry into the title round.

The win — which extended Iran's run in the championship to 8-0 — put the West Asian powerhouse as the first FIBA Asia team to book their ticket to the 2010 FIBA World Championships in Turkey.

"Our aim here is to win the gold medal," said Iran coach Veselin Matic.

"Qualifying (for the FIBA World Championship) is important, but it's more important to retain the title," Matic added.

"So we will come out even harder on Sunday," the Serbian said.

Jordan coach Mario Palma said, "I think we lost the initiative in the first half."

"After that it was all uphill. Against a team like Iran you don't win that



Iran's Samad Nikkhah Bahrami led the team to victory, scoring for the game with 23 points, seven seconds left were most significant. Jordan's Hamed Afagh was at hand to regain control for Iran.

And whenever Jordan fought back, Hamed Afagh was at hand to regain control for Iran.

Afagh had an incredible 5/7 record in three pointers for his 18 points.

Hamed Hadadi scored only five points, but stood tall and solid in defense collecting 12 rebounds — most importantly 11 of them in defense.

Rasheim Wright was Jordan's highest scorer with 17 points, 11 of them scored in the first half.

Sam Daghigh, who scored nine points in Jordan's third quarter galantry, had fifteen points.

Zaid Abbas' double-double — 11 points and a game-high 17 points — went in a losing cause.

China beat Lebanon 72-68 in another semi-final match. Iran will play China in the final round.

Woods opens commanding lead at gusty Hazeltine

CHASKA, Minnesota (Reuters) — Tiger Woods answered every challenge with a brilliant display of power shot-making on a hot, windy day at Hazeltine to seize a commanding four-stroke lead after 36 holes of the U.S. PGA Championship.

Woods, up by one after an opening 67, burst out of a four-way tie with back-to-back birdies from the sixth and quashed a late challenge by Briton Ross Fisher with three birdies in a row to post 70 for a seven-under total of 137.

"It was pretty blustery," Woods said about the 25 mph gusts that blew across the 7,674-yard layout, the longest to hold a major championship.

"It was changing directions a little bit here and there. It was affecting putts. You had to play the wind on putts. All in all just a very difficult day."

Five players were tied for second on three-under 141 -- holder Padraig Harrington of Ireland (73), two-time winner Vijay Singh of Fiji (72), U.S. Open champion Lucas Glover (70), Australian Brendan Jones (70) and Briton Ross Fisher (68).

Fisher birdied three of four holes from the 14th to surge into a tie with Woods on five-under, but the world number one shifted into high gear and the 28-year-old Englishman bogeyed his last two holes to drop back.

On the front nine, big-hitting Spaniard Alvaro Quiros and Graeme McDowell of Britain joined Woods and Harrington in a four-way tie for the lead on four-under before giving way.

McDowell shot 75 and Quiros 76 as both finished on 145.

Woods played some spectacular golf sandwiched inside a bogey start and bogey finish. He took five on the par-four first hole after driving into the left rough and lost a stroke to par after an errant approach on the 18th.

With winds firming up the massive greens that grew bumpier as the day progressed, Woods made shot after shot to leave his pursuers behind.

"I got off to a poor start and just kind of hung in there," said Woods, going after his 15th major crown. "Long way to go. Thirty-six more holes."

That analysis might offer little consolation for the 79 other players who made the cut at four-over 148. Woods has won all eight times after leading a major at the half-way mark.

"His game looked solid again today," said Harrington, who played alongside Woods and watched his overnight one-stroke deficit blow out to four on Friday.

"I would think the golf course will get tougher on the weekend ... More tucked pin positions and with the greens getting a little bit firmer, all in all probably playing well into Tiger's hands."

NEWS IN BRIEF



Wenger laughs off Cesc talk



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insists Barcelona have as much chance of signing Cesc Fabregas as the Gunners do of capturing Lionel Messi.

Fresh reports suggest that European champions Barca are lining up an attempt

to bring Spain international Fabregas back to Camp Nou.

The 22-year began his career at Barca before moving to England in 2003 and speculation has hinted that he could be interested in switching back to his homeland.

Wenger, though, has again laughed off rumours he would sell by comparing a approach for captain Fabregas to a Gunners enquiry regarding Argentina star Messi.

(Source: Skysports)

Montreal closes on F1 return



Montreal officials have revealed that they are 'trying to finalize' a deal that will see Canada return to the F1 calendar in 2010.

Although Bernie Ecclestone recently confirmed his interest in seeing F1 return to Montreal, the city made it

clear that it was not willing to pay just any price that the F1 supremo demanded.

But it now looks as if the two parties have come to an agreement with Montreal's major Gerald Tremblay feeling rather positive about a deal.

(Source: Skysports)

Moyes eyes top four shake-up



David Moyes believes Everton can challenge for a UEFA Champions League spot this season - but has dismissed suggestions that Arsenal are the weak link in the top four.

The Toffees were the last club to break the domination of the 'big four' when they finished ahead of Liverpool in the 2004/05 season, and they remain contenders to repeat the feat after coming in sixth and fifth in the last two years.

Many have suggested that Arsenal could be the most likely side to concede their Champions League spot - particularly given Manchester City's transfer activity - but Moyes feels there could be many surprises at the top of the table.

(Source: Skysports)

Santa Cruz aiming for glory



Manchester City striker Roque Santa Cruz believes that it is "a matter of time" before his side are challenging for top honors in the Premier League.

The Paraguayan moved to Eastlands in a deal worth £17million over the summer and is confident his new club will soon be in the title race.

He has also set his sights on overhauling neighbors Manchester United as the city's most successful club.

"It won't be easy to catch them but that's our aim," Santa Cruz told The Guardian.

(Source: Skysports)

Iran's wrestling team wins Ziolkowski wrestling tourney

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WARSAW — Iran finished first in the Ziolkowski International Free-style Wrestling Tournament on Friday.

Iran won the championship with 67 points, gaining four gold medals and three silvers.

Russia and Azerbaijan came in second and third places respectively. Ziolkowski International Free-style Wrestling Tournament was held in Warsaw, Poland, from August 13 to 14 with the participation of 24 teams.

Team Standings: 1- Iran, 67 2- Russia, 55 3- Azerbaijan, 35 4- Bulgaria, 34 5- Georgia, 34 6- Kazakhstan, 34 7- Ukraine, 29 8- Turkey, 27 9- Belarus, 25 10- Poland, 24 11- United States, 13 12- Armenia, 10 13- Spain, 6 14- Slovakia, 2 15- India, 2 (of 24 teams)

Brazil futsal team to travel with its stars to Iran

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TEHRAN — Brazil futsal team will travel to Tehran with its iconic players to play three friendlies with Iran in late September.

The reigning world champion is scheduled to play Iran on three successive days from 21 September.

Brazil's iconic players including, Tiago, Franklin, Schumacher, Marquinho, and Jonas will accompany their team on the trip.

Falcao, the world's best futsal player, is the only well-known Brazilian player who will not come to Iran.

Iran was beaten by Brazil 1-0 in the second stage of the 2008 Futsal World Cup.

Vick ready for return to football

PHILADELPHIA (Reuters) — Disgraced NFL star Michael Vick made his first public appearance for the Philadelphia Eagles on Friday and expressed remorse for bankrolling a dogfighting ring, an offense that sent him to prison.

"I made some mistakes and did some terrible things," Vick, a former All-Pro quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons, told a news conference to announce his signing with the Eagles.

The two-year deal divided fans in Philadelphia, with some threatening to abandon the Eagles and others saying they could hardly wait to see him in the team's uniform.

Vick, released in May from federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, will be eligible to play the final two preseason games with the Eagles and, if National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell approves, could join the team by the sixth week of the regular season in October.



"Everybody deserves a second chance," Vick said. "But I think you only get one shot at a second chance and I'm conscious of that."

Vick, 29, was convicted in 2006 of organizing a dogfighting ring and served 18 months of a 23-month sentence. His suspension from the NFL was conditionally lifted on July 27.

Media reports said the first year of Vick's contract with the Eagles was worth \$1.6 million, with the team having an option for the second year at \$5.2 million.

Eagles coach Andy Reid said he was satisfied that Vick truly regretted the dogfighting and was "not only proactive but sincere" in his desire to make amends.

"It was a smart move by the Eagles -- a good business move," said Tom McCloskey, a customer at the 15th Round sports bar in Philadelphia. "Eagles fans will start to love Vick if he starts to do well."

Safina ends Clijsters' comeback at Cincinnati

CINCINNATI, Ohio (Reuters) — Kim Clijsters' brilliant comeback after two years off the tour came to an end at the Cincinnati Open on Friday when she lost 6-2 7-5 to world number one Dinara Safina in the quarter-finals.

Former world number one Clijsters led 2-0 in the first set and 4-1 in the second but could not press home the advantage as Russian Safina powered her way into the last four.

"I really felt like Dinara today played some of her best tennis that I've seen of her," Clijsters, who gave birth to her first child last year, told reporters.

"She doesn't give you the opportunity to step in and put the pressure on her. She hits the ball extremely deep and down the middle of the court."

"It's a very good game plan that she's developed in the last few years. Obviously it's worked."

The Belgian 26-year-old, unseeded here and without a world ranking, launched her "second career" by beating Marion Bartoli, Patty Schnyder and French Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova on the way to the quarter-finals.

"I kind of feel like I want to go out there right now and do it all over again and try to figure out a few things out there," she said.

MLS' Donovan tests positive for swine flu

CARSON, Calif. — Los Angeles Galaxy forward Landon Donovan has tested positive for what is believed to be swine flu, and his teammates are taking precautions.

Donovan was to be evaluated by a doctor on Friday and Saturday, the team said. His status for the Galaxy's game against Seattle remains unclear.

"It certainly depends on how Landon feels and what the doctors tell me," Galaxy coach Bruce Arena said after practice Friday. "He might be an option, depending on how quickly he can turn it around."

Donovan did not practice Friday after playing all 90 minutes for the United States in a 2-1 loss to Mexico in World Cup qualifying Wednesday in Mexico City. SI.com first reported his condition Thursday night.

The United States Soccer Federation said Donovan joined the national team on Aug. 9 in Miami, three days before the game. It also said that no other players expressed or showed signs of flu-like symptoms while in camp.

"Even Landon said it hasn't hit him as hard as the normal flus have hit him," Galaxy spokesman Justin Pearson said.

In a statement, the federation said Donovan tested positive for the influenza A virus, which is presumed to be the H1N1



strain known as swine flu.

"We had the flu run through the team last week in Boston," Arena said. "We took the necessary precautions. We had a couple of staff members out a couple of days and on medication."

All Galaxy players and support staff who encountered Donovan have been told they should take Tamiflu for 10 days. Roughly half the players on the U.S. national team are rejoining clubs in Europe, while the rest return to MLS

teams.

Also missing Galaxy practice on Friday were David Beckham and Chris Birchall, who played Wednesday for England and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively. They, along with Donovan, received the day off, said Arena, who added that nobody other than Donovan is sick.

"It's not infectious," he said. "We're well past that stage. There are no issues on our team."

Midfielder Chris Klein said that Donovan's possible absence could be pivotal. Donovan, MLS' player of the month for July, has nine goals and five assists.

"It's huge because it's Landon and he's the best player in our league," Klein said. "Any team that doesn't have Landon is going to be a different team."