

Russia Hands Over World Cup Hosting Duties to Qatar



Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Russian President Vladimir Putin attend a handover ceremony for the 2022 World Cup at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia July 15, 2018.

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday handed over the mantle of World Cup host to the emir of Qatar, whose country will stage the 2022 edition of the tournament.

The ceremony marked a handover from the world's largest country by landmass to one of the smallest. Qatar has a population of 2.3 million people and an area slightly smaller than the U.S. state of

Connecticut.

Qatar's size, as well as its broiling temperatures and its lack of ready stadium infra-structure, have prompted some to question the decision by FIFA, soccer's world governing body, to make it host. Qatar's rulers say they will rise to the challenge.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani joined Putin and FIFA chief Gianni Infantino at a Kremlin ceremony ahead of the final between France and Croatia that brought down the curtain on Russia's hosting of this year's tournament.

"Russia is handing over the relay baton for hosting the FIFA World Cup to Qatar," Putin said.

"We are proud of what we did for fans of this wonderful sport. We ourselves, the whole country, got an enormous amount of pleasure from interacting with soccer, with the world of soccer, with the fans who came here from all over the globe."

Kerber Stuns Williams to Win Wimbledon Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Angelique Kerber has beaten seven-time champion Serena Williams to win her first Wimbledon title and spoil the American's dream comeback as a mum.

The German 11th seed, 30, beat the 23-time Grand Slam champion 6-3 6-3 to add this title to her 2016 Australian Open and U.S. Open crowns.

Williams had been the favorite despite it being only her fourth tournament.

Kerber dropped to the grass when a netted service return gave her victory.

"It is a dream come true," said Kerber, who is the first German woman to win the title since Steffi Graf in 1996.

"I know I had to play my best tennis against a champion like Serena. Serena is a great person and a great champion and she is a great inspiration for all of us."

Williams said she had been happy to simply get to the final so soon into her comeback, adding: "It is obviously a disappointment but I can't be disappointed. I'm literally getting started.

"To the other mums out there I was playing for you today and I tried. But Angelique played really well. I look forward to continuing to be out there and do what I do best."



Martin Pulls Clear to Win German Moto3



SACHSENRRING, Germany (AFP) - Jorge Martin started from pole position and went on to win the German Moto3 Grand Prix by a comfortable margin on Sunday, increasing his slim championship lead.

Martin's only anxious moment came when team-mate Fabio Di Giannantonio touched his rear wheel, but the Spaniard managed to keep his balance while the Italian slid off.

"I was in my rhythm, trying to save my tyres," Martin said "My team-mate was very aggressive, I don't know why. I thought I was going to crash."

Martin, who won in Assen two weeks ago, finished 2.515 seconds ahead of his nearest challenger in the standings, Italian Marco Bezzecchi, with Scot John McPhee (KTM), third at 2.571.

Pacquiao Claims WBA World Title With First Knockout Since 2009

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Manny Pacquiao has put in a dominant display as he stopped Lucas Matthisse in the seventh round to claim the WBA welterweight title from the Argentine.

Pacquiao dropped Matthisse in the third and fifth rounds before the referee stopped it after he sent him to the canvas for a third time in the seventh.

The victory gave the 39-year-old the 60th win of his career, which also includes seven losses and two draws.

"I'm surprised I knocked him down so early," said Pacquiao.

"It was a long time ago since I've done that. I came out smoking hot."

The win gave the Filipino, who has been world champion at eight different weights, his first inside the distance since 2009.

He had replaced long-term trainer Freddie Roach with Buboy Fernandez for the contest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Matthisse, 35, had won 36 of his 44 fights by knockout going into the bout.

"We did a good job in training," added Pacquiao. "We were not pushing hard - we controlled our pace and ourselves."



"I'm no longer young so thanks to my trainer and all my team members."

Manny Pacquiao (right) knocked Lucas Matthisse down on three occasions in Kuala Lumpur.

Iranian Karatekas Claim 7 Medals at Asian Championships



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian karate practitioners have managed to collect seven medals, including three gold ones, at the 15th edition of the Asian Karate Federation (AKF) Senior Championships in Jordan.

Majid Hassannia showed great punching, knee strikes as well as open-hand techniques in the final contest of the male kumite minus 55-kilogram weight class at the Prince Rashed Martial Arts Center of King Hussein Sports City in the Jordanian capital city of Amman, and overcame Saudi representative Saud al-Basher 6-2 to clinch the gold medal.

Saleh Abazari prevailed over his Japanese rival Hideyoshi Kagawa 8-0 in the male kumite over 84-kilogram category, and collected another gold medal for Iran.

Ali Asghar Asiabari, though, conceded defeat against his Jordanian op-

ponent Bashar al-Najjar 4-6 and received the silver medal of male kumite minus 75-kilogram weight division.

Additionally, Madi Khodabakhshi managed to win a bronze medal in male kumite minus 84-kilogram section.

Hamideh Abbasali participated in the female kumite over 68-kilogram category, and routed Wen Tzu-hsuan from Chinese Taipei 8-0, and proudly got a gold medal for Iran.

Shima Alesaadi also earned a bronze medal in the female kumite minus 61-kilogram class.

Iran women's kata team, comprised of Elnaz Taghipour, Najmeh Ghazizadeh and Shadi Ja'afari, finished third and received a bronze medal.

The 15th edition of the AKF Senior Championships started in Jordan on July 11, and will finish on July 15, 2018.

Leicester City Eyes Alireza Jahanbakhsh



Alireza Jahanbakhsh

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Alireza Jahanbakhsh has been linked with a summer transfer to Leicester City.

The AZ Alkmaar winger has been reportedly pinpointed by Leicester as its preferred replacement for Riyad Mahrez, who this week departed for Manchester City in a £60million move.

Some outlets go as far to say Jahanbakhsh is set to fly to England to undergo a medical with a €22m (£19.5m) offer accepted.

The 24-year-old is hot property after a superb campaign for AZ, scoring 21 goals in 33 games from the right wing to finish as the Eredivisie's top scorer. He also provided 12 assists.