

Iran to Attend Meeting of OCA Executive Committee



Head of Iran's National Olympics Committee Kiyoumars Hashemi

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Iran's National Olympics Committee will participate in the 69th Executive Board Meeting of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) as board member.

Kiyoumars Hashemi will be on a visit to the Japanese city of Sapporo on February 17-28 to partic-

ipate in the 69th OCA Executive Committee meeting.

The session, to convene in Sapporo's Grand Hotel, will be chaired by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti head of OCA.

During the visit, he will also attend the official opening ceremony of the 8th Asian Winter Games to be hosted by Japan from 19-26 of February.

The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) is the apex sports body monitoring the sports in Asia. It is one of the five continental associations recognized by the IOC.

The OCA was formed in 1982 and has its permanent headquarters in Kuwait. The main objective of the Olympic Council of Asia is to develop sport, culture and education of Asian youths and to promote international respect, friendship, goodwill & peace through sports.

Persepolis Coach Branko Ivankovic Wary of Al Hilal Match

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic is wary of Saudi Arabian Al Hilal's threat in the AFC Champions League group stage.

Iran's Persepolis has been scheduled to face Al Hilal in Group D at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat on Tuesday.

"It's a great success that Iran has four representatives in the competition. All Iranian football fans want their teams to obtain the best possible," Branko said ahead of travel to Oman.

"Persepolis has been drawn in the toughest group and Al Hilal is our main rival in Group D. Qatar Stars League champion Al Rayyan is also a strong team as well as Al Wahda of the United Arab Emirates," the Croat added.

"We have had problems in the domestic league but we are well-prepared for the AFC Champions League opener and our players are fit for this crucial match," Branko stated.

"Al Hilal has won AFC Champions League titles and we know how dif-

ficult this match will be," Branko concluded.

Jalal Hosseini A Solid Defender for Persepolis in AFC

Meanwhile, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) site wrote Jalal Hosseini is a solid defender for Persepolis in the AFC Champions League group stage.

Experienced captain Jalal Hosseini boasts more than 100 caps for Iran and after signing from city rival Naft Tehran has provided solidity at the back.

Vahid Amiri was another international who moved from Naft, and the goalscoring midfielder twice found the back of the net on his previous AFC Champions League appearance in 2015.

The Islamic Republic of Iran giant Persepolis narrowly missed winning the 2015-16 Iran Pro League title when they were pipped to the post on goal difference by Esteghlal Khuzestan. However, its second-place finish ensured a return to the continental stage after missing out last year.

Barcelona's Time at the Top Is Over - Sacchi



Real Madrid are set to supersede Barcelona as the leading club in Europe, according to former Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi.

ROME (Dispatches) –Former Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi has said that Barcelona's era as the dominant force in European football is over, proclaiming: "A king has died".

Luis Enrique's side were beaten 4-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League despite the presence of Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, Neymar and Andres Iniesta in their starting line-up, and Sacchi said the current Barcelona team lacks the qualities that helped them win Europe's top competition four times between 2005 and 2015.

Barcelona are second in La Liga, a point behind Real Madrid having played two games more, and Sacchi – who was director of football at Santiago Bernabeu for a season in 2004-05 – predicted a shift in the balance of power in Spanish and European football.

"A king has died: Barcelona," Sacchi told Gazetta Dello Sport. "There is another sovereign who will impose his rule: Real Madrid.

"But there is room for others to occupy the throne. I see Juventus very well. Real Madrid is the most serious candidate for the title.

"For a long time, Barcelona has stopped being what it used to be. You no longer see the aggressive, orderly and ambitious team that we admired for 10 years, imposing a great game.

"They have given football lessons to the world. That's over."

Sacchi said that Barcelona can no longer rely on Messi to lead them to success, suggesting there were deeper problems at the club.

He said: "Even Messi is no longer able to overcome the opponent because it is the machine that does not work."

Young Topples Isner in Memphis Open Quarterfinals

MEMPHIS (AFP) – American John Isner became the latest seed to be upset at the ATP Tour's Memphis Open as the second seed lost in three sets to unheralded Donald Young.

The world No. 81 Young posted his first career win over Isner in four meetings by outlasting the fellow American 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-6 (8/6) to reach the semifinals.

Isner was the last remaining seed in the tournament as none of the top seeds reached the semis.

Young won a first-set tiebreak and dropped the second before holding on in the third set. He let a triple match point opportunity slip away at 6-3 in the third-set tiebreaker, but after Isner won three straight points to tie it at 6-6, Young won two points to finish off the contest.

Qualifier Mikhail Kukushkin powered his way into the semifinals with a 6-0, 6-4 victory over fourth-seeded Steve Johnson.

Kukushkin, ranked No. 103 in the world, is on a roll. He won three matches while losing only 14 games along the way. This is his first semifinal since 2015 in Sydney, Australia.

Many of the top players in the world decided to skip the Memphis tournament in order to play in events in Rotterdam, Netherlands and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Kukushkin's semifinal opponent will be Nikoloz Basilashvili, who defeated qualifier Matthew Ebden of Australia 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

Dwight Yorke Denied Entry Into U.S. Because of Iranian Stamp in His Passport

LONDON (Telegraph) - Dwight Yorke, the former Manchester United and Aston Villa striker, has been denied entry into the United States because of an Iranian stamp in his passport, it was reported last night.

Yorke, 45, a Trinidad and Tobago international, was travelling to the Caribbean, was refused permission to travel via Miami, an airport which acts as a gateway to much of the region.

He obtained the Iranian visa after playing in a charity match in Iran in 2015.

Details of the incident were disclosed by Richard Keys, a presenter on beIN Sports, who works alongside the retired player.

Yorke who was travelling on personal business, also acts as



Dwight Yorke denied entry into the U.S.

an ambassador for Manchester United.

He had also been a pundit providing co-commentary on Manchester United's Europa League tie on Thursday night against St Etienne.

"I couldn't quite believe what was happening. I have lost count of the number of times I have been to America, I love the country, yet I was being made to feel like a criminal," Yorke told the Sun

"I had bought my ticket and checked in and was about to get on the flight when I was stopped by two officials.

"I thought 'what is happening here?'. They told me there was a visa problem and a red flag had come up against my name be-

cause of an Iranian stamp in my passport."

The incident came as controversy continued to rage at the entry ban imposed on citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries by Donald Trump, which was suspended by the courts last week.

However on this occasion, Yorke appears to have been caught by a regulation introduced by the Obama administration.

It ruled that anyone who had visited Iran - along with Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Yemen or Sudan - were no longer allowed to use the visa waiver program.

Anyone with an offending stamp in their passport is required to obtain a visa from a U.S. embassy before attempting to enter the country.

Machine Sazi to File Complaint Against Manuel Fernandez

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Manuel Fernandez Muniz, commonly known as Manu, has left Machine Sazi and joined Marbella FC in Segunda Division B.

Manu replaced Guille Lara in the goal of Marbella FC.

The 30-year-old Spanish goalie has joined

Marbella for the rest of 2016-17 season.

Iran's Machine Sazi has reacted to the transfer and said it will file a complaint to FIFA about the transfer.

In the summer of 2016, Manu penned a one-year contract with Machine Sazi, newly promoted to the Persian Gulf Pro League, but left

Iran before the end of his contract after financial problems with the Tabriz based club.

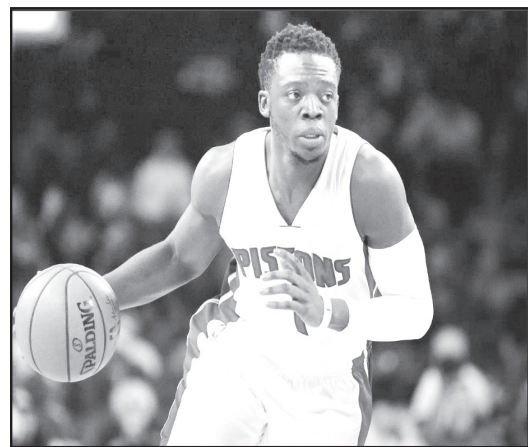
Manu made his professional debuts during the 2005-06 season, with the club in Segunda Division. In 2007 he joined Deportivo de La Coruna, spending the major part of his first two years with the team.

'Magic Discussed Trade to Acquire Pistons' Jackson'

WASHINGTON (The Score.com) -The Orlando Magic have discussed a trade that would see them acquire Detroit Pistons point guard Reggie Jackson in exchange for D.J. Augustin and Jeff Green, sources told ESPN's Marc Stein.

It's unclear if there have been any serious negotiations or if the talks have advanced past the preliminary stage, Stein reports. What does seem clear is the Pistons appear motivated to move him, even for a potentially underwhelming return.

After enjoying a career year in 2015-16, his first full season as a Piston, things have turned a bit sour for Jackson this year. He missed the first 21 games of the season with knee tendinitis, and has yet to really recover his rhythm since returning. He's averaging 15.2 points and 5.6 rebounds per game, with a 52.3 percent true-shooting mark and a 15.7 PER,



Magic have discussed trade to acquire Pistons' Jackson

down from 18.8, 6.2, 53.5, and 19.6 a year ago.

When they struggled after he rejoined the rotation, the Pistons - and specifically head coach Stan Van Gundy - cited Jackson's ball-dominance as an issue. Jackson later referred to Van Gundy's coaching

style as "a lot of yelling" and said he'd learned to "tune the little words out." He also called the Pistons' defense "a joke."

Jackson, who owns the worst individual defensive rating on the team, hasn't helped in that regard, and on offense hasn't quite found the same pick-and-roll chemistry he developed with Andre Drummond last season. That pairing has been a disaster this season on both sides of the ball, with the Pistons getting outscored by 7.1 points per 100 possessions when they share the floor, and the team has reportedly been exploring the trade market for both players with the deadline approaching.

The Pistons overall have been 9.6 points per 100 worse when Jackson is on the floor, and they've recently taken to closing some games with Ish Smith at the point.