

# Persepolis Held by Al-Hilal



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Persepolis football team of Iran failed to defeat Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League's Matchday 5 on Monday.

Persepolis could have won the match but the team's players squandered their chances at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman.

Al Hilal secured its place in the knockout phase of the 2017 AFC Champions League with this draw.

The point earned moves the Saudi Arabia champion onto nine points in Group D and, thanks to

the goal scored in the 1-1 draw in its first meeting with Persepolis on Matchday One, the club from Riyadh cannot be passed by Branko Ivankovic's team.

Persepolis remain in third place in the group with six points with their hopes of a place in the Round of 16 growing increasingly slim after it failed to score for the second game in a row.

Al Rayyan of Qatar lost 5-1 to Al Wahda of the UAE in another match at Al Nahyan Stadium.

Persepolis will have to beat Al Wahda in Matchday 6 and will

qualify for the next stage if Al Hilal don't lose to Al Rayyan.

## FIFA President Congratulates Persepolis Over Winning IPL Title

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has sent a congratulatory message to the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and congratulated Persepolis FC over winning its 10th Iran Professional League (IPL) crown.

Persepolis football team claimed the title last week with three games to spare.

"On behalf of the entire football

community, I would like to congratulate Persepolis since it's a great achievement for the team. My congratulation goes to players, head coach, coaching staff, medical staff, and the club's fans," Infantino wrote.

"I would like to thank Persepolis over sending positive message to the world," FIFA president added.

## UAE's Al Ain Beat Iran's Zob Ahan

Ans also, Zob Ahan football team of Iran lost to the UAE's Al Ain 3-0 in Matchday 5 of the AFC Champions League on Monday.

Danilo Asprilla gave Al Ain the lead in the 25th minute in Isfahan before Jerry Bengtson's missed penalty saw last year's beaten finalist hold onto its advantage going into the half-time interval.

A fine solo effort from Omar Abdulrahman doubled Al Ain's advantage 12 minutes into the second half and Mohammed Abdulrahman added a third nine minutes from time to seal all three points.

The win moves Al Ain into first place in Group C with nine points, one ahead of Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli and a further point clear of Zob Ahan. With Al Ahli and Zob Ahan due to meet on Matchday 6, Al Ain are assured of a place in the top two positions.

## Pars Jonoubi Jam Promoted to Iran Professional League

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Pars Jonoubi Jam football team sealed promotion to Iran Professional League (IPL) on Monday.

The Bushehr-based football team defeated Esteghlal Ahvaz 2-1 in Iran First Division and sealed promotion to IPL for the first time in history.

Pars Jonoubi Jam secured promotion with 62 points with one

week left.

Ehsan Taeidi scored for Pars Jonoubi in the 35th minute but Pedram Ardalani equalized the match four minutes later.

Just before the half time, Mojtaba Lotfi scored Pars Jonoubi's second goal.

Last week, Machine Sazi of Tabriz was relegated to Iran First Division.

## Klitschko Looks Beyond Joshua Fight, Has No Plans to Retire



Anthony Joshua (left) and Wladimir Klitschko pose during the press conference

LONDON (Reuters) - With no question marks over his health or motivation, former champion Wladimir Klitschko has no plans to bring the curtain down on his 21-year professional career and is relishing the pressure ahead of his title fight against Briton Anthony Joshua.

Klitschko, who went unbeaten for 11 years before losing to Tyson Fury in 2015, has 64 wins against four defeats and will be hoping to seize Joshua's IBF heavyweight crown as well as the vacant WBA and IBO titles also up for grabs.

"Hopefully, I have a couple of years left in me," the 41-year-old Ukrainian told British media.

"I was always saying health and motivation is very important. If one of those things is missing then it doesn't make sense to continue."

Klitschko will face Joshua on April 29 in front of a 90,000 strong crowd at Wembley, one of the largest crowds in British boxing.

"In regards to pressure, it's just enjoyable. Anthony Joshua is a great fighter, I'm taking on the best out there to be the best. It's challenging... My next stage is bigger than my last," Klitschko said.

"The attention for the previous fight was less compared with this. It is an upgrade, it is a winning upgrade. I love it."

## Messi's Late Goal Lifts Barcelona Over Real Madrid

MADRID (NY Times) — Lionel Messi has scored his 500th career goal for Barcelona to give the club a dramatic 3-2 win in injury time against 10-man Real Madrid in the "clásico", leaving the Spanish league title race wide open.

Messi netted his milestone goal — his second of the night — with a low left-foot shot from inside the area after a cross by Jordi Alba two minutes into stoppage time.

That goal left the two rivals level at the top on 75 points. Barcelona leads on the head-to-head tiebreaker but Madrid has six games left — one more than Barcelona.

It was the second consecutive win by Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, coming after a 4-0 rout last season that put Madrid in crisis and eventually led to the replacement of coach Rafa Benitez by Zinedine Zidane.

This year's victory could keep



Lionel Messi after scoring Barcelona's winning goal in the final minute against Real Madrid on Sunday. The teams are now tied atop the La Liga standings.

Madrid from winning the league title for the first time since 2012, and give Barcelona its third straight La Liga trophy.

"We can't be happy," Zidane said. "When you don't put the game away, things like this can happen.

We are disappointed because we didn't deserve to lose."

It was another outstanding performance by Messi, who played part of the game with a bloodied mouth after colliding with Madrid left back Marcelo's elbow.

"He is the best player in history," Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said of Messi. "He makes the difference."

Messi's winner at the Bernabeu came after Sergi Roberto made a great run from Barcelona's defense, leading to Alba's low pass across the area as Messi came charging to one-touch the ball into the corner past the diving Keylor Navas.

Messi's first goal came after he got past Luka Modric and Dani Carvajal with a run inside the area after picking up a pass by Ivan Rakitic outside the box in the 33rd.

Messi is the all-time leading scorer in the clásico with 23 goals.

He has scored 14 goals in his last 10 league matches, and is the competition's leading scorer with 31 goals, seven more than teammate Luis Suarez. He has 47 goals with Barcelona in 46 games this season.

## Andy Murray to Face Bernard Tomic in Second Round



Andy Murray won 18 of his 21 matches during the European clay-court season last year

LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Andy Murray will play Australian Bernard Tomic in the Barcelona Open on Wednesday.

The Briton, 29, accepted a late wild card for Barcelona after his third-round defeat by Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas in Monte Carlo on Thursday.

It will give top seed Murray more match time on clay before the French Open, which begins on 28 May.

British number two Kyle Edmund is out of the Barcelona Open after losing 6-1 6-4 to Austria's Dominic Thiem.

Murray played his first professional match at the tournament in 2005, aged 17, where he lost to Czech Jan Hernych.

The Scot was based in Barcelona from

the age of 15 and he visited the Barcelona academy, which has named one of its courts after him.

"I was here in Barcelona for two years and I loved it. I would say that they were two of the best years of my life," Murray told the ATP website.

"It was the first time that I was away from my family home and even though it was hard, it was the first time I'd tasted independence".

Murray won his first clay-court title in Munich in 2015 and beat Rafael Nadal the following week to win the Madrid Masters.

He won the Italian Open last year and reached the final of the French Open, where he lost to Novak Djokovic.

## Warriors Get a Break After Drama-Filled Opening Series

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Warriors can breathe for a bit after a first-round series filled with drama.

With a sweep of the Portland Trail Blazers, Golden State now awaits the conclusion of the series between the Utah Jazz and Los Angeles Clippers — currently tied at 2.

The Warriors will also await word on coach Steve Kerr's health — with the short break perhaps providing more clarity about when he can rejoin the team. Kerr missed the last two games after symptoms from his back surgery two years ago suddenly flared up.

The 51-year-old coach was in obvious discomfort just before the team left for the two games at Portland's Moda Center. It was announced a few hours before Game 3 that he would stay back at the team hotel. Assistant Mike

Brown, who has plenty of head coaching experience, took over.

A day later, Warriors GM Bob Myers was scheduled to address the media, but Kerr showed up instead and said he wouldn't be available for Game 4, either.

"As of now, I'm consulting with my doctors," Kerr said. "I'm hoping for some improvement and if I can get some improvement, I'll get back on the sidelines. But I'm not going to do that unless I know I can help the team."

Kerr still experiences lingering symptoms from complications following two back surgeries after the franchise's run to the 2015 championship. He missed the first 43 games last season dealing with symptoms such as headaches, nausea and an aching neck.

It is not known when Kerr might

return, but he is expected to seek treatment in the San Francisco Bay Area in the coming days.

He was at Game 4 at the Moda Center, watching from the locker room as the Warriors beat the Trail Blazers 128-103 to close out the series in four games.

Durant, who added to the drama after injuring his calf in the opener game against the Blazers, praised Brown for stepping into a lead role with short notice. A first-year assistant for the Warriors, Brown was coach of the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Los Angeles Lakers.

In the first of two stints with Cleveland, Brown led the Cavs to their first NBA Finals appearance in 2007. He was named the league's Coach of the Year in 2009 when Cleveland finished with 66 wins.

Brown said Kerr's foundation and an experienced group of players helped make the translation easy.

In the midst of the sobering news about Kerr, the Warriors got a boost with the return of Durant for the final game of the series after he injured his left calf in Game 1.

Durant had just returned from a left knee injury to play in Golden State's final three regular-season games. He missed 19 games because of the injury he sustained at Washington on Feb. 28.

The first-round series between the Jazz and the Clippers moves back to Los Angeles for Game 5 on Tuesday night. The Clippers are without Blake Griffin for the rest of the playoffs after he injured his right big toe in Game 3.

Brown said the break will do the Warriors good.