

Iran Down Italy at FIVB U-21 World Championship



The photo shows a view of the Pool C match between Iran (players in red) and Italy at the 2017 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship in České Budějovice, the Czech Republic, on June 23, 2017.

TEHARN (Dispatches) - Iran's national under-21 volleyball team has trounced Italy in straight sets at the 2017 Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Volleyball Men's U21 World

Championship in the Czech Republic. The Persians sealed their first win of the tournament by seeing off the European squad 3-0 (25-22, 25-19 and 25-21) in a Pool C match played

at the Budvar Arena in the southern Czech city of České Budějovice.

The Iranians started the match with vim and vigor, and dug and spiked effectively throughout the first set. They went ahead and won it 25-22.

The Iranian team kept its dominant performance in the second set of the game with some good attacks, and took it 25-19.

Iranians stood firm against their rivals in the last set and powered through to claim it by 25 points to 21.

Italy's Pinali Giulio was named the top scorer of the match with 12 points. Rasoul Aghchehli was Iran's top scorer with 11.

"This match was hard and yes we won but we don't pay a lot of attention to it. Tomorrow will be another difficult one against Ukraine," Iran's head coach Behrouz Ataei said.

Iran's captain Rasoul Aghchehli said, "It was a good match for us. We had a very good analytical tactic. The Italians are a good team in Europe with a great system and tactic but today we proved to be stronger."

"The first match is always hard but today I'm disappointed with my team, they lost their focus on the service. It is important to play with confidence and strength. Tomorrow is another day but tonight I will have a talk with my team for an hour or two," Italy's head coach Michele Totire commented.

President Congratulates Iran's Junior National Weightlifting Team on World Title

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has congratulated the country's national weightlifting team on winning the championship title at the 2017 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships in Japan.

"I warmly appreciate the whole athletic managers, coaches, members and particularly the dear weightlifters for creating public jubilation for the second consecutive year," the president said in a message of Friday night.

He also wished success for the young Iranian generation in all international arenas, including the athletic competitions.

Meanwhile, parliament speaker Ali Larijani also has congratulated Iranian weightlifting team on claiming first place at 2017 Junior World Championships in Japan.

"Championship of the Iranian weightlifting team, for the second

consecutive year, at 2017 Junior World Championships made us happy," Larijani said in the message.

Congratulating the youth, heroes, coaches, officials of the sport and honest people of Iran, Larijani hoped for a lasting success for the Iranian youth in all fields.

Iran's eight-man delegation claimed the IWF Junior World Championships title for the second successive year on Friday.

The Iranian team won the title with 423 points.

Host Japan came second, earning 394 points and China finished in third place with 391 points.

Iran's Reza Beiralvand won a gold medal in the 105kg while Rahman Ourameh claimed a bronze in the 94kg in the event.

A Total of 265 (108 Women / 157 Men) athletes from 50 countries competed in the international weightlifting event in Tokyo.

Gatlin Set for Duel With Bolt in London



Justin Gatlin wins the men's 100m final at the U.S. World Championship trials ahead of Christian Coleman (right).

LONDON (Dispatches) - American Justin Gatlin has set up the prospect of a final showdown in London with Usain Bolt after winning the 100m in the U.S. World Championship trials.

Gatlin powered through in 9.95 seconds ahead of compatriot Christian Coleman, the fastest man in the world so far this year, who finished in 9.98.

Jamaica's Bolt has qualified for the World Championships in August via a wildcard and is then set to retire.

Yohan Blake ran his fastest time in five years in the Jamaican trials.

The 27-year-old, who is making his comeback following injury problems, won the 100m

in 9.90. Asafa Powell, who has been nursing tendonitis, failed to report for the final after posting 10.15 in his semi-final.

Fellow Jamaican Elaine Thompson clocked her fastest time this year in the women's 100m, crossing the line in 10.71.

At the U.S. trials in Sacramento, U.S. Paralympian Blake Leeper raced in the men's able-bodied 400m, breaking Oscar Pistorius' Paralympic T43 record in the semi-final heat.

Leeper, 27, who was born without lower legs, finished in 45.25, beating the South African's time of 45.39 but it was not enough to see him through to Saturday's final.

Hiddink Urges FIFA to Pick Best Referees for World Cup

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (AP) — FIFA should pick the best referees for the World Cup and not limit its list to one per nation, according to coaching great Guus Hiddink.

Hiddink, a two-time World Cup semifinalist, told The Associated Press three or four referees should be chosen from the same country if they were best at a job getting more complex as video review is tested.

"It's not a World Cup for refer-

ees, it's a World Cup for football teams," the Dutch coach said in St. Petersburg where he is analyzing Confederations Cup games for American broadcaster Fox Sports.

"We want to have the best teams so we want to have the best referees as well. Not necessarily European. Without looking to their nationality, which are the best referees?"

At the 2014 World Cup, FIFA had 25 referees from 25 different countries working in Brazil.

South Korean President Calls for North Korean Olympic Participation



South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, left, shakes hands with a North Korean delegation led by International Olympic Committee member Chang Ung during the opening ceremony of the World Taekwondo Championships in Muju, South Korea, Saturday, June 24, 2017

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea President Moon Jae-in said Saturday he hopes to see North Korean athletes at next year's Winter Olympics in South Korea to ease tensions over the North's nuclear program.

Moon made the comments during the opening ceremony of the world taekwondo championships in the South Korean town of Muju, where a North Korean delegation led by International Olympic Committee member Chang Ung was also present.

The championships, which will

feature a performance by the North Korean taekwondo demonstration team, mark the first sports exchange between the Koreas since the liberal Moon took office in May.

He recalled key moments in sports diplomacy between the Koreas, including when they sent unified teams to the world table tennis and youth soccer championships in 1991, and their athletes marching together during the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Federer Beats Mayer 2-0 at Gerry Weber Open 2017

HALLE, Germany (dispatches) - Top seed Roger Federer has reached the Halle Open semi-finals, beating defending champion Florian Mayer 6-3 6-4 and edging closer to a ninth title at the Wimbledon tune-up event.

The 18-time grand slam champion, whose last title at Halle was in 2015, skipped the entire clay court season after winning the Australian Open and claiming titles at Indian Wells and Miami this year, to prepare for grass.

He will now face rapidly rising talent Karen Khachanov, who won his all-Russian quarter-final against Andrey Rublev 7-6(8) 4-6 6-3 to reach his first tour semi-final of the year.

Federer, who has yet to drop a set in Halle after crashing out of Stuttgart in his first match back last week, limited his serve-and-volley game



Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball during the men's singles quarterfinal match against Florian Mayer of Germany in the Gerry Weber Open 2017 in Halle, Germany, on June 23, 2017.

against the German who is a fine returner and Mayer was broken quickly as his opponent won the first set.

The 33-year-old Mayer squandered two break points at 1-0 in the second set and paid the price as Federer broke again and never relinquished his advantage to win in just over an hour.

Frenchman Richard Gasquet also reached the last four, edging past Dutchman Robin Haase, who had eliminated second seed Dominic Thiem in the previous round, 6-1 3-6 6-1 and looked to be hitting top grass court form at just the right time.

Gasquet will now play the winner of the last quarter-final between local favorite Alexander Zverev and Spaniard Roberto Bautista-Agut later on Friday.

Bottas Tops Final Azerbaijan Practice, Vettel Suffers Problems

BAKU (Reuters) - Valtteri Bottas topped the final Azerbaijan Grand Prix practice and team mate Lewis Hamilton finished third as Mercedes heaped pressure on Ferrari's Formula One championship leader Sebastian Vettel, who retired early with hydraulic problems on Saturday.

Bottas, on soft tires, had been the early pacesetter, but a mistake on Turn Two saw Hamilton usurp him as practice leader, before the Finn bounced back and finished top of the classification with a time of 1.42.742. Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen was second.

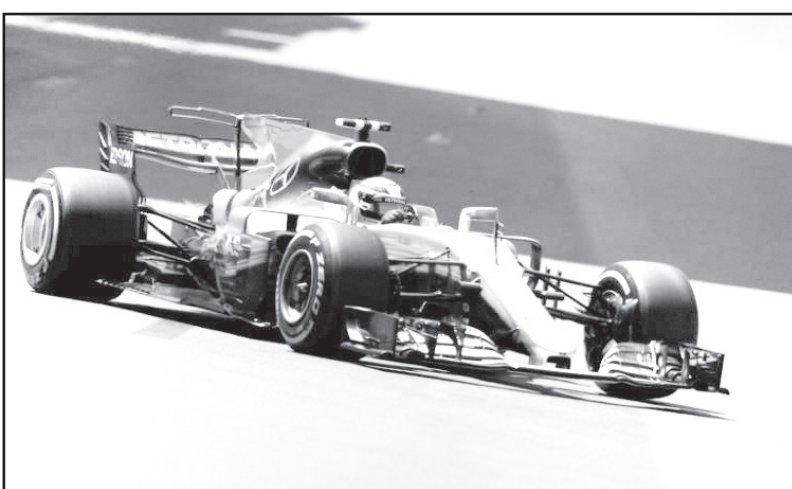
Four-times world champion Vettel ended the session in 12th, 1.602 seconds behind Bottas, after withdrawing early

due to "a loss in the hydraulic pressure circuit".

That set the stage for an unpredictable qualifying session.

It was a rare poor final practice performance and a potentially significant blow to Ferrari's hopes of matching Mercedes' four Grand Prix wins this season. Hamilton, who is 12 points behind Vettel in the championship standings, finished four tenths of a second behind Bottas.

Despite improving on Friday's underwhelming performance, the British driver will be desperate to translate his improving form into qualifying after enjoying a practice sweep in Baku last year only to clip the barriers in qualifying and subsequently starting 10th on the grid.



Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas drives during the third practice session.