

Iran's Taftian Wins Gold at Montgeron Athletics Meeting

TEHRAN (Disptches) - Iranian athlete Hassan Taftian has exhibited outstanding performances at the Meeting de Montgeron running contest in France, winning the gold medal.

The 25-year-old sportsman clocked 10.22 seconds at the men's 100-meter final, and took the title.

Gue-arthur Cisse from Ivory Coast recorded the time of 10.22 seconds and took the silver medal.

Dutch sprinter Solomon Bockarie came third with 10.26 seconds.

Taftian is currently training under the tutelage of his French coach Guy Ontanon to prepare for the 2018 Asian Games, commonly known as Jakarta Palembang 2018.



Hassan Taftian from Iran (right) claimed a gold medal at the 34th International Montgeron Athletics Meeting.

Djokovic, Nishikori Advance to Second Round in Rome



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his first round match against Ukraine's Alexandr Dolgopolov.

ROME (Reuters) - Former world number one Novak Djokovic has strolled into the second round of the Italian Open with a morale-boosting 6-1 6-3 victory over Ukrainian Alexandre Dolgopolov.

Djokovic has struggled to

rediscover his best form since returning from a troublesome elbow injury and has not reached the quarter-finals of a tournament since last year's Wimbledon.

The Serb was beaten by Briton Kyle Edmund in the second

round of the Madrid Open last week, but turned in a convincing display to see off Dolgopolov in under an hour in Rome, returning deep and controlling play from the baseline.

Djokovic plunged to 18th in the latest world rankings released on Monday, but is optimistic he can go deep in this year's tournament, where he finished runner-up last year.

Japan's Kei Nishikori, who like Djokovic is making his way back from injury, also got off to a solid start, striking 18 winners en route to beating Spaniard Feliciano Lopez 7-6(5) 6-4.

Nishikori will face third seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria in the second round.

Lopez refused to go down without a fight, forcing a first-set tiebreak that Nishikori edged.

The Japanese got an early break in the second, but Lopez clawed his way back to 3-3 before Nishikori broke again and held his nerve with a flawless service

game to seal victory.

Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta, the 10th seed, was pushed to three sets by hard-hitting American Jared Donaldson, but held on before flattening his opponent in the decider to win 6-4 3-6 6-0.

Carreno Busta will face Donaldson's compatriot Steve Johnson in the second round.

Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber was forced to play two tiebreaks before edging out Russia's Karen Khachanov 7-5 6-7(7) 7-6(6) in an encounter that stretched over three hours.

Kohlschreiber came from behind to win the first set, but passed up on an opportunity to serve out the match in the second, allowing the Russian to force the decider.

The two went toe-to-toe in the third set, with neither able to gain a decisive advantage until Kohlschreiber got his nose in front in the tiebreak and converted his third match point.

New Italy Coach Mancini Vows to Restore Azzurri Pride



Roberto Mancini has enjoyed club success at Manchester City, Inter Milan and Galatasaray

FLORENCE, Italy (AFP) - New Italy coach Roberto Mancini on Tuesday said he wanted to restore pride in the national side six months after their shock failure to qualify for the World Cup.

"Not going to the World Cup is difficult for those who, like us, have always been cheering for the national team," Mancini told a press conference at the national training centre at Coverciano, near Florence.

"I feel the need to do something for the national team and think it's the right time for me. I want to build something for the years to come and bring Italy back to the top."

Italy have been without a permanent coach since Gian Piero Ventura was sacked after the four-time world champions failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1958.

Former Manchester City and Inter Milan coach Mancini signed a two-year deal on Monday after severing his lucrative contract with Russians Zenit Saint Petersburg.

The contract, reportedly worth two million euros (\$2.3 million) a year, will see Mancini lead Italy's bid to qualify for Euro 2020. If successful, it will be automatically extended until June 2022, ahead of the World Cup in Qatar.

Finland Top U.S., Swiss Make Quarters at Ice Hockey Worlds



Finland's Janne Pesonen, center, fails to score past Nick Bonino, right, of the United States and Keith Kinkaid, left, during the Ice Hockey World Championships group B match between Finland and the United States at the Jyske Bank Boxen arena in Herning, Denmark, Tuesday, May 15, 2018.

HERNING, Denmark (AP) - Finland handed the United States its first defeat at the ice hockey world championship in a 6-2 thumping on Tuesday.

The Finns supplanted the U.S. to top Group B in Herning, and will face Switzerland in the quarterfinals on Thursday. The Swiss clinched a quarterfinal by beating France 5-1 to finish fourth in Group A in Copenhagen.

The Americans' first defeat in seven games dropped them to second in the group and a quarterfinal against the Czech Republic, the third team in Group A.

The remaining quarterfinal pairings will be decided in the final group stage games later Tuesday.

Canada needs a win over Germany to secure the third place in Group B while host Denmark will fight with Latvia over the

last quarterfinal berth in the same group.

Sweden and Russia will clash over the top place in Group A. Slovakia also plays Belarus.

Sebastian Aho scored a couple of opening-period goals for Finland and added one more into an empty net to finish the scoring to become the championship leader with nine goals and eight assists.

Mikko Rantanen, Marko Anttila, Kasperi Kapanen also scored.

U.S. captain Patrick Kane got a power play goal to reduce the deficit to 4-1 in the final period. Derek Ryan added another one for the U.S.

Finland outplayed Canada 5-1 earlier in the preliminary round.

Gregory Hofmann, Enzo Corvi, Ramon Untersander, Kevin Fiala Simon Moser had a goal apiece for the Swiss. France replied with one from Guillaume Leclerc.

Serbian Soccer Referee Detained for Whistling Wrong Penalty

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) - Police say a Serbian soccer referee has been detained for awarding a non-existent penalty during a weekend match against Radnicki Nis that gave the home side a 2-0 victory. The two teams are fighting for a spot in the Europa League.

Police say Srdjan Obradovic is suspected of "committing a criminal act of abusing his official position."

Obradovic awarded the penalty to Spartak Subotica in the

weekend match against Radnicki Nis that gave the home side a 2-0 victory. The two teams are fighting for a spot in the Europa League.

Police say Obradovic is suspected of favoring the home side."

TV footage shows that the ball did not hit a Radnicki defender in his hand in the penalty area.

Barcelona Backs FIFA's Proposal for 24-Team Club World Cup

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) - Barcelona has given its backing to FIFA's plans to expand the Club World Cup to a 24-team competition played every four years.

Barcelona's board of directors says the expanded tournament would be "exciting, dynamic, inclusive and prestigious."

The Liga champion regards as favorable the subsequent elimination of "two FIFA

competitions, the Confederations Cup (for national teams) and the current Club World Cup" played every year by seven clubs in December.

Barcelona says FIFA's plans would also "create a global platform for clubs to contribute to the growth of their brands."

Rival Spanish powerhouse Real Madrid has also said it likes the proposal.