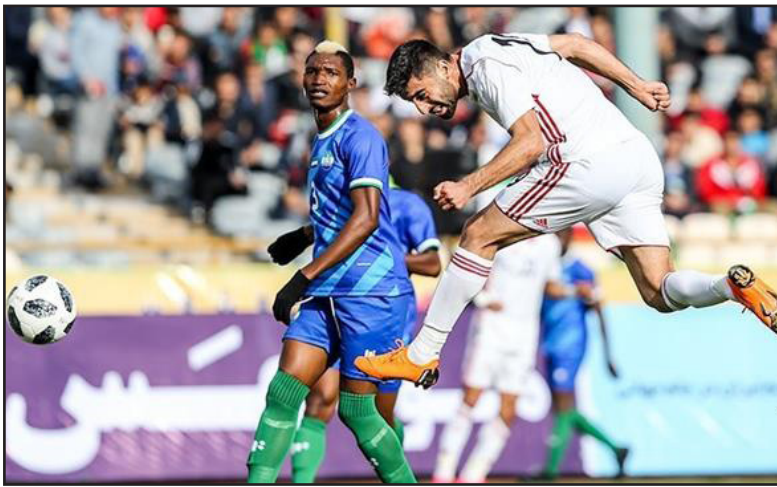


# Iran Routs Sierra Leone 4-0 in World Cup Warm-Up



This picture shows a view of the friendly match between the Iran men's national football team (players in white) and Sierra Leone at Azadi Stadium, western Tehran, Iran, on March 17, 2018.

the Iran national football team's lead.

Kaveh Rezaei scored Team Melli's third goal in the 33rd minute, and Iranian footballers went into the cloakrooms ahead of their West African counterparts by three goals.

Gholizadeh put his name on the scoreboard once again in the 47th minute.

During the official 2018 FIFA World Cup draw ceremony at Kremlin State Palace in the Russian capital city of Moscow on December 1, Team Melli joined the Portugal national football team, nicknamed A Seleção, Spain's La Furia Roja and Atlas Lions of Morocco in the preliminary round of the tournament.

## Utah Jazz Beat Sacramento Kings 103-97 for 9th Straight Win

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - The Utah Jazz struggled from long range. They were on at the free-throw line.

Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points, and the Jazz beat the Sacramento Kings 103-97 on Saturday night for their ninth straight victory.

Rudy Gobert had 22 points and 13 rebounds for Utah, and Ricky Rubio added 14 points, nine rebounds and five assists. The Jazz (40-30) won for the 21st time in their last 23 games.

Sacramento went 14 for 21 from 3-point range, but Utah made 31 of 38 at the line. Gobert went 8 for 10 as six different Jazz players shot at least four free throws. The free throws helped make up for a disparity on the perimeter. Utah went 6 for 24 from beyond the arc, and Sacramento was 9 for 14 on foul shots.

The Kings (23-48) lost to the Jazz for the third time this season. Buddy Hield scored 23 points, and Bogdan Bogdanovic finished with 12.

De'Aaron Fox made a free throw and dunked off a pass from Garrett Temple to rally the Kings into a 94-all tie with 1:11 remaining. But Joe Ingles, Rubio and Gobert each made two free throws to make it 100-94 with



Ricky Rubio #3 of the Utah Jazz passes the ball against the Sacramento Kings on March 17, 2018 at vivint.SmartHome Arena in Salt Lake City, Utah.

about 23 seconds to go.

Temple then made a 3-pointer for Sacramento, but Ingles made another foul shot and Gobert scored to help Utah close it out.

Ingles finished with 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds.

Fox and Temple each had 11 points for the Kings, who are 5-5 in March.

"Finding our identity is something we're finding late, but it's better to end on a better note," Hield said.

## Salah Can Pass Messi and Be Best in World, Says Klopp



Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi are premature, but that the Egyptian is on his way to one day becoming the best player in the world.

Salah's stunning season continued with a four-goal haul in a 5-0 thrashing of Watford at Anfield to take his tally for the season to 36 on Saturday -- the most goals ever scored by a Liverpool player in their debut year at the club.

Messi showed why he is still widely considered the world's best by scoring his 100th Champions League goal in tearing Chelsea apart in a 3-0 win on Wednesday.

But Klopp believes Salah, 25, has time on his side to succeed Messi and Real Madrid rival Cristiano Ronaldo, both now in their thirties, as the world's best player.

"I think Mo is on the way (to being the best in the world)," said Klopp.

"I don't think Mo or anybody else wants to be compared with Lionel Messi. He is the one who is doing what he's doing for what feels like 20 years or so."

And Klopp challenged Salah to maintain the standards he has set this season in the manner Messi and Ronaldo have for the past decade.

Salah even defied the slippery conditions of a snow storm as he weaved his way past Jose Holebas to slot home the opener after just four minutes.

"Conditions were difficult. It was obviously slippery and everybody suffered, but not Mo in that situation. It was really special," added Klopp.

Mohamed Salah, 25, could become the world's top player succeeding Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, both in their 30s, his manager Jurgen Klopp believes celebrates scoring the team's fourth goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Watford at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on March 17, 2018.

LIVERPOOL (AFP) - Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes comparisons between Mohamed Salah and Barcelona's five-time

## Ramirez Beats Imam, Claims WBC Super Lightweight Belt



Jose Ramirez (R) took his record to 22-0, as he captured the vacant World Boxing council super lightweight title with a 12-round unanimous decision over fellow American Amir Imam (L)

But Ramirez was clearly in control in the latter rounds, hurting Imam with a right in the 10th. Imam's right eye was swelling

shut in the 11th, and Ramirez came out firing in the 12th, although the knockout eluded him.

The bout saw Hall of Fame 86-year-old promoters Don King and Bob Arum renew their decades-old rivalry.

Top Rank boss Arum promotes Ramirez while King promotes Imam, a 27-year-old New Yorker who fell to 21-2 and saw a run of three straight victories end.

It was the first fight in which Arum and King fighters faced each other since March 2011, when Puerto Rico's Miguel Cotto kept his World Boxing Association super welterweight world title with a 12th-round stoppage of Nicaragua's Ricardo Mayorga.

## Coaching Italy Would Be Extraordinary - Mancini



Roberto Mancini won league titles with both Man City and Inter Milan, but has struggled in Russia with Zenit

ROME (AFP) - Zenit St Petersburg coach Roberto Mancini has revealed in an emotional interview how coaching his native Italy would be "extraordinary".

Mancini, 53, is among the favorites to lead the four-time World Cup winners, with Chelsea manager Antonio Conte and former Bay-

ern Munich coach Carlo Ancelotti also being touted as candidates.

"When you're abroad you always miss your country," said Mancini in an episode of "The Lords of Football" series with Sky.

"When you are in Italy, you sometimes criticize it rightly. You go abroad and you miss this feeling.

"You become nostalgic for the past when we were young, in the '70s and '80s when we saw the Italian national team playing with great emotion.

"You never know in life, I think that coaching Italy one day would be an extraordinary thing of enormous prestige."

"In the meantime, though, I'll try to win and do my best with Zenit," he added of his current team, who are struggling down in fifth in Russia.

Giampiero Ventura was fired as coach last November, days after Italy's shock failure to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years.

## Federer Survives Scare, to Face Del Potro in Indian Wells Final

PARIBAS (Reuters) - World number one Roger Federer survived a scare from unseeded Borna Coric to beat him 5-7 6-4 6-4 in the BNP Paribas Open and set up a final showdown with Juan Martin del Potro who cruised to a 6-2 6-3 win over Milos Raonic.

expectedly competitive two hour twenty minute battle against the 21-year-old Croatian on a windy morning in the California desert.

An upset was on the cards when the speedy Coric used his ferocious backhand to take the first set off the Swiss, the first time defending champion Federer had dropped a set at Indian Wells in nine matches.

He then broke Federer to start the second set and silence the stunned crowd, which included Hall of Famers Rod Laver and Pete Sampras.

But despite playing below his usual standards, the 20-times

grand slam champion was able to eke out victory by finding his serving rhythm and winning the biggest points of the match as nerves finally caught up with Coric.

Del Potro's one-sided win lacked the drama of the earlier match as Canadian Raonic put up little fight against the Argentine's powerful serve and punishing forehand in a contest that lasted just over an hour.

Del Potro won nearly 90 percent of his first service points and converted four of his five break point opportunities against Raonic, who never created a break point against the towering Argentine.

## Zarco Takes Pole for MotoGP's Qatar Opener in Record Time

DOHA (Reuters) - Frenchman Johann Zarco took the first pole position of the MotoGP season for the non-works Tech3 Yamaha team on Saturday with a record lap around Qatar's floodlit Losail circuit.

The twice-Moto2 champion's best time of one minute 53.680 seconds was 0.247 faster than the previous lap record set by Spaniard Jorge Lorenzo in 2008 at the desert track outside Doha.

Honda's Spanish reigning world champion Marc Marquez was 0.202 slower than Zarco and will start Sunday's night race in the middle of the front row.

Italian Danilo Petrucci was third on the grid, 0.005 slower than Marquez, as the best of the Ducati riders on a non-works Pramac team bike.

The pole was Zarco's third in the top category of motorcycle grand prix racing that he entered last year. Britain's Cal Crutchlow will line up fourth for LCR Honda while factory Ducati rider Andrea Dovizioso, Marquez's main rival last year, qualified fifth. Italian great Valentino Rossi will start his 23rd season of grand prix racing, at the age of 39, from eighth place for Yamaha. Marquez, who has won four of the past five MotoGP titles, was happy with his performance.