

Iran, Asian Ski Heads Discuss 2020 Junior Championship

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Asian Ski President Aki Murasato and the head of the Iranian Ski Federation have held talks in a bid to coordinate efforts to hold an Asian Alpine Ski Championship in Iran.

The two sides discussed preparations for Iran to host the 29th Junior Asian Alpine Ski Championships in 2020.

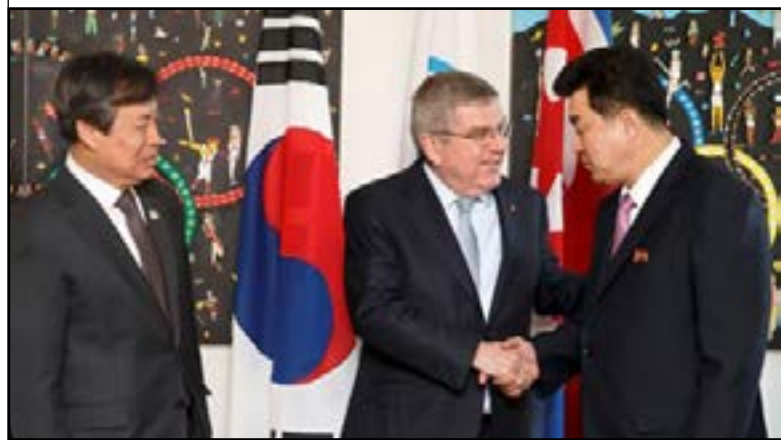
The officials also touched upon holding snowboard ski competitions in the country.

The Iranian Ski Federation chief also informed the Japanese official about the federation's efforts to discover young ski talents.

Abdi Eftekhari stressed the need that Iranian skiers hold some preparatory practices in South Korea before the 28th Children Asian Alpine Ski Championships in that country.



North, South Korea Eye Joint March, Teams for Tokyo 2020



International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach from Germany, shakes hands with North Korea's Olympic Committee President and Minister of Physical Culture and Sports Kim Il Guk, as South Korean Sports Minister Do Jong-hwan looks on, prior a meeting with the IOC for their bid to co-host the 2032 Summer Olympics, at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, February 15, 2019.

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) - North Korea and South Korea want a joint march at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and have requested to have some unified teams in different sports, the president of the International Olympic Committee said on Friday.

South and North Korean sports and government officials met with the IOC in Lausanne, buoyed by the role the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics played in easing tensions between the two countries, amid initial planning for a joint bid for the 2032 Olympics.

The two nations had marched together at the opening ceremony

in Pyeongchang for the first time since the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin. They had also fielded a unified women's ice hockey team.

"We are taking note that both are very much interested in having some joined actions in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 with a joined march and some unified teams in different sports," IOC President Thomas Bach said.

The IOC said the two countries had officially requested to enter joint teams in the qualifying process for four sports -- women's basketball, women's hockey, the judo mixed team event and some men's and women's rowing teams.

Pelicans Take Down Thunder 131-122

NEW ORLEANS (Dispatches) - The New Orleans Pelicans have toppled the Oklahoma City Thunder 131-122, All-Star center Anthony Davis had sustained a shoulder injury.

Pelicans earned their 26th win this season as Julius Randle and Jrue Holiday were the key players having major contributions to Pelicans win at Smoothie King Center.

Randle scored 33 points and took 11 rebounds, his teammate Holiday produced 32 points and seven assists for Pelicans.

Thunder's star point guard Russell Westbrook's outstanding performance couldn't avoid the away loss.

Westbrook tallied 44 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists.

Thunder forward Paul George



Oklahoma City Thunder forward Paul George, front, and New Orleans Pelicans guard Tim Frazier watch the ball go out of bounds during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019.

scored 28 points, had seven rebounds and made six assists.

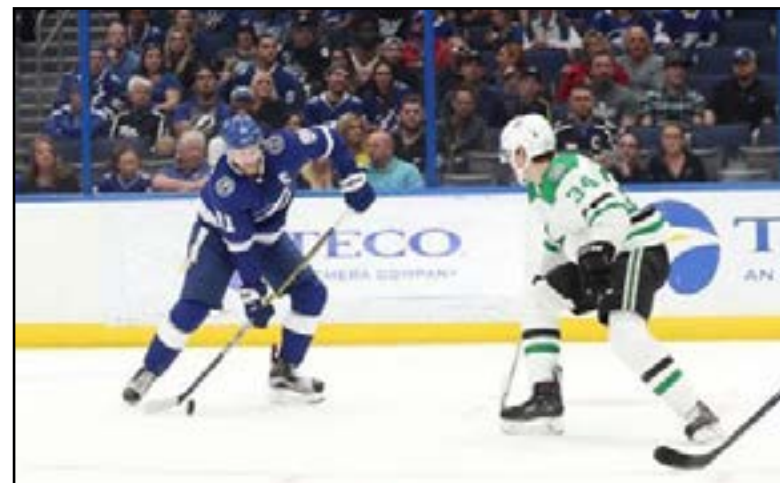
Visitors Thunder had their 20th loss in the regular season.

Pelicans star Davis had to go off the court because of a left shoulder injury.

It is unclear that Davis would miss the 2019 NBA All-Star Game this weekend. Davis was in Team LeBron reserves.

This year's NBA All-Star Game will be held on Feb. 17 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Lightning Slam Stars, Win Fourth Straight in NHL



Feb 14, 2019; Tampa, FL, USA; Tampa Bay Lightning center Steven Stamkos (91) shoots against Dallas Stars right wing Denis Gurianov (34) during the third period at Amalie Arena.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Steven Stamkos has scored two power-play goals and assisted on another tally to help the Tampa Bay Lightning, the NHL's top team, stroll past the visiting Dallas Stars 6-0 to win their fourth consecutive game.

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 32 shots to shut out the Stars for the second time this season. He has five shutouts this season and

17 in his five-year NHL career. Vasilevskiy has made 67 saves against Dallas in the past two outings and is now 5-0-1 in his career against the Stars.

The Lightning are 6-0-2 in their past eight games, lead the NHL with 90 points and have scored at least five goals in each of their past four games. Nikita Kucherov had a goal and three assists in the easy win for Tampa Bay.

UEFA Satisfied With VAR Debut in Champions League Knockouts

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Video Assistant Referee (VAR) "worked perfectly" at all stadiums that hosted the first leg of the last-16 Champions League ties this week, according to UEFA's chief refereeing officer Roberto Rosetti.

VAR was implemented for the first time in Europe's premier club competition and was called into action in games when tight offside and penalty decisions were involved.

"I am very happy with the way VAR was implemented," Rosetti said in a statement on the UEFA website <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/news/newsid=2591309.html>. "The technology worked perfectly, and the refereeing teams performed at a very high level."

The most talked-about decision involved VAR ruling out Ajax's first-half opener against Real Madrid after it deemed Dusan Tadic to be offside when Nicolas

Tagliafico headed the ball past Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

UEFA stood by the decision to chalk off the goal but questions were raised over the time it took to reach a verdict, with the restart delayed by nearly three minutes.

Rosetti promised to look into improving the system's efficiency.

"The most important thing is that the referee took the right decision. Accuracy is more important than speed," Rosetti added.

"We have to take into account that this was a very complex situation where the VAR had to check two possible offside situations and the referee also had to consider the interference of the attacking player."

Rosetti said VAR also reviewed but did not intervene in two other decisions which involved a Porto handball outside the box at AS Roma and a delayed offside call against Paris St Germain at Manchester United.

Ferrari Presents New F1 Car to Challenge Mercedes

MARANELLO, Italy (AP) - Ferrari unveiled its new Formula One car on Friday, one that it hopes can finally end its title drought.

Team principal Mattia Binotto and drivers Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc were on stage for the presentation of the car, which has been named SF90 to commemorate the Italian manufacturer's 90th anniversary in 2019. They were joined by Ferrari chairman John Elkann and CEO Louis Camilleri.

"The car embodies the latest state of the art technology, reflects the new regulations for



the coming season and is the fruit of the combined enormous work

and talent of everyone in the Scuderia," Camilleri said.

The new matte livery radiates the classic Ferrari red, with splashes

of black and hardly any white.

"I'm really excited and I can't wait to get in," Vettel said. "I'm looking forward to this year. I think the team is on the right path and hopefully we can continue improving."

Vettel won the opening two races of the 2018 season and took pole position in three of the first four but Ferrari's performance waned as the year went on, enabling Mercedes to win a fifth straight drivers' title with Lewis Hamilton.

Ferrari hasn't won a title since taking the 2008 constructors' championship, while Kimi Raikkonen claimed the team's last driver's title back in 2007.

Coach Valverde Extends Stay at Barcelona



Ernesto Valverde won a league and Copa del Rey double in his first season at Barcelona.

MADRID (AFP) - Spanish champions Barcelona announced Friday they have extended the contract of coach Ernesto Valverde for another season with the option of one more.

Valverde, who took over at the Camp Nou in 2017 after joining from Athletic Bilbao, won the league

and cup double last season.

"FC Barcelona and Ernesto Valverde, the first team coach, have reached an agreement to extend the contract between the two parties for another season (2019/20) with the option for one more (2020/21)," the club said in a statement.

Valverde's previous contract would have expired at the end of this season.

He came within a whisker of leading Barca to an undefeated 2017/2018 season when only a defeat late in the season at Levante prevented the team from making history.

Barca's run of scoring in 37 consecutive matches in the league came to an end last Sunday with a goalless draw away to Athletic Bilbao.

Madrid's Bale Faces Possible 12-Match Ban for Celebration

MADRID (AP) - Gareth Bale could face a suspension of up to 12 matches because of a gesture he made toward fans during Real Madrid's 3-1 derby win at Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

The 29-year-old Bale has been reported by La Liga to the Spanish Football Federation over his celebration after scoring Real Madrid's third goal.

A statement on La Liga's official website says Bale "moves his right arm up towards his head in a signal of

provocation towards the fans, creating a possibly obscene gesture by moving his other arm and striking halfway up his right arm."

That gesture is considered offensive in Spain.

The statement says Bale could be suspended for four to 12 matches if he is deemed to have intentionally provoked the crowd. However, it could also be a shorter suspension - or no ban at all if his celebration is not deemed to be provocative.