

Iran Beach Soccer Team Stays Put in International Rankings



The national Iranian men's beach soccer team

TEHRAN (Press TV) - The national Iranian men's beach soccer team has kept its position as the best Asian squad in the latest edition of the Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW) rankings, and stayed put in the world's third spot.

According to the latest monthly rankings released by the BSWW, the organization responsible for the founding and growth of beach soccer, Team Melli Football Saheli accumulated 3,103 points.

Japan occupied the second place in Asia and sat in the ninth slot in the global rankings with 1,434 points.

The Japanese squad was followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman teams, who landed in the 10th and 16th spots respectively, having gained 1,327 and 906 points.

The 2017 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Beach Soccer World Cup champion Brazil stood on the top of the rankings with 4,370 points.

Portugal collected 3,449 points to claim second position. Fourth-placed Russians tallied 2,695 points. Italy stood fifth, having notched up 2,531 points.

Vonn Tunes Up for Olympics With Downhill Double, 81st World Cup Win

Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany (AFP) - U.S. ski queen Lindsey Vonn chalked up her 81st World Cup win on Sunday to complete the downhill double at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the final races before the Winter Olympics.

Vonn clocked one minute, 37.92 seconds with Italy's Sofia Goggia, the current overall downhill leader, just behind in second at 0.11 secs back.

Tina Weirather of Lichtenstein was third at 0.12 secs.

Vonn also pipped Goggia in Saturday's downhill.

Vonn has won the last three downhill races on the World Cup circuit after also claiming victory in Cortina d'Ampezzo a fortnight ago.

It leaves Vonn second in the downhill overall rankings and just 23 points behind Goggia.

Vonn's 81st win edges her closer to Inge Stenmark's all-time alpine record of 86 World Cup victories.

In total, the 33-year-old Vonn has won the downhill at Garmisch five times with her 2018 double following wins in 2012, 2016 and 2017.



Lindsey Vonn won for a second straight day, for the fifth time in the Garmisch downhill and for the 81st time in the World Cup

Bayern March, Bremen Upset Schalke



Ishak Belfodil of Bremen (R) vies with Daniel Caligiuri of Schalke 04 during the Bundesliga match between FC Schalke 04 and SV Werder Bremen in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, on Feb. 3, 2018. Schalke 04 lost 1-2.

Jupp Heynckes' men gained momentum and doubled the lead moments later as James controlled Corentin Tolisso's cross with the chest to unleash a hammer from seven meters into the top right corner in the 44th minute.

After the restart, Bayern continued on the front foot but the runaway Bundesliga leaders lacked in accuracy to triple the lead as Tolisso, Ribery and James squandered promising chances.

Bayern retracted with the two-goal lead and allowed the hosts to produce opportunities. However, Mainz were not able to pull one back as Robin Quaison, Yoshinori Muto and Abdou Diallo failed to overcome Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich.

With the result, Bayern increase their advantage atop the table to 18 points while Mainz suffered their second loss in row to drop to the 16th place, which is a relegation play off spot.

Struggling Werder Bremen shocked top-four team Schalke with a late comeback win in the dying minutes of the game.

The "Royal Blues" controlled the proceedings on the pitch but lacked in penetration against Bremen's well-positioned bulwark.

Nevertheless, Schalke opened the scoring with 21 minutes into the game as Bremen goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka fumbled Yevhen Konoplyanka's shot into the goal.

Schalke suffered a setback after the restart as Matija Nastasic booked his second yellow card to receive his marching orders in the 78th minute.

Things went from bad to worse as the "Green-Whites" got rewarded for their resilient performance in 79th minute when Max Kruse benefitted on a rebound following a free kick to level the scores.

Werder Bremen capitalized on their superior number and grabbed the 2-1 victory in the dying minutes of the game as Zlatko Junuzovic poked home the winner from very close range.

With the win, Bremen climbed out of the bottom three and jumped onto the 15th place meanwhile Schalke slipped from the 3rd to the 4th position.

Elsewhere, second placed Bayer Leverkusen were held to a goalless draw by Freiburg.

Wolfsburg shared the spoils with Stuttgart following a 1-1 draw as Mario Gomez cancelled out Divock Origi's first half opener.

Hertha Berlin and Hoffenheim played out a 1-1 stalemate and Leipzig's last-gasp winner through new arrival Ademola Lookman downed Monchengladbach 1-0.

The following fixtures complete the 21st round in Bundesliga on Sunday: Augsburg see Eintracht Frankfurt and Hamburg host newly promoted Hannover.

team could help improve ties.

"I am excited," said Park Cheol-hyun, who came to watch the game with his wife and son.

"Even though the nuclear issue may not be resolved immediately, it will be good for the longer term if the two Koreas get closer. Otherwise, there is no way to resolve it."

While the reaction to the North's decision to participate in the Winter Games was met warmly in the South, the decision to form a combined women's ice hockey team sparked a public backlash.

Critics said adding North Korean players to the South's roster at the last minute would mean missed opportunities for home players and could hurt team chemistry.

Rockets Rout Cavs, Nuggets Rally Past Warriors



Houston Rockets' Chris Paul (3) drives past Cleveland Cavaliers' Derrick Rose (1) in the second half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Feb. 3, 2018, in Cleveland. The Rockets won 120-88

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Chris Paul has finished with 22 points and 11 assists as the Houston Rockets became the latest team to pummel LeBron James' struggling Cleveland Cavaliers with a 120-88 win.

The Rockets did it without a big night from James Harden who finished with 16 points, while on the other side James had just 11 points and didn't play at all in the fourth quarter with the game out of reach.

Harden has been averaging 31 points a game this season for the Rockets, who won their fourth consecutive game and their 11th in their last 13. Ryan Anderson stepped in with 21 points.

Since losing at Golden State on Christmas Day, Cleveland have been humiliated in several matchups against top level NBA clubs. They lost by 28 at Minnesota, 34 in Toronto, 24 at home to Oklahoma City and now by 32 to the Rockets.

The Cavaliers looked nothing like the team that has made it to the last three NBA finals. The defending Eastern Conference champs played

their second game without injured all-star forward Kevin Love, who suffered a broken left hand earlier this week and could be out for two months.

Isaiah Thomas scored 12 for Cleveland, who have lost 12 of 18 and don't seem to have any answers on the floor for what ails them.

In Denver, Nikola Jokic scored 19 points and added nine rebounds as the Nuggets came from behind to beat the Golden State Warriors 115-108.

Denver rallied from a 12-point deficit in the second half to hand the Warriors their second loss in three games.

"For us to come and get the defending world champs was huge," said Denver's Gary Harris, who tallied 16 points.

Will Barton had 25 points and Harris 16 for the Nuggets, who split the four games with Golden State this season.

Kevin Durant scored 31 points and Stephen Curry had 24 for Golden State.

Italy Win Davis Cup Tie Against Japan

TOKYO (AFP) - Italy's number one Fabio Fognini beat Japan's Yuichi Sugita in five hard-fought sets to give his country a 3-1 victory in their Davis Cup World tie at Morioka in Japan on Sunday.

Fognini, ranked 22nd in the world, edged past Sugita 3-6, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6, 7-5 in a marathon match lasting four hours and eight minutes to take Italy into the quarter-finals for the fifth time in six years.

The Italian had admitted feeling tired after Saturday's doubles success, having played nearly eight hours in total including Friday's defeat of Taro Daniel.

He even suggested he might not play on Sunday but managed to stay on court for another four

hours with plenty of tiebreak tension.

Japan had hoped to reach the Davis Cup quarter-finals for only the second time after former world number four Kei Nishikori helped them reach the last eight in 2014.

But they will have to enter September's playoffs in a bid to remain among the Davis Cup elite.

Italy were champions back in 1976 and have finished runners-up on six occasions.

The tie was held in a 4,000-capacity indoor arena in snowy Morioka, some 450 kilometers (280 miles) north of Tokyo. The first-choice venue of Ariake in Tokyo is being renovated for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Deportivo la Coruna Sack Coach Parallo

MADRID (Xinhua) - Deportivo la Coruna confirmed on Sunday that they have sacked coach Cristobal Parallo following a poor run of results.

Parallo, who replaced Pepe Mel for the 10th game of campaign, has been in charge for 13 games in the Liga Santander, but has overseen just two wins along with three draws and eight defeats and Deportivo are currently the third from bottom of the league table.

Club president Tino Fernandez had assured on Thursday that Parallo's job was safe whatever happened in the club's next game, but a 5-0 defeat away to Real Sociedad on Friday night meant his position was unsustainable and the club is now searching for a replacement.



Deportivo La Coruna have announced that Pepe Mel has been fired as coach

Fans Flock to Cheer Joint Korean Ice Hockey Team

INCHEON, South Korea (Reuters) - South Korean fans chanting, "We are one" and wearing shirts with the unification flag emblazoned on the front packed into a freezing ice hockey arena on Sunday to cheer on the joint Korean women's team in a tune-up for this month's Winter Olympics.

North and South Korea agreed last month to field a combined women's ice hockey team and march together under one flag in Pyeongchang after a new round of talks amid a thaw in cross-border relations.

With some 3,000 fans packed into Seonhak International Ice Rink in Incheon, the Koreans, who have only practiced together for a week, lost 3-1 to Sweden.

While the result was a disappointment, hopes are high that the unified