

Paralympic Champion Auctions Gold to Help Iran Quake Victims



Iranian Paralympic shooter Sareh Javanmardidodmani poses with her gold medal of the P4 mixed 50-meter pistol SH1 competitions of the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on September 14, 2016.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian Paralympic Games gold medal up for auction to raise money for the victims of the quake that struck western Iran

at the weekend, and left thousands of people injured and tens of villages destroyed.

The quake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale rattled the border region between Iran and Iraq on Sunday night, causing extensive damage and loss of life.

According to the latest figures, at least 432 people have lost their lives and over 7,817 others sustained injuries in the earthquake. More than 12,000 homes have also been completely destroyed in the incident.

"In the wake of this natural disaster and having seen the country's athletes making their contributions to quake-stricken people, I wondered what I could do as a Paralympic athlete and play a part in this major initiative.

"Therefore, I took the decision to auction my most precious medal,

the one which I clinched in Rio Paralympics, to help quake-hit people. I hope the proceeds can alleviate their sufferings to some extent," Javanmardidodmani wrote in a message.

All interested bidders can contact by cellular phone number: 00989125105266.

On September 14, Javanmardidodmani participated in the P4 mixed 50-meter pistol SH1 competitions of the 2016 Paralympics at the Olympic Shooting Center in the western Rio neighborhood of Deodoro.

She racked up 189.5 points to claim the top position and finish as champion.

Earlier, Olympic weightlifting champion Kianoush Rostami had put his gold medal up for auction to raise money for the victims.

Federer Powers Past Zverev to Reach Last Four at ATP Finals

LONDON (Xinhua) - Roger Federer is one step closer to winning his seventh ATP Final championship after beating Alexander Zverev at London's O2 Arena.

Federer has moved Zverev around the court with drop shots and slices and flatten out his groundstrokes against the 20-year-old right-hander, winning 7-6 (6), 5-7, 6-1 after two hours and 12 minutes.

The 36-year-old Swiss, who beat American Jack Sock in the group opener, thus guaranteed a place in the semifinals for the 14th time in his 15th appearance at the ATP Finals.

"I think I was able to stay the course and use my slice quite effectively, then try with variation to go into his forehand," Federer said.

"I'm extremely happy... It's been a tough group so to be there in two matches is great," Federer said. "But today was difficult. Still



Roger Federer of Switzerland serves during the singles round-robin match against Alexander Zverev of Germany during the Nitto ATP World Tour Finals at O2 Arena in London, Britain on Nov. 14, 2017.

early days in the tournament. It was nice to be able to show maybe that quality of mine, that I can dig out these matches, these points time and time again, and stay mentally tough. In the third I started to play better. It was a tough match from the beginning till the end."

In the day's other match, eighth seed Sock upset fifth seed Marin Cilic of Croatia 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (4) to move to 1-1 in Group Boris Becker. Sock also became the first American to win at the season finale since Andy Roddick 10 years ago today in Shanghai.

Cilic, who lost to Zverev in his first match, is eliminated. Sock and Zverev will fight for the other berth to qualify from the group.

Federer has now won 12 consecutive matches, dating back to his title runs at the Shanghai Masters and the Swiss Indoors Basel.

France to Host 2023 Rugby World Cup

LONDON (AP) - France will host the Rugby World Cup in 2023, a year before the Olympic Games in Paris, after surprisingly beating South Africa and Ireland in a vote on Wednesday.

The World Rugby Council disregarded the recommendation of an evaluation report to hand the tenth edition of its showpiece tournament to South Africa.

A secret vote by member nations instead saw France, which hosted

the 2007 World Cup, beat South Africa 24-15 in a second round.

"If you look there wasn't a great deal between France and South Africa in the evaluation report," World Rugby president Bill Beaumont said. "It was very close."

It means France will host four prestigious sporting events within six years, with golf's Ryder Cup in Paris next year and soccer's Women's World Cup across France in 2019.

The French sports ministry said the decision to award it the Rugby World Cup so close to the Olympics and Paralympics in Paris in 2024 "demonstrates the excellence of the French know-how in organizing major sporting events."

The Rugby World Cup final is set to be played at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, just outside Paris. Eight other cities that will host matches: Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon,

Marseille, Nantes, Nice, Saint-Etienne and Toulouse.

South Africa, which staged the Rugby World Cup in 1995, has now failed with four successive bids to land the tournament again.

Fans gathered in the capital Pretoria expecting to celebrate victory in the vote. Instead, some of the crowd, dressed in the colors of the South African flag, was in tears as they watched the announcement from England.

Argentina Football Official Commits Suicide After FIFA Bribe Claims

NEW YORK (AFP) - A former Argentine football official has reportedly committed suicide after he was accused of bribe-taking in testimony to a trial of top former FIFA figures in New York.

Jorge Delhon threw himself under a train in a Buenos Aires suburb on Tuesday, Argentine newspapers Clarin and La Nacion reported on their websites.

A sports marketing executive, Alejandro Burzaco, had testified in the trial Tuesday that Delhon and another man, Pablo Paladino, took millions of dollars in bribes in exchange for rights to broadcast football games.

Burzaco, the first witness in the trial, painted a damning picture of corruption in South American soccer, saying millions of dollars in bribes were paid for TV rights to major tournaments.

Burzaco, the former chairman of an Argentine sports marketing company, pleaded guilty in November 2015 to racketeering, wire fraud and money laundering conspiracies and agreed to pay \$21.6 million in restitution.

In U.S. federal court, he detailed how his Torneos y Competencias S.A. company paid bribes to South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) executives for more than a decade to secure television rights to major tournaments.

Payments were sent by wire transfer to Swiss bank accounts or passed on as cash "in bags or envelopes," Burzaco added.

Fox Pan American Sports, part of 21st Century Fox, Brazil's TV Globo, Argentine group Full Play and Spain's MediaPro were among those who paid -- all partners of Torneos y Competencias.



Alejandro Burzaco (C) says media companies paid millions of dollars in bribes to secure television rights to major soccer tournaments

Fox Sports' parent company, 21st Century Fox, did not immediately respond to a request to comment.

The FIFA corruption trial began Monday, two and a half years after the United States unveiled the largest graft scandal in the history of world soccer.

Jedinak's Hat-Trick Fires Australia Into World Cup



SYDNEY (AFP) - Captain Mile Jedinak's second-half hat-trick fired Australia into next year's World Cup in Russia on Wednesday as they swept past Honduras 3-1 in the second leg of their playoff in Sydney.

The Aston Villa midfielder's free kick went in off Henry Figueroa on 54 minutes, and he then buried two penalties in the space of 13 minutes before Honduras scrambled a late consolation through Alberth Elis.

The final whistle heralded a massive roar from the 77,000 home crowd at the Sydney Olympic stadium as the Socceroos went through 3-1 on aggregate following last week's 0-0 first leg in San Pedro Sula.

It will be Australia's fourth consecutive World Cup and fifth overall, and follows a mammoth 22-game, 29-month qualifying campaign criss-crossing Asia, the Middle East and Central America.

"It's overwhelming to be honest. When you are coaching your own nation to burden of responsibility is even greater, you know what it means to the nation and the game," said Australia coach Ange Postecoglou.

He added: "They got what they deserved. It wasn't by luck or chance, they believed in something that we started and right to the end they displayed the resilience and belief that has made me proud all the way along."

After a cagey first half, the game unravelled for Honduras when Jedinak, who has been struggling with injury for several months, struck three times in the last 36 minutes.

Scoring chances were scarce in a cat-and-mouse opening period, with the best falling in the 37th minute to Celtic's Tom Rogic, whose shot was well saved by Donis Escobar.

Argentine referee Nestor Pitana issued a total of three yellow cards, two to Australia's Matt Jurman and Aaron Mooy and the other to Maynor Figueroa for a foul on Tim Cahill.

Australia were fielding four across the back, with deep-lying midfielder Jedinak adding to the rearguard, but Honduras posed little threat in the first half.

Jedinak broke the deadlock in the 54th minute with free kick which took a wicked deflection off Figueroa, but was eventually credited to the skipper after initially being marked as an own goal.

The goal revved up the Socceroos and the capacity home crowd, and Cahill came close with a looping header but Escobar scrambled it away off the woodwork.

Cahill's night was over after 66 minutes, replaced by striker Tomi Juric and met with a standing ovation from the home crowd in salute to his courageous fightback from a recent ankle injury.

Italy Mull Overhaul After Missing World Cup

ROME (AP) — Out with the old guard and in with the new.

Italy's national soccer team needs a serious injection of youth to recover from its failure to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in six decades.

Goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, defender Andrea Barzagli and midfielder Daniele De Rossi — the three holdovers from the squad that won the country's fourth World Cup in 2006 — announced they were retiring from the national team in the aftermath of a 1-0 aggregate loss to Sweden in a playoff.

Veteran defender Giorgio Chiellini was also considering retirement.

"We all need to take a step back to reset the movement," Chiellini said. "It's the lowest point in modern times for Italian soccer. We need to take advantage of this moment to redesign a new squad."

Italy coach Gian Piero Ventura is sure to go, and there are also calls for soccer federation president Carlo Tavecchio to step down.

So who's left for the Azzurri?

The easiest answer to that question comes in goal, where 18-year-old AC Milan starter Gianluigi Donnarumma is set to replace Buffon.

In defense, Leonardo Bonucci could be the only holdover from the "BBC" trio with Barzagli and Chiellini. Younger defenders on the ho-

lizon include Daniele Rugani, Alessio Romagnoli and Mattia Caldara.

There is hope in midfield, too. Although Marco Verratti still hasn't put in a solid performance as he attempts to replace the retired Andrea Pirlo, a lot will be expected of the Paris Saint-Germain player in the coming years.

Then there is Brazilian-born Jorginho, who was given his first competitive action for Italy in the second leg against Sweden and showed that he can be a reliable option in midfield. Roberto Gagliardini, a physical 23-year-old midfielder for Inter Milan, should also gain more playing time.

Up front, talented wingers Lorenzo Insigne and Stephan El Shaarawy are approaching their primes and center forwards Ciro Immobile and Andrea Belotti are also in their early to mid-20s. At 27, the long-excluded Mario Balotelli could still have plenty to contribute if he ever matures enough.

Other players to watch out for down the line are 20-year-old Fiorentina forward Federico Chiesa — the son of former Italy striker Enrico Chiesa — and 23-year-old Sassuolo striker Domenico Berardi. AC Milan's 23-year-old right back Andrea Conti and 21-year-old Roma midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini are also potential national team players.