

# Iranian Boxer Wins Gold in Baku Games

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian boxer Hossein Ashouri has won the gold medal in Thai Boxing and a silver medal in MMA at Baku martial arts games.

Based on the draw, Ashouri fought in two bouts (+90 kg), and won the gold medal in Thai boxing and the silver medal in MMA at Baku International Martial Arts Festivals May 24-25.

Athletes from eight prominent countries in martial arts took part in the international Baku games.

## Isfahan to Host International Futsal Tournament

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The four-a-side futsal tournament will be held in the city of Isfahan, Iran.

Head of the futsal committee in the Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation (IRIFF), Abbas Torabian, said the tournament will kick off in Isfahan on December 3, 2017.

According to Torabian, Argen-

tina, Russia and Portugal have expressed readiness to take part in the competition.

Argentina won the 2016 FIFA Futsal World Cup after defeating Russia 5-4 in the final match.

Iran also finished in third place, beating Portugal in penalty shootout.

## Sadeghi Joins Beykoz Belediyespor Handball Team

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Afshin Sadeghi has joined Beykoz Belediyespor handball team.

The Iranian international left back joined the Turkish super league team on a one-year contract.

The details of the contract have not been revealed.

Sadeghi has joined Beykoz Belediyespor from Switzerland's TSV Fortitudo Gossau.

Another Iranian player Sajjad Nadri has previously joined Beykoz Belediyespor.

Nadri plays at right back.

Sadeghi and Nadri are members of Iran national handball team.

## Barcelona Likely to Name Ernesto Valverde as Luis Enrique's Replacement



Ernesto Valverde managed Bilbao to their first trophy in 31 years when they won the Spanish Super Cup in 2015 beating Barcelona 5-1 on aggregate.

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona are expected to name former Athletic Bilbao manager Ernesto Valverde as their new boss.

Valverde, who has won a Copa Del Rey with Barcelona as a player, had announced that he would step down as Bilbao manager after four years at the helm of the club.

Valverde managed Bilbao to their first trophy in 31 years when they won the Spanish Super Cup in 2015 beating Barcelona 5-1 on aggregate.

He then went on to manage Greek side Olympiacos winning

league and domestic cup titles there.

He replaces Luis Enrique, who has won nine trophies in his three-year stint as Barcelona manager. The Catalan giants won a treble of the Copa Del Rey, La Liga and UEFA Champions League in his first season in charge. He has won a total of nine trophies with the club including a third consecutive Copa Del Rey in his last match as manager of Barcelona. He is hence the third most decorated manager of the club, only after Pep Guardiola and Johan Cruyff.

## Cristiano Better Than Messi This Season: Ronaldo

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo deserves to win the Best FIFA footballer of the year award in 2017, despite the fine performances of his rival Lionel Messi, according to Brazilian legend Ronaldo.

"This year I would choose Cristiano Ronaldo to win it," Ronaldo, a three-time recipient of football's highest individual honor, was quoted as saying by Fox Sports.

"In the past two years he has been decisive. His statistics can't be ignored."

Cristiano Ronaldo, a four-



time winner of the FIFA player of the year award, has scored 40 goals and provided 12 assists in 45 matches for Real Madrid in the 2016-17 season, reports Xinhua news agency.

Meanwhile, Messi - who has received the honor five times - has scored 54 goals and provided 19 assists in 52 matches.

"I love watching Messi with the ball at his feet," Ronaldo said. "He scores goals and everything else. Both players are fantastic but it's a cruel comparison. Both players deserve respect," he concluded.

## Djokovic Begins Agassi Era With Win

PARIS (Dispatches) - Defending champion Novak Djokovic won his first match on Monday under new coach Andre Agassi to reach the second round of the French Open in Paris.

The 12-time Grand Slam champion teamed up with American Agassi after parting company with his entire coaching team.

The world number two Serb, who could meet Rafael Nadal in the semi-finals, beat Marcel Granollers 6-3 6-4 6-2.

Spaniard Nadal, bidding for a 10th French Open title, is currently playing Benoit Paire.

### Bedene First Briton Into Second Round

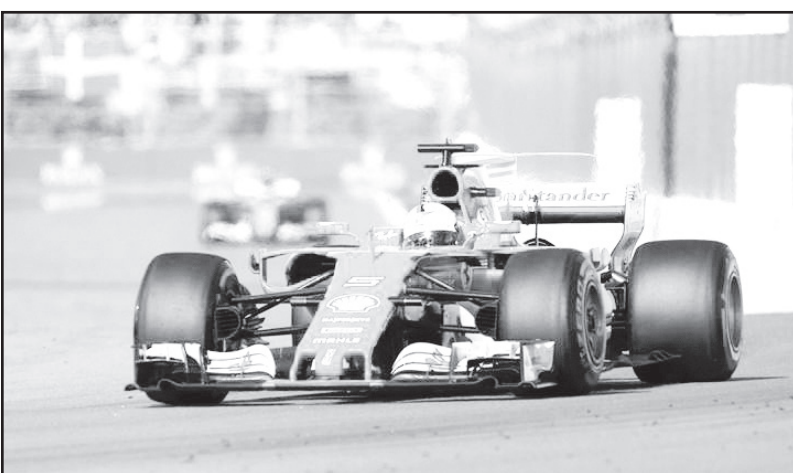
And also, Aljaz Bedene became the first Briton to reach round two of the French Open with a comfortable win over Ryan Harrison.

The British number three won 6-4 6-0 3-6 6-1 against the American who is 10 places higher in the rankings at 42.

Bedene, 27, who lost to Novak Djokovic in the third round last year, will face Czech player Jiri Vesely next.

Bedene has impressed on clay this year, winning two titles on the second-tier Challenger circuit and reaching on ATP Tour final in Hungary, and continued that form winning in one hour and 59 minutes.

## Ferrari Clearly Favoring Sebastian Vettel: Lewis Hamilton



Sebastian Vettel has now won three of the six races to Lewis Hamilton's two.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ferrari are giving Sebastian Vettel the Michael Schumacher treatment, according to the German's main title rival Lewis Hamilton.

The Briton told reporters after the German handed Ferrari their first Monaco Grand Prix win in 16 years that the Italian team was clearly favoring the championship leader over his team mate Kimi Raikkonen.

Raikkonen, the 2007 world champion, had started on pole position but as a result of strategy ended up anchoring Ferrari's first one-two since 2010 instead of standing on top of the podium. Schumacher, the sport's most suc-

cessful driver who won five of his seven titles with Ferrari from 2000-2004, famously built a team around him and was seen as the clear number one at Maranello.

Hamilton had started 13th after a nightmare in qualifying, with the Briton unable to get his car's tyres performing in the requisite window while Ferrari looked suddenly in a league of their own.

Vettel, a four-times world champion and first Ferrari winner in Monaco since Schumacher, has now won three of the six races to Hamilton's two. Finland's Valtteri Bottas also winning in Russia for Mercedes.

## Totti Bids an Emotional Farewell to AS Roma

ROME (Dispatches) - The Stadio Olimpico stadium cried along with legend Francesco Totti, who bid farewell to the only club he ever played for - AS Roma.

It was a celebration filled with tears and a lot of love as the 40-year-old played his last match for the club he had been a part of for 25 years.

The Giallorossi sealed the season with a 3-2 win over Genoa in Serie A, securing a spot in the Champions League. But the highlight of the match for which 60000 fans flocked to the stadium was their loyal legend Totti.

An emotional Totti thanked Roma after the match, putting end to speculation that he would join another club. He said, "Unfortunately the time has come. I've cried every day. It's a decision I made with my wife and my family. I would stay here another 25 years. Thank you Roma."

"I would have liked to write a poem or a song but I've tried to express myself with my feet," Totti added. "I'm taking my shirt off for the last time and folding it up well and good. The lights are turning off now and I'm afraid. Allow me to have a little fear. Now I need your help." Thousands of fans were in No. 10 shirts to honor their hero, while oth-



Francesco Totti played his last game for AS Roma on Sunday.

ers wore shirts that read, 'captain forever'. Totti told his fans that he loved them before parting with the club.

## Kenyan Runners Sweep Titles at Yinchuan International Marathon

YINCHUAN, China (Xinhua) -- The first Ningxia Yinchuan International Marathon kicked off in Yinchuan city of Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, with Kenyan runners winning both men's and women's titles.

Bethwel Biwott Yegon took the men's crown in 2:24:00, while Cheboi Consolata Jepkosgei snatched the women's title in 2:54:15.

According to the local organizers, the event featured marathon, half marathon and mini-marathon, attracting some 20,000 runners from 41 countries and regions, including Kenya, the United States, France, Denmark and Albania.

The male runners from Kenya swept the top three places while Lu Chunyang and Mei Ying, both from the hosts, placed second and third respectively in the women's event.