

No Shortcuts in Volleyball For Success: Kolakovic



Igor Kolakovic

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran newly-appointed head coach Igor Kolakovic has told his players there are no shortcuts for success in volleyball.

The Montenegrin coach has initially called 20 players to the camp in preparation for four major competitions including the World League, the Grand Champions Cup and the Asian Championship.

In his speech to the players, Kolakovic said, "It is my wish to win more medals with all of you in the upcoming competitions. Make a success out of what you have. I know the way to win medals. I did that before."

"Success is a process. There are no shortcuts. I wish for us to go that way together, to succeed."

"Important factors of success are unity, optimism, self-confidence, dedication, to be focused on the goal, discipline, work, work and work...I ask for your support for respecting these factors," he added.

Faghani Chosen to Officiate Gamba Osaka vs. Adelaide United



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Alireza Faghani from Iran has been chosen as referee of Japan's Gamba Osaka and Adelaide United from Australia.

Gamba Osaka will host Adelaide United in Group H of the AFC Champions League group stage on April 25 at the Suita City Football Stadium in Suita, Japan. Faghani will be assisted with his

countrymen Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri. Hassan Akbari is the fourth official.

Alireza Faghani made history by becoming the first Asian referee to officiate the final of a Men's Olympic.

He was the main referee of the 2016 Olympic football final match between host Brazil and Germany.

Alireza Faghani

Arsenal Keep Top-Four Hopes Alive With 2-1 Win at Middlesbrough

LONDON (Dispatches) - Mesut Ozil scored the winner, as Arsenal defeated Middlesbrough 2-1 at the Riverside Stadium on Monday night, to keep their top-four hopes alive.

It was Ozil's seventh league goal of the season and it sealed three points for the Gunners, after Alvaro Negredo cancelled out Alexis Sanchez's exquisite free-kick.

Arsene Wenger's side were hammered 3-0 at Crystal Pal-

ace in their last league fixture, prompting the Frenchman to tweak his formation to a 3-4-3.

Captain Laurent Koscielny who was back in the team after injury, started along with Rob Holding and Gabriel Paulista at the base of the defensive set-up.

The new system seemed to help the Gunners achieve stability, as they won on the road for the first time since February, when they crushed Swansea 4-0.



Leonard's 37 Points Lead Spurs by Grizzlies 96-82

SAN ANTONIO (NY Times) — The Spurs responded to another late-game meltdown as they have all season: relying on a little 3-point shooting and a whole lot of Kawhi Leonard.

They also got an assist from the officials, according to Memphis coach David Fizdale.

Leonard had a postseason career-high 37 points and added 11 rebounds, and San Antonio beat the Memphis Grizzlies 96-82 on Monday night to take a 2-0 lead in their first-round series.

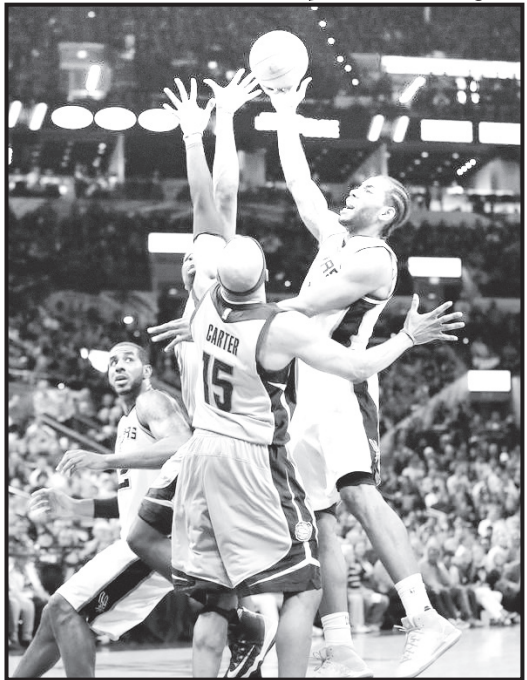
Game 3 is Thursday night in Memphis. San Antonio led for all but 13 seconds in winning its 10th consecutive postseason game over Memphis.

"This team has character, besides the talent and the desire to win," Spurs center Pau Gasol said. "We have to keep that up every single night. We responded well when they made their run, and that's the mindset we have to have every night."

Leonard finished 9 for 14 from the field and was 19 for 19 on free throws.

Leonard attempted more free throws than Memphis had as a team, which infuriated Fizdale.

Memphis closed within 75-71 early in the



San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard (2) shoots over Memphis Grizzlies center Marc Gasol (33) during the second half in Game 2 of a first-round NBA basketball playoff series, Monday, April 17, 2017, in San Antonio.

fourth quarter, but San Antonio responded with 3-pointers by Parker and Pau Gasol in rebuilding their double-digit lead.

The Grizzlies forced seven turnovers while outscoring the Spurs 34-19 in the opening 16 minutes of the second half. Conley, Marc Gasol and Zach Randolph accounted for 21 points.

Conley finished with 24 points, Randolph had 18 points and Marc Gasol added 12 points for the Grizzlies.

Tony Parker added 15 points for the Spurs, who had three others score in double figures.

San Antonio had a better start than in Game 1. Leonard made sure of that.

Leonard opened the game by making his first three shots and four free throws as the Spurs built a 13-point lead, the same deficit they faced in the opening period Saturday.

Unlike Game 1, there was no coming back from that deficit for Memphis.

San Antonio had a 26-point lead in the first half on the strength of its outside shooting. The Spurs only had 12 points in the paint, but got two 3-pointers from Parker and Danny Green, in building a 26-point lead in the first half.

and with planning," he said. "If we also buy players in the future that will help...but we have to spend intelligently, choosing players who fit in with what we are looking for."

"The first thing we are looking to do is get back into (the Champions League), where we feel at home." Rivals AC Milan's new Chinese owners have said they were planning to invest in a stadium. Zanetti said Inter would be happy to jointly renovate San Siro, possibly reducing its capacity to improve the atmosphere. "Inter has been ready with the project for more than one year," he said. "I hope that this situation can be resolved quickly."

performances over five seasons. But Zanetti sees a better future. "We were winning for seven years in a row so it was perfectly natural that (would end), at a time when the ownership changed twice in three years," he said.

"Now we are at the stage of trying to build an important team... where the club wants to be in the best 10 in the world. That is what we are working for but you can't do that overnight. You need time, a strategic plan." He said it was not just a case of the new owners trying to buy their way out of trouble. "You do it by building a team with good players but also with human values

League treble in 2010 under Jose Mourinho.

Since then, Inter have entered a period of instability coinciding with a decline in Serie A, which has been unable to keep up financially with the Premier League or La Liga. The club has changed ownership twice, most recently last June when it was sold to Chinese retail giant Suning Commerce Group, and it has employed nine coaches since Mourinho's departure.

Currently seventh in Serie A, Inter are set to miss out on Champions League action again next term and have slumped to 44th in the UEFA club rankings, which are based on

Ticket Sale of Tractor Sazi vs. Esteghlal Match to Be Donated to Flood Victims

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Tractor Sazi General Manager Mostafa Ajorlou said that sale from the ticket for the match against Esteghlal will be donated to flood victims of Azarbaijan Province.

Severe flood and landslide in western and northwestern parts of Iran have so far claimed 42 lives and left seven missing.

Tractor Sazi football team will host Esteghlal in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium on Thursday.

Two teams will vie for a berth in the next season's AFC Champions League.

Ajorlou has issued a passionate plea for football enthusiasts of Tractor Sazi's to fill the stadium.

Barcelona in Tricky Position to Produce Another Comeback

MADRID (AP) - Things have changed since Barcelona's historic comeback against Paris Saint-Germain in the last round of the Champions League.

When Barcelona routed PSG 6-1 to reverse a 4-0 first-leg deficit in the last 16, its confidence was high from winning four games in a row and outscoring opponents 15-3 before that second leg.

This time, it has to overcome a 3-0 first-leg loss against Juventus in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. But without the boost of a winning streak, Barcelona has lost three of its seven games since that spectacular victory over PSG at the Camp Nou.

From leading the Spanish league by one point before beating PSG, Barcelona has dropped to second, three points behind, and hasn't been playing well.

It lost at Malaga 2-0 before the defeat to Juventus in Turin, and had to claw its way past Real Sociedad 3-2 at the weekend.

"There's only one option: Attack, attack, attack," Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said.

"This is similar to the PSG match but in theory we need to score fewer goals. Juve will have their chances, too, so our objective is to score five times."

He said fans shouldn't leave in the 80th minute because they could miss another historic comeback. Barcelona scored three goals after the 87th minute in the win over PSG.

"We are the same team and we can repeat that," said Neymar, who led Barcelona with two goals and two assists in the victory over PSG last month. "We have to give everything we have. We believe that we can come back again."

A contribution from Lionel Messi

would be helpful, too. He's scored a pair in three of his last five games. He netted twice each against Valencia, Sevilla, and Real Sociedad, but failed to score in the losses to Malaga and Juventus.

Juventus pays no mind to Messi's middling form.

"These guys are like sharks," Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini said of Messi and Co. "If you show a sign of nerves, they smell the blood and finish you off."

"Instead, you have to push them back as far as you can, double up when they are in possession, and shut down the lines between defense and midfield."

If Messi scores twice against Juventus, he will reach his 500th goal in official matches with Barcelona. He would be the first player to reach that mark with the club.

Messi has played 575 games since making his debut for Barcelona in 2004.

Barcelona is trying to return to the Champions League semifinals for the first time since beating Juventus in the 2015 final to win its fifth title.

"We must take charge of the game," Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta said. "That's our mentality. We need a perfect game, tactically, mentally, and physically."

Juventus, looking for its third Champions League title, is coming off three straight victories. It has lost only one of its last 19 matches, winning 16 of them, and leads Serie A.

It remains unclear if Juventus will be able to count on forward Paulo Dybala, who scored twice in the first leg. Dybala hurt his ankle at the weekend in the 2-0 win at Pescara.

Barcelona will have back midfielder Sergio Busquets after he missed the first leg because of a suspension.

Zanetti: Inter Aim to Be One of World's Top 10 Clubs

MILAN (Reuters) – Inter Milan, currently enduring their fifth straight season without Champions League football, are determined to establish themselves as one of the world's top 10 clubs, vice president Javier Zanetti told Reuters in an interview.

Zanetti, a former Inter captain who made a club record 858 appearances over 19 years, also said the club were committed to redeveloping the San Siro stadium along with neighbours and rivals AC Milan.

The Argentine played for Inter during one of their most successful spells, helping them win four successive Serie A titles and culminating in a league, cup and Champions

League treble in 2010 under Jose Mourinho.

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