

Iran Stand 2nd at 2018 Asian Alpine Ski Championships



Iranian alpine skier Mohammad Kia-Darbandsari

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian skiers have exhibited fine performances at the 2018 Asian Alpine Ski Championships, and collected a dozen medals, including two gold ones, and claimed the second spot at the conclusion of the continental sports event.

On Tuesday, the Islamic Republic of Iran finished as the vice cham-

pion of the three-day competitions at Darbandsar ski resort, located 60 kilometers northeast of the Iranian capital city of Tehran, having won two gold medals, six silvers and four bronzes.

Kazakhstan was crowned the champion with five gold medals, while South Korea stood third with a gold medal and a bronze.

Iran's Mohammad Kia-Darbandsari snatched the gold medal in the men's slalom competitions on Tuesday, while Kazakhstan's Igor Zakurdayev finished second and received the silver. Hossein Saveh-Shemshaki, another representative from Iran, took the bronze.

In the women's slalom contests, Iranian contestant Forough Abbasi stood behind South Korea's Shin Hyo-im and claimed the silver medal. Kazakh skier Yekaterina Karpova pocketed the bronze medal.

Earlier, Kia-Darbandsari scooped the silver in the men's giant slalom competitions. Kazakhstan's Zakhar Kuchin and Igor Zakurdayev received the gold and bronze medals respectively.

Sadaf Saveh-Shemshaki also picked up a silver medal at women's giant slalom on Monday. Mariya Grigorova from Kazakhstan finished first; and South Korea's Shin Hyo-im claimed the

third spot.

On Saturday and the first day of the tournament, Kia-Darbandsari took the alpine combined gold medal. Zakurdayev got the silver and Hossein Saveh-Shemshaki had to settle with the bronze.

Kia-Darbandsari also claimed the men's Super-G silver. Zakurdayev and Kuchin got the gold and bronze medals of the disciple respectively.

Grigorova won the gold medal in the women's Super-G, while Iran's Atefeh Ahmadi and Sadaf Saveh-Shemshaki snatched the silver and bronze medals.

Iranian skiers Saveh-Shemshaki and Abbasi won the silver and bronze medals in the women's alpine combined competitions. Kazakhstan's Grigorova stood atop the podium and clinched the gold medal.

The 2018 Asian Alpine Ski Championships took place between March 4 and 6, 2018.

Vettel Fastest With Ferrari as F1 Tests Resume in Spain

MONTMELO, Spain (AP) — Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel got off to a good start as the final week of Formula One testing began on Tuesday, setting the fastest time and running the most laps at the Circuit de Catalunya-Barcelona.

Vettel showed Ferrari's strength by finishing the day with a time of 1 minute, 20.396 seconds, two tenths faster than Valtteri Bottas of Mercedes. Max Verstappen was close behind with Red Bull, followed by the Mercedes of defending champion Lewis Hamilton.

Vettel ran 171 laps on Tuesday, 41 more than Verstappen, the driver closest



Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel of Germany steers his car during a Formula One pre-season testing session in Montmelo, outside Barcelona, Spain, Tuesday, March 6, 2018.

to him on the lap charts. The only other driver to break the 100-lap mark was Marcus Ericsson of Sauber, with 120. Mercedes totaled 177 laps as Hamilton and Bottas split driving time.

McLaren, using a Renault engine this season after three dismal years with Honda, struggled with reliability problems as Stoffel Vandoorne was twice stranded on the track.

Vandoorne ended the day with 38 laps, the fewest among the 13 drivers who were on the track. The Belgian driver had the third-fastest time overall in last week's tests.

Blazers Win 8th Straight With 111-87 Victory Over Knicks

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) - Knicks coach Jeff Hornacek said it may be time to get Damian Lillard into the Most Valuable Player conversation.

"The guy is playing fantastic. He might be one of those guys you've got to start talking about that MVP too with the way he's playing," New York's coach said after Lillard scored 37 points in a 111-87 victory over the Knicks on Tuesday night.

Lillard made eight 3-pointers, one off his career high, in the Blazers' eighth straight win.

CJ McCollum added 19 points for the Blazers, on their longest winning streak since winning nine in a row in 2014. They have moved into third place in the Western Conference standings.

Even the fans have lofty expectations for Lillard, chanting "MVP! MVP!" at times when he got to the line.

Lillard added that he believes this has been his best season. He's averaging 26.8 points, but he's been particularly effective over the streak.

The Blazers hit a season-high 20 3-pointers in 33 attempts (60 percent).

Enes Kanter had 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Knicks, who lost their fifth straight. It was Kanter's 32nd double-double this season, a career high. Tim Hardaway Jr. finished with 19 points.

New York has won just one of its last 14 games. The Knicks trailed by as many as 22 points.

The game in Portland was the

third of a four-game road trip for the Knicks and comes off a 102-99 loss to the Kings on Sunday. Sacramento's Skal Labissiere had a 3-pointer with 1.6 seconds left to win it.

The Knicks lost top scorer Kristaps Porzingis last month to a season-ending ACL tear injury that required surgery, and they've since gone 1-8.

Against the Blazers, the Knicks were without Courtney Lee because of personal reasons. Rookie Frank Ntilikina got his first NBA start in his place. Lance Thomas also got the start for New York, with Michael Beasley coming off the bench.

Portland remained without forward Maurice Harkless for the third straight game because of a knee injury. Evan Turner started in his place.

Lillard had 16 points in the first quarter alone and the Blazers led 34-28 after the period. Pat Connaughton hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer for Portland.

Lillard went to the bench to start the second quarter and was briefly looked at by trainers. Portland led by as many as 15 points in the quarter but the Knicks closed the gap to 57-52 at halftime.

Portland stretched the lead to as many as 27 points in the second half.

The Blazers were coming off a 108-103 victory the night before against the Lakers in Los Angeles. Lillard scored 19 of his 39 points in the final quarter in the come-from-behind victory.

Novak Djokovic Becomes Latest Player to Join Indian Wells



Novak Djokovic has not played a competitive match since the Australian Open in January

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - As the biggest hard-court tournament of the spring, the upcoming event at Indian Wells turns into a comeback for tennis. Last night, Novak Djokovic became the latest big name to appear in the draw.

Women's draw confirmed the entries of Serena Williams and Victoria Azarenka, who had not played a match on the tour since January and July 2017 respectively.

Then it was the turn of the men, and of Djokovic. The 12-time slam champion did participate in the recent Australian Open, but his four matches there remain his only contribution to the tour since Wimbledon. He also needed a "small medical intervention" - in

his own words - on his troublesome right elbow in February, which left him with bandaging all the way down to his hand.

But Djokovic has been practicing again in recent days and he will probably return to the fray at the weekend, depending on the schedule. He is the 10th seed and will thus enjoy a first-round bye, while two qualifiers fight for the right to face him.

The lesson from Djokovic's strong performances in Melbourne six weeks ago is that he doesn't need much match-time to find his form. He looked commanding there on his way to the fourth round, before his painful elbow combined with an inspired performance from South Korea's Hyeon Chung to undo him.

Pacquiao Eyes Next Fight in Malaysia in May or June

MANILA (AFP) - Philippine boxing idol Manny Pacquiao said his next opponent would be either world champion Lucas Matthisse or Danny Garcia in Malaysia in May or June, after rejecting an undercard offer to face Mike Alvarado.

Pacquiao told ABS-CBN television in an interview he aired that his camp had narrowed the choices down to World Boxing Association welterweight champion Matthisse, of Argentina, or the American former WBA super-welterweight and World Boxing Council welterweight champ Garcia, who was unbeaten until last year.

Last week Pacquiao, 39, rejected an offer to fight on the undercard of the Jeff Horn-Terence Crawford fight in the U.S. in April.

Pacquiao, who has won world titles in an unprecedented eight weight

divisions, previously said he was eyeing an April date with Ukraine's World Boxing Organization superfeatherweight champion Vasyl Lomachenko during a break from his senatorial duties.

Asked why he would fight in Malaysia, Pacquiao said "because those in Malaysia appealed to also have a fight there".

Pacquiao is a national hero in the Philippines but there have been growing questions about whether the ageing boxer can still command the mammoth paydays that his fights used to earn.

He lost his WBO welterweight title to the Australian Horn last year to leave his record standing at 59 wins, seven losses and two draws, and is now in the twilight of his career.

The Filipino southpaw retired briefly in 2016 but made a comeback to retake his WBO title from Jessie Vargas just months later. He has not scored a knockout win



Manny Pacquiao, who has won world titles in an unprecedented eight weight divisions, is also a senator in the Philippines

in the past eight years.

In January, Pacquiao rejected calls to retire for good, adding he did not believe his recent losses tarnished his record.

He parlayed his sporting fame to get elected to the influential Senate in 2016 and has had to juggle his training and matches with his legislative schedule.

Heynckes Backs Tuchel for Bayern Munich Job

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Jupp Heynckes has backed Thomas Tuchel to replace him as Bayern Munich coach when he steps aside at the end of the season.

Heynckes returned for a fourth spell in charge of the Bundesliga leaders in September after Carlo Ancelotti was fired following a 3-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Bayern had been a shadow of their former selves early in the campaign but under the 72-year-old they have impressed - only losing one game in all competitions.

They top the Bundesliga once again, are in the DFB-Pokal semis and have one foot in the



Thomas Tuchel is a leading candidate to replace Jupp Heynckes at Bayern Munich next season, according to the 72-year-old departing coach.

Champions League quarter-finals after thrashing Besiktas 5-0 in the last-16 first leg.

Heynckes has no intention of staying on beyond May despite his success, though, with his replacement a hot topic of conversation in Germany.

North Korean Athletes Arrive in South for Paralympics

Pyeongchang, South Korea (AFP) - North Korean athletes and delegates arrived in the South Wednesday to take part in the Winter Paralympics, as part of an Olympics-driven detente between the two neighbors.

Two competitors -- both of them taking part in cross-country skiing -- along with four observer athletes and 18 officials crossed the land border north of Seoul before heading for the venues.

Their journey came a day after Seoul announced plans to hold a historic summit between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in -- the latest fruit of their Olympics-fuelled diplomacy.