

Abedzadeh named Iran's favorite football player

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Former Iran football team captain Ahmadreza Abedzadeh has been chosen as Iran's favorite player in last 30 years, according to polls taken by an Iranian television station on Monday night.

Abedzadeh won more than 42 percent of the votes in the six-candidate race. Ali Daei, Ali Parvin, Ali Karimi, Nasser Hejazi and any

other player were chosen respectively in the opinion pole.

Abedzadeh nicknamed the "Eagle of Asia" is the former keeper of Esteghlal, Persepolis and the Iranian national football team. He performed well in the 1998 World Cup. His fantastic saves helped Iran attain respectable results in the tournament.



NEWS IN BREIF



Bellis close to return to Britain



Manx cyclist Jonny Bellis is communicating and close to a return to Britain after a motor scooter accident in Italy last month.

The 21-year-old suffered a fractured skull and bruising to his brain when he crashed in Tuscany prior to September's road world championships.

He was subsequently placed in a medically induced coma.

Bellis competed in the road race at last year's Beijing Olympics and is a three-time European track champion.

A statement on British Cycling's official website read: "Jonny is doing really well since the last update and is communicating by writing messages on a white board. They are looking into flying him to London shortly."

(Source: BBC)

Safina unworried by critics



Dinara Safina has reclaimed her place as world number one in the rankings and insists she is no longer concerned by critics saying she is undeserving of the top spot.

The 23-year-old, who has never won a Grand Slam title, begins her 26th week on top of the standings this year after knocking 11-time major winner Serena Williams from the number one spot.

The Russian is now preparing for the season-ending WTA championships in Doha, where Williams will have the opportunity to regain the top spot to end the year as world number one.

(Source: Skysports)

Brook-Jennings postponed



Kell Brook's eagerly-awaited showdown with Michael Jennings has been postponed.

Brook, recently named the British Boxing Writers' Young Fighter of the Year pulled out of the British welterweight title clash after picking up a virus.

The cold, which prevented the champion finishing his training camp, means the clash - which many were expecting to be a fight of the year contender - will be moved to a later date.

The bill at the Echo Arena, Liverpool, will still go ahead with the all-Scouse battle for the British super-middleweight title between Tony Quigley and Paul Smith top of the bill.

(Source: Skysports)

Alonso eyes winning farewell



Fernando Alonso has admitted he is braced for an emotional goodbye to Renault at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Alonso will bring an end to his second stint at Renault after the race, with the Spaniard having agreed a big-

money move to Ferrari.

And Alonso, who lifted the world title at Renault in 2005 and 2006, is hoping to leave the team on a winning note.

Alonso said: "I would love to finish the season and my Renault career with a great result."

"It will be an emotional race because I have enjoyed so many special memories with this team, and I am leaving behind a lot of friends."

(Source: Skysports)

Esteghlal saddened by Zob Ahan in Isfahan

Tehran Times Sports Desk

ISFAHAN — Esteghlal of Tehran suffered its second loss of the Iran Professional League season on Tuesday.

In the match played at the Foolad Shahr Stadium, Esteghlal was beaten by Zob Ahan of Isfahan 1-0 and descended to the second place of the IPL rankings.

Mohammad-Reza Khalatbari scored the Isfahani team's sole goal in the 23rd minute. Esteghlal created many opportunities afterwards, but the scoreboard remained unchanged until the end of the match. Esteghlal had previously lost to its namesake rival Esteghlal of Ahvaz at the Azadi Stadium.

Sepehan of Isfahan tops the table with 25 points. Esteghlal has 24 points and is second. Paykan is third, also with 24 points, but with a lower goal average.

Cole ready to sign deal

Chelsea midfielder Joe Cole has confirmed that he wants to stay at Stamford Bridge.

The England star made a triumphant return to the first XI at the weekend, after nine months on the sidelines with a knee injury.

Now, after playing under Carlo Ancelotti for the first time, Cole insists that he has no plans to quit the West London giants - despite reports to the contrary in recent months.

Cole's current deal expires next summer and Chelsea are anxious to tie him down to a long-term contract.

"We're talking at the moment about the future and we all agree what we want," he told The Daily Mirror.

(Source: Skysports)

Manager Ferguson admits FA charge

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has admitted a charge of improper conduct for his comments on referee Alan Wiley's fitness.

Ferguson made the remarks about Wiley after the 2-2 draw with Sunderland on 3 October and has requested a personal hearing with the Football Association.

The 67-year-old Scot, who later apologized to Wiley, could face a hefty fine or a touchline ban from the FA.

The referees' union Prospect has called for Ferguson to be banned.

BBC Radio 5 live sports news correspondent Gordon Farquhar said: "The improper conduct charge seemed inevitable given the anger among Wiley's colleagues and the FA's determination to promote respect for game officials."

"The United manager admitted in match programme notes that he'd been angry with his team's performance that day, and that he thought Wiley was a good referee."

"He'll now have the chance to explain his remarks in person. A touchline ban of some kind seems the most likely outcome."

Following United's draw with Sunderland at Old Trafford, Ferguson was hugely critical of Wiley.

"The pace of the game demanded a referee who was fit," fumed the Scot. "He was not fit."

He later said he was sorry for any personal embarrassment caused to Wiley, claiming the comments were to highlight "what I believe to be a serious and important issue in the game".

Alan Leighton, head of Prospect, told BBC Radio 5 live after Ferguson's apology that he felt it was "half-hearted".

He called on Ferguson to receive a Uefa-type coaching ban,



which is more than a touchline ban.

Leighton later told BBC Sport: "We think that the attack on Alan Wiley was an attack on his professionalism, struck at the heart of his professionalism and was totally unwarranted."

"Since then we believe he has broadened out that attack to talk about the fitness of other referees and hasn't retracted that main allegation that Alan was unfit."

"Some people suggest it is us picking on Sir Alex. I'm not interested in pre-

vious. If this had gone unchecked, other managers would have felt able to make similar slurs and that fundamentally brings the game into disrepute."

While managers are allowed to comment on an official's performance, the FA insists any remarks must not imply bias, question their integrity or engage in what could be construed as a personal attack.

If this had gone unchecked, other managers would have felt able to make similar slurs and that fundamentally brings the game into disrepute. Alan Leighton Ferguson has a history of improper conduct charges for incidents involving referees.

In the 2007/08 season Ferguson was given a two-match touchline ban and was handed a £5,000 fine for a rant at referee Mark Clattenburg at half-time during a match at Bolton.

And during the 2008/09 campaign Ferguson was banned for two games and fined £10,000 after admitting a charge of improper conduct.

The Scot came on to the pitch to remonstrate with referee Mike Dean after United beat Hull on 1 November.

(Source: BBC)

McClaren extends deal with Twente

Steve McClaren has signed a one-year contract extension with Dutch league leaders Twente Enschede that is set to keep him at the club until 2011.

The 48-year-old former England boss joined Twente in June after failing to guide England to the Euro 2008 finals.

Twente finished second last season and lost the Dutch Cup final on penalties.

"It is an ambitious club as we have shown," said McClaren. "It's a pleasure to work with a management team and players who want to achieve something."

McClaren linked up with Twente last summer after his England managerial role came to a halt on the back of the 3-2 defeat by Croatia in November 2007 which ended their Euro 2008 hopes.

The former Middlesbrough boss - who also had a spell at Manchester United number two - opted for a move to



the Netherlands claiming that "staying in one country can narrow your mind".

Some Twente fans opposed McClaren's appointment but his tenure has so far been a successful one.

Twente finished second last season to AZ Alkmaar, lost the Cup final to Heerenveen and currently lead the Dutch league two points clear of PSV Eindhoven after 11 games.

Twente chairman Joop Munsterman stated: "It goes without saying that FC Twente are delighted Steve has decided to extend his contract."

"Both parties are very keen for the technical policy of the club to be continued. Steve McClaren is ambitious, FC Twente are ambitious so it fits."

Twente have played 62 games since McClaren arrived, winning 35, losing 12 and drawing 15.

(Source: BBC)

Yankees likely to face old foe in World Series

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The New York Yankees could face familiar old foe Pedro Martinez in the World Series against defending champions Philadelphia Phillies that begins in the Bronx on Wednesday.

Phillies manager Charlie Manuel would not announce his rotation plans beyond Cliff Lee as Game One starter but said Martinez could get a start against a Yankees team he had often opposed in his years with the Boston Red Sox.

"We're going to use Pedro," Manuel told reporters. "I look at Pedro as a starter."

"I think from his performance the other day at Dodger Stadium he deserves another chance to go back out there."

Martinez, who turned 38 on Sunday, pitched seven scoreless innings in Game Two of the National League Championship Series (NLCS), giving up only two hits to the Los Angeles Dodgers.



GB athletes given 10-medal target

The chief executive of UK Athletics wants British athletes to win 10 medals at the London Olympics in 2012.

Niels de Vos told BBC Radio 5 live it was an "optimistic target" but said athletics should aim for more medals than British teams in any other sports.

Not since Tokyo in 1964 has Britain won 10 or more athletics medals in a boycott-free Games, while GB cyclists won 14 medals at Beijing 2008.

"We have to aim for the best we've ever done at our home Games," said De Vos.

"I'm perfectly happy to put a target out there that's aspirational. We should be aiming to get a better return than we've had in past Olympics."

"I've based it on the number of finalists we've been getting in the past four or five years, which has been going up at each major championship."

"At the last two major finals, the Worlds and the Olympics, we've had 25 finalists."

"Can we get to 10 medals? We got six at the Worlds, so there is a way to go, but it's possible."

At the Beijing Games in 2008, Team GB's athletes missed the target of five medals set for them by UK Sport, coming home with four - one gold, two silver and one bronze.

UK Athletics performance director Dave Collins left his post after the Games. Dutchman Charles van Commenee subsequently took up the position of national head coach.

More than doubling the number of medals won by Britain in track and field events is a sizeable challenge, as is De Vos's apparent intention to get athletics to overhaul cycling as the leading source of British Olympic medals.

Under the stewardship of performance director Dave Brailsford, cyclists including Sir Chris Hoy and Victoria Pendleton racked up 14 medals in Beijing, eight of them gold - smashing their UK Sport target of six medals.

But De Vos, formerly the chief executive of Sale Sharks rugby union club, insisted Britain's athletes have the potential to outperform other sports in 2012.

"Have we got the possibility of winning more medals than any other sport? Yes, we have," stated De Vos. "I'm not saying we will, but that's what we should aim for."

"In most of the events at this year's World Championships in Berlin, we did extremely well. We had finalists in most of the sprint events and the relays, and we won middle-distance medals for the first time ever."

"I'm not going to sit here and say 'that's an event we will win a medal in'. The difference between success and failure is literally the blink of an eye in athletics."

"All we have to do is put ourselves in a position to have a very good Olympics. Twenty-five to 30 finalists is possible."

However, De Vos said he was "avoiding fingering any particular athlete" and would not make individual targets public.

"I always fight against focusing on individuals but as a sport, do we have the depth and breadth of talent? Yes, I believe we do."

(Source: BBC)