

Sadeqzadeh Wins Iran's Pahlavani Wrestling Cup Title



Wrestlers compete during Iran's National Senior Pahlavani Wrestling Championship at Shahid Beheshti Sports Hall in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, on January 11, 2018.

TEHRAN (Press TV) - Iranian wrestler Jaber Sadeqzadeh has delivered impressive displays of grappling skills and physical might during the National Senior Pahlavani Wrestling

Championship in the country's northeastern shrine city of Mashhad, and has deservedly been decorated with Iran's "Champion of the Year" title.

On Thursday evening,

Sadeqzadeh triumphed over compatriot Ahmad Mirzapour in the over 100-kilogram weight category of the competitions at Mashhad's Shahid Beheshti Sports Hall, and stood atop the podium.

The Iranian sportsman then wore the Pahlavani armband, which had been unveiled earlier this week.

Mazandaran outfit scooped the top honor in the team division of the tournament, having racked up 41 points.

It was followed by representatives from North Khorasan side in the second spot, who accumulated 40 points. Wrestlers from Razavi Khorasan squad claimed the third place with 30 points.

The 2018 National Senior Pahlavani Wrestling Championship kicked off in Mashhad on January 10, and finished the next day.

On December 30, 2016,

Sadeqzadeh won Iran's Pahlavani Wrestling Championship in Mashhad.

Pahlavani wrestling goes back to ancient Persia, and was originally used to train warriors.

It combines martial arts and wrestling techniques, calisthenics, strength training and epic music.

The two competitors in a match try to take control over each other by throwing the opposite combatant back on his shoulders.

The wrestler is allowed to grab his opponent's pants or belt as a grip. He can also use his own legs to off-balance a rival, hence causing him to fall to the ground.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized Pahlavani wrestling as among the world's longest-running forms of sport.

Austria's Kriechmayr Leads Downhill in World Cup Combined



Austria's Hannes Reichelt competes during the first portion of an alpine ski, men's World Cup combined race, in Wengen, Switzerland, Friday, Jan. 12, 2018.

Leipzig Again Rule Out Early Keita Liverpool Move

BERLIN (AFP) - RB Leipzig on Thursday again told Liverpool that Naby Keita will not be moving before next season, amid reports the Merseyside club want the Guinea midfielder immediately to replace Philippe Coutinho.

Keita, 22, already has a contract with Liverpool which comes into effect on July 1, but having completed the sale of Brazil star Coutinho to Barcelona on Monday for 160 million euros (\$192

million), Liverpool are reportedly keen to bring Keita to Merseyside early.

The Germans issued another firm "hands off" ahead of the end of the Bundesliga winter break this weekend.

"We have always said that there is no reason for us to let him go sooner. Therefore he will be playing for us against Schalke at the weekend and hopefully playing well," said Leipzig coach Ralph Hasenhuttl on Thursday.

Kicker say RB Leipzig will get 75 million euros (\$90m, £66.7) for Keita if they qualify directly for the Champions League next season, which will drop to

In November, RB Leipzig also ruled out Keita joining Liverpool earlier than planned.

Countinho's departure has changed the situation at Liverpool. German daily Bild report the Reds are prepared to pay 15 million euros extra to sign Keita this month.

German magazine Kicker says Keita has not been impressing in training in a bid to force the German club's hand.

The German club, who are fifth in the Bundesliga, have repeatedly said they need their midfield dynamo to help them qualify again for the Champions League.



PARIS (AP) - The French football league has suspended goal-line technology in its competitions following more glitches during League Cup quarterfinals this week.

The LFP informed the company GoalControl "of the immediate suspension" of its technology following "two more technical failings" in matches, it said in a statement late Thursday.

The French league already said last month it wanted improvements after expressing "dissatisfaction with the failures" in several matches with GoalControl, the same system used at the 2014 World Cup. FIFA has yet to confirm whether GoalControl will be used in Russia at a second straight

Clippers Hold Off Kings 121-115 After Blowing 14-Point Lead



Lou Williams #23 of the LA Clippers handles the ball against the Sacramento Kings on January 11, 2018 at Golden 1 Center in Sacramento, California.

over the Kings this season and their 11th in a row at Sacramento.

Williams finished with 30 points and six assists, one night after scoring a career-high 50 against defending champion Golden State. Griffin had 18 points, 12 rebounds and six assists in his return to the lineup, and Montrezl Harrell scored a season-best 25 - including 16 in the second quarter when Los Angeles put up 43 points.

The Clippers led 106-92 early in the fourth before the Kings rallied to go ahead 113-112 on Bogdan Bogdanovich's layup with 2:10 remaining.

Griffin followed with a 3-pointer and Williams later scored on a short jumper, but the Kings pulled to 117-115 on George Hill's free throw with 24.9 seconds left.

Williams then committed a turnover at midcourt when he threw a pass to Sacramento's Kosta Koufos, but Wallace saved his teammate when he stole the ball back and drove in for a dunk. Wesley Johnson added two free throws to seal the win.

Bogdanovich scored 22 points, and Koufos had 14 points and 14 rebounds. Hill added 21 points but missed two free throws in the final 70 seconds.

"We've got to start games and play with a lot more effort, a lot more aggressiveness, a lot more motor," Kings coach Dave Joerger said.

Williams had 21 points in the first half, including nine in the final 1:33 of the second quarter after the Kings had trimmed a 14-point deficit to 60-58.

The Clippers also got a lift from Harrell, who made all seven of his shots in the period.

That was important after Jordan limped off the court with an ankle injury after scoring on a dunk with 5:15 left in the first half.

"That's par for the course for our team this year," Griffin said. "One guy comes back, one guy has to go out."

French League Suspends Goal-Line Technology After 'Failings'

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league has suspended goal-line technology in its competitions following more glitches during League Cup quarterfinals this week.

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World Cup.

It took referee Nicolas Rainville about a minute to confirm Paris Saint-Germain's second goal in the 2-0 win over Amiens on Wednesday. Adrien Rabiot headed in the second goal but the referee's watch, which normally vibrates to indicate a goal, did not work, and he had to consult with video assistant referees to validate the goal.

Another incident marred Montpellier's 1-0 win in Angers, where the technology wrongly made the referee's watch vibrate.

Didier Quillot, the league general director, said the service provided by GoalControl was not reliable at the moment, and hinted French football authorities could end the partnership.

Djokovic Dealt Tough Australian Open Draw

running into fourth seed Aleander Zverev and 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka.

Even if the six-time Australian Open champion should clear all those hurdles he could encounter 2017 champion Roger Federer in the semifinals.

Federer, who turned back the clock to win two Grand Slams in 2017 after a five-year drought, on Thursday night described the season as "unbelievable."

A string of local hopes were also dealt difficult draws; 17-year-old Destanee Aiava will face world number one Simona Halep while



LA PAZ (Xinhua) - Spain's Carlos Sainz edged closer to the overall Dakar Rally lead by holding off Peugeot teammate Stephane Peterhansel to win Thursday's sixth stage here.

Sainz finished the 313-kilometer timed section of the route from Arequipa in Peru to Bolivia's capital in two hours 53 minutes and 30 seconds.

Race leader and defending champion Peterhansel took second place, more than four minutes behind, and Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah was third, five minutes off the pace in his Toyota.

China's BP Yong Racing driver Yong Zhou finished 32nd and his countryman He Zhitao was 45th for Boundless Young Racing.

Peterhansel, who is aiming for a 14th Dakar title in all categories, leads Sainz overall by more than 27 minutes. Dutchman Bernhard Ten Brinke is third, one hour and 20 minutes in arrears. Yong is 23rd overall and He 42nd.

In the motorcycle category, French KTM rider Antoine Meo rose to seventh in the standings after crossing Thursday's finish line in 1:54:10.

China's Zhang Min crossed the finish line in 57th place, with his countryman and Daming Racing teammate Zhao Hongyi 103rd.

Benavides leads the general standings, almost two minutes ahead of France's Yamaha rider Adrien Van Beveren. Zhang is 80th overall and Zhao 85th.

Angelique Kerber Wins 8th Match in a Row, Into Sydney Final

SYDNEY (AP) - Angelique Kerber won her eighth consecutive match of the new season, coming from 3-1 down in the final set to beat qualifier Camila Giorgi 6-2, 6-3 to reach the Sydney International final on Friday.

Kerber, a former No. 1 and the 2016 Australian Open champion, won all four singles at the Hopman Cup and now all four in Sydney en route to the final.

She will face Ashleigh Barty, who beat Australian compatriot Daria Gavrilova 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in the other semifinal.

In a match that included 11 breaks of serve, Barty needed just one in the third set.

"It's nice getting a bit of confidence going into our biggest tournament for us," Barty said of next week's Australian Open.

Gavrilova's frustration with her serving were evident in the ninth game of the set when, soon after leveling at 4-4, she double-faulted twice and received a code violation for smashing her racket.

In men's semifinals, Russian qualifier

Daniil Medvedev booked a spot in the final by upsetting fourth-seeded Fabio Fognini of Italy 2-6, 6-4, 6-1.

Medvedev will next play Australian 18-year-old Alex de Minaur, who defeated Benoit Paire of France 4-6, 6-1, 6-1.

CANBERRA (Xinhua) - Former world number one Novak Djokovic faces a brutal challenge if he is to win the Australian Open in his comeback to tennis.

Djokovic, 30, enters the 2018 Australian Open as the 14th seed, the first time he has been ranked outside the top 10 at the year's first Grand Slam in a decade, after missing much of 2017 with an elbow injury.

His hopes for a triumphant return at Melbourne Park were dealt a blow at the Australian Open draw on Thursday night with the Serbian set to face former top-10 player Gael Monfils in the second round before

running into fourth seed Aleander Zverev and 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka.

Even if the six-time Australian Open champion should clear all those hurdles he could encounter 2017 champion Roger Federer in the semifinals.

Federer, who turned back the clock to win two Grand Slams in 2017 after a five-year drought, on Thursday night described the season as "unbelievable."

A string of local hopes were also dealt difficult draws; 17-year-old Destanee Aiava will face world number one Simona Halep while

fellow teenager Alex De Minaur, who has made the semi-finals at both the Brisbane and Sydney Internationals, will play Tomas Berdych.

Berdych, the 17th seed, has never lost to an Australian at a Grand Slam in seven matches.

"He's a very talented player. Has a very high level. I'm just going to go out there, try to weather the storm, and try to play my game," De Minaur said.

Seeded women in the tournament were lucky to avoid the threat of Maria Sharapova who is ranked 47th in the world after serving a doping suspension in 2017.