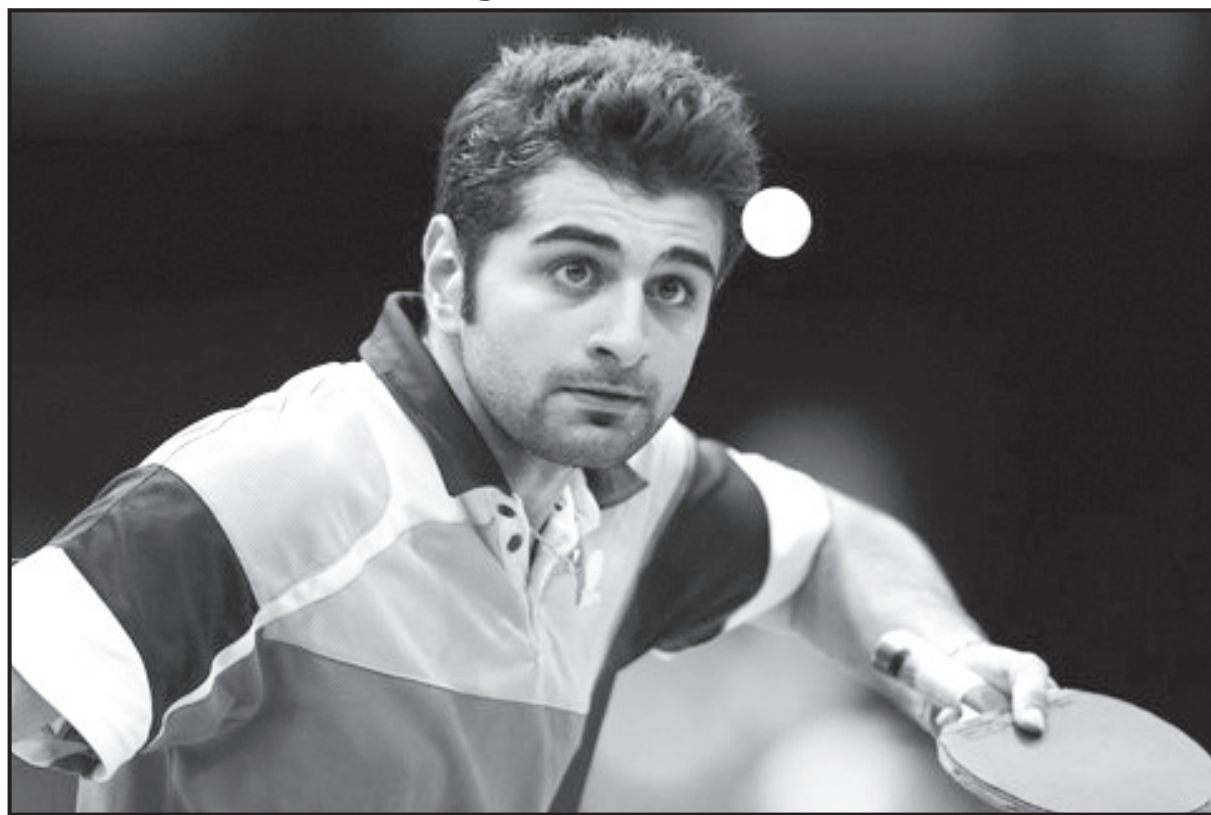


Alamian Begins Korea Open With Victory



Noshad Alamian

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s Noshad Alamian overcame the host country rival in his first encounter at the ITTF 2016 World Tour Korea Open underway in South Korea. Alamian’s opening match was competed against Hogyun Baek of South Korea on Wednesday morning in the first round of 2016 World

Tour Korea Open in Incheon. The Iranian Olympian paddler conceded defeats against the Korean competitor in the first (8-11), second (8-11) and fifth (11-13) sets of the match while he was the victor in the remaining sets (11-4, 11-5, 11-7 and 11-6) in order to win with the overall result of 4-3.

Noshad Alamian is scheduled to face a Japanese tennis player in his second encounter at the World Tour event.

Milad Alamian, Noshad’s brother who struck as an off draw in the first round is slated to face Malaysia’s Muhd Shakirin Ibrahim who holds the 254th ranking in the world.

Iran’s only female representative at the tournament Neda Shahsavari will also meet a rival from the host country in the first round of the sportive event.

Nima and Noshad Alamian as well as the female athlete Neda Shahsavari are attending the tournament with 111th, 118th and 254th rankings, respectively.

The Super Series tournament is underway in Incheon of South Korea from Wednesday 22nd June to Sunday 26th June.

Iran’s Paykan Signs Armenian Defender Levon Hayrapetyan



Levon Hayrapetyan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s Paykan football team completed the signing of Armenian international defender Levon Hayrapetyan.

The 27-year-old defender has joined Paykan on a one-year contract for an undisclosed fee.

Hayrapetyan is the pupil of the German school of football. He played in the youth team of Hamburger SV from 2004 to 2008.

Hayrapetyan has also played for Pyunik Yerevan, Lechia Gdansk, and Widzew Lodz.

The international left back was a member of Armenia U-19 and U-21 football teams and currently plays for his country senior team.

Newly promoted Paykan also signed a contract with Esteghlal striker Arash Borhani on Monday.

Thai Referees Enriched Through AFC Expert Pool

BANGKOK (AFC) - A total of 50 participants, including top Referees, Assistant Referees and Referee Assessors attended the Football Association (FA) Thailand Referees Seminar held from June 13 to 19, 2016 at the Rajamangala Stadium.

Conducted by FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Referees Instructor Farkhad Abdullaev (Uzbekistan) and AFC Referees Fitness Instructor Ravichandran Chappanimutu (Malaysia), the seminar was organized as part of the AFC’s Expert Pool programme.

Participants went through the one-week intensive programme which aimed to widen their knowledge in areas such as team tactics, offside, handball, positioning and movement. They were also put to tests and given an opportunity to apply their lessons through practical and fitness sessions.

FA Thailand Referees Committee Chairman Pol. Lt Gen. Somkid Boonthanom said: “I would like to

thank the AFC and the hard work and commitment by the instructors. We will support and implement all the recommendations by the experts to improve and raise the overall standard of refereeing in Thailand.”

One of the participants and AFC Elite Referee Sivakorn Pu-Udom lauded the sharing of knowledge and experience by the AFC instructors, adding: “It has been a rewarding experience to spend the one week together with fellow refereeing colleagues and to be updated on FIFA and the AFC’s latest instructions and guidelines.

“Football is ever-changing and the past week was a real eye-opener for all of us. We are all grateful to be part of the AFC Expert Pool programme and received many excellent tips from world-class experts,” said the 29-year-old referee.

FA Thailand will be hosting the next MA Referees Course in August and will commence online education for referees later this month.

Ibrahimovic to Quit International Duty After Euro 2016

NICE (DAWN) - Sweden’s superstar striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced on Tuesday he will retire from international football after Euro 2016.

“The last game with Sweden in the Euro will be my last game with Sweden. So I hope it won’t be tomorrow,” Ibrahimovic, 34, told a press conference ahead of Wednesday’s final Group E game against Belgium in Nice.

He ruled out any chance of playing at the Rio Olympics in August.

Sweden’s coach Erik Hamren said “this will be a big loss. He is unique.”

Sweden’s record goal scorer with 62 goals, Ibrahimovic is looking to become the first player to score European Championship finals.

Sweden must beat Belgium to stand a chance of advancing to the last 16.

“I will not participate in the Olympics because my last game will be the last game Sweden does in this Euro. So let’s hope it goes as long as possible,” he said.

Ibrahimovic, a record 10-time winner of the national Guldbollen award for player of the year, said he would go out with his head held high regardless of Wednesday’s result. “To finish in a disappointment, never. Because I’m very proud to be the captain of Sweden and of what I’ve achieved.

“I want to take this moment and thank all the supporters because they made it possible for me to achieve what I have achieved. Without them it would not have been possible.

“So wherever I go, wherever I come, I’ll always bring the Swedish flag with me and stand with it. So for me disappointment doesn’t exist, only pride, and grateful. I’m very thankful. So thank you.”

Ibrahimovic is out of contract with Paris Saint-Germain after four seasons in Ligue 1, but is yet to commit to a new club, although Manchester United are rumored to be favorites to seal his signing.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Record-Breaker Messi Fires Argentina Into Copa Final



Argentina’s Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against the US during their Copa America Centenario semifinal football match in Houston, Texas.

Houston (AFP) - Lionel Messi became Argentina’s all-time record goal scorer as the two-time world champions outclassed the United States 4-0 to reach the Copa America Centenario final.

Messi curled in a magnificent 32nd-minute free-kick to take his total to 55 goals as the United States’ campaign ended with an emphatic defeat in front of a 70,858 crowd at Houston’s NRG Stadium.

The five-time world player of the year now has five goals in this Copa America as he aims to lead Argentina to their first major title in 23 years.

The Barcelona superstar also created Argentina’s opening goal for Ezequiel Lavezzi and was involved in the build-up for their third, scored by Gonzalo Higuain in the 50th minute. Messi then lay on the pass for

Higuain’s second four minutes from time.

“We’ve been playing well from day one and we deserve to be in the final,” said a delighted Messi, dedicating his goals tally to the work of his teammates.

“I’m happy to have the record, and I’m happy to play with the teammates that have made it possible. I owe it to them,” said Messi, who is now one clear of Gabriel Batistuta’s mark of 54 goals.

US coach Jurgen Klinsmann, meanwhile, said his team had showed Argentina “too much respect” after a display which saw them finish with zero shots on or off target.

“I think in general we had too much respect,” Klinsmann said while hailing Argentina as the “number one team in the world.”

“I told the guys there’s nothing to be ashamed of. We have to learn and move forward,” Klinsmann said. “We have to keep our heads up and swallow it. But Argentina are a special team.”

Argentina will now face either Chile or Colombia in Sunday’s final at East Rutherford, New Jersey -- their third major final in three years after reaching the finals of the 2015 Copa America and 2014 World Cup.

A disastrous start for the United States saw the hosts fall behind after only three minutes when they gifted possession to Messi on the edge of the area.

The Argentina captain instantly spotted that Lavezzi was unmarked and lofted a first time pass through to the China-based midfielder to head home.

Argentina might have doubled their lead five minutes later, when Ever Banega backheeled to pick out Marcos Rojo, who crossed for Messi, only for the Albiceleste skipper to shoot over.

Messi was again on the prowl in the 14th minute, seizing upon another American mistake to burst clear from near halfway before firing a shot which Brad Guzan managed to gather safely.

With Argentina monopolizing possession, it was only a matter of time before the South Americans scored again.

The second goal almost came on 22 minutes when Messi released Higuain with a quick free-kick into

the penalty area, only for Geoff Cameron to snuff out the danger with a desperate tackle.

But just after the half-hour mark the US defense buckled, Messi causing panic on another foray before being bundled over with a crude challenge by Chris Wondolowski, who was promptly booked.

From the ensuing free-kick, Messi stepped up to curl in his magnificent record-equalling effort and Argentina was 2-0 up.

Klinsmann introduced Borussia Dortmund teenager Christian Pulisic at half-time for the ineffective Wondolowski but within five minutes it was 3-0.

Once again, the US coughed up possession in midfield and from the left flank Lavezzi picked out Higuain in the penalty area.

Higuain’s first shot was saved by Guzan, but the Napoli striker was on hand to tap in the simplest of rebounds.

With hope ebbing away, the remaining 40 minutes became an exercise in damage limitation for the Americans.

The hosts earned a brief respite from the onslaught when play was held up after Lavezzi injured himself falling over a hoarding, but Argentina were quickly back in control.

The only surprise was that it took until 86 minutes for Argentina to grab their fourth, Messi pouncing on yet another US mistake to burst into the box before squaring for Higuain to finish with aplomb.

Rio 2016 Apologizes After Jaguar Shot Dead

RIO DE JANEIRO (China Daily) - Rio 2016 organizers issued an apology on Tuesday after a jaguar that featured in an Olympic torch ceremony was shot dead in the Amazonian city of Manaus.

The jaguar, which had earlier been tranquilized, was killed by a single gunshot from a soldier after it escaped from handlers, the Brazilian army said in a statement.

The army said the soldier had been forced to shoot the animal to protect himself from being mauled.

“We made a mistake in permitting the Olympic torch, a symbol of peace and unity, to be exhibited alongside a chained wild animal,” Rio 2016 said in a statement.

“This image goes against our beliefs and our values. We guarantee that there will be no more such incidents at Rio 2016.”

The jaguar, named Juma, was the real-life version of Brazil’s Olympic team toy mascot, known as Ginga.

Animal rights groups questioned why Juma was used in the ceremony. Moments before being fatally wounded, the animal featured in photographs alongside the Olympic torch while shackled by chains.

“When will people (and institutions) stop with this sick need to show power and control by confining, taming and showcasing wild animals?” Brazilian animal rights group Animal Freedom Union said on Facebook.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the jaguar is an endangered species in the Americas. Its population has fallen by 30% since the mid-1980s. Ipaam, Brazil’s Amazonas state environmental authority, said it had launched an investigation in the incident.

“No request was made to authorize the participation of the jaguar ‘Juma’ in the event of the Olympic torch,” Ipaam said in a statement.



Jaguar Juma is pictured during the Olympic Flame torch relay in Manaus, Brazil