

Iran, Top Asian Football Team in Latest FIFA Ranking

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Iran men's national football team has climbed five places in the August edition of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) rankings to land in the 32nd spot in the world, and regain the throne of being the best Asian squad.

According to the latest monthly rankings released by the world's soccer governing body, the Iranian team, domestically known as Team Melli, accumulated 1,471 points.

Other Asian teams were Australia, which plunged seven spots and claimed the 43rd slot in the latest FIFA rankings with 1,431 points, followed by Japan and South Korea, which landed in the 55th and 57th places respectively with 1,392 and 1,387 points.

Japan climbed six positions in the global rankings of national soccer teams, while South Korea stayed put.

France moved up six places to be named the top-ranked soccer team in



Iran's players pose for the team photo prior to the 2018 FIFA World Cup Group B football match between Iran and Portugal at the Mordovia Arena in Saransk, Russia, on June 25, 2018.

the world, with 1,726 points.

Belgium earned 1,723 points to win the second position, while third-place Brazil collected 1,657 points. Croatia climbed 16 places and stood fourth with 1,643 points.

On June 25, the Iran men's national football team failed to advance to the 2018 World Cup knockout stage, however it wrote history by earning four points for the first time in the quadrennial international sporting

event.

Iran finished 1-1 with the Portugal national football team, nicknamed A Seleção, at the Mordovia Arena.

Team Melli did not allow Portugal to break through until the 45th minute, when Ricardo Quaresma broke the deadlock with a stunning goal.

The 34-year-old's right-footed shot curled the ball past Alireza Beiranvand.

Eight minutes into the second half, Cristiano Ronaldo could have doubled Portugal's lead, when his team was awarded a penalty by video assistant referee (VAR). Beiranvand brilliantly saved Ronaldo's penalty though.

Iran was awarded a penalty kick after a VAR review determined that Portugal's Cedric Soares had committed a handball in the box in the stoppage time.

Karim Ansarifard buried the ball into the upper right corner of the goal.

Mehdi Taremi could have jabbed Iran's second goal, but he missed his marvelous chance in front of the goal.

FIFA Threatens Four Clubs With Points Deductions for Failing to Pay Players

ZURICH (Reuters) - Four clubs -- two in Qatar, one in the United Arab Emirates and one in Iran -- have been fined and threatened with points deductions for ignoring orders to pay "overdue" amounts to players, FIFA said on Friday.

World soccer's governing body said in a statement that Qatar Sports Club and Al-Shamal Sports Club, both based in Qatar, Shabab Al Ahli Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Saba Qom (Iran) had been given deadlines of between 30 and 90 days to pay up.

Any club which did not meet its deadline would be deducted six points in its domestic league and banned from signing players for the next one or two transfer periods, FIFA added.

The four had failed to comply with previous orders, either from FIFA or following appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), FIFA said. The fines ranged from 15,000 (£11,843.3 pounds) to 30,000 Swiss francs.

FIFA said the decisions marked a "new framework" for debtor clubs.

In a separate decision, FIFA announced that La Liga side Atletico Madrid had been fined 52,000 euros (\$59,192) for a deal with a player which involved "third-party influence".

FIFA said the Spanish club entered into a contract which "enabled a third party to influence the club's independence in employment and transfer-related matters", which breached transfer and



players' status rules.

FIFA policy on third-party ownership bans either clubs or players from entering into economic rights

agreements with third-party investors. Frequently such deals involve outside investors retaining or gaining a share in ownership of a player.

Dominant Del Potro Into Third Round at Rainy Cincinnati



Juan Martín del Potro (ARG) returns a shot against Chung Hyeon (KOR) in the Western and Southern tennis open at Lindner Family Tennis Center.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Juan Martín del Potro quickly has dispatched South Korean Chung Hyeon 6-2 6-3 in a Cincinnati Open

second-round match carried over from the previous day because of inclement weather.

Bad weather continued to play

havoc with the evening schedule as second seed Roger Federer's match against Leonardo Mayer and Kevin Anderson's match against David Goffin failed to get underway.

Several of Thursday afternoon's matches were suspended in progress, with Novak Djokovic leading fifth seed Grigor Dimitrov 2-6 6-3 2-1 and Marin Cilic tied with Karen Khachanov at 7-6(5) 3-6 1-1.

Wild-card entrant Stan Wawrinka was up 2-1 in the first set against Marton Fucsovics.

In third round action, big-serving Milos Raonic beat fellow Canadian Denis Shapovalov 7-6(6) 6-4 while Spanish 13th seed Pablo Carreno Busta topped Dutchman Robin Haase 6-4 6-2.

"I think I got myself into more points on his serve than he did on mine," said Raonic.

"It was the thing I struggled with most last time we played, so I definitely made sure to focus on that and sort of try to change that a little bit."

Del Potro and Chung were delayed from taking the court because of rain and then had to endure another weather-related suspension just six minutes into their match.

Del Potro was not rattled by the delays, however, and did well to attack Chung's forehand throughout the 81-minute encounter that determined the final entry into the last 16.

"I am happy to beat these young players," del Potro said. "He has a big future, and he is a nice player. I am glad to go through."

This marks Del Potro's fourth consecutive last-16 appearance in Cincinnati, where the Argentine appears to be in fine form right in time for the Aug. 27-Sept. 9 U.S. Open.

Sainz to Replace Alonso at McLaren



Carlos Sainz will be entering his fifth season in Formula 1 in 2019

LONDON (dispatches) - Carlos Sainz has signed a multi-year deal to replace Fernando Alonso at McLaren from the 2019 season, the team have confirmed.

Alonso, twice world champion, announced on Tuesday that he will retire from Formula 1 at the end of the year.

Fellow Spaniard Sainz, 23, is currently on loan at Renault from Red Bull and said it was a "childhood dream" to join McLaren.

"I've been a McLaren fan for as long as I can remember," he added.

"It's a great name in the sport with an incredible heritage, and the list of drivers that have raced for McLaren over the years are among the heroes of Formula 1."

"Fernando is of course one of them, so it's particularly special that I'll be taking his seat as part of the next generation of Spanish racing drivers behind the wheel of a McLaren."

Pakistan Ban Batsman Jamshed for 10 Years for Corruption

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Former Pakistan batsman Nasir Jamshed has been banned for 10 years by an anti-corruption tribunal for his part in the spot-fixing scandal that engulfed the Pakistan Super League in 2017, the country's cricket board (PCB) said on Friday.

Jamshed, who played 48 one-day internationals and two tests, was suspended from all forms of cricket in February 2017 for violating the PCB's anti-corruption code and handed a one-year ban in December for failing to co-operate with the ACU's investigation.

PCB's legal advisor Taffazul Rizvi said Jamshed was the "lynchpin" in the scandal.

"The tribunal has reached the verdict that the PCB's multiple

charges against Nasir Jamshed have been proved and he was banned for 10 years," Rizvi told reporters.

"He will not be allowed to be involved with cricket or cricket administration even after his period of ban is over."

Jamshed did not participate in the first two editions of the PSL but was alleged to have played a major role in the spot-fixing scandal that engulfed the Twenty20 tournament last year.

Batsmen Sharjeel Khan and Khalid Latif were handed five-year bans for their role in the scandal, while paceman Mohammad Irfan and all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz received respective suspensions for 12 and two months.

Paulo Bento Appointed as South Korea Head Coach



In this Sept 29, 2016 file photo, then Olympiakos' coach Paulo Bento holds the ball during the Europa League Group B soccer match between Olympiakos and APOEL at Georgios Karaiskakis stadium in Piraeus port, near Athens.

SEOUL (China Daily) - South Korea has appointed ex-Portugal manager Paulo Bento as head coach of the national team.

The 49-year-old Bento is charged with leading the national team to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and replaces Shin Tae-yong, who was not offered a new contract in July after South Korea's group-stage exit at the World Cup in Russia.

Bento, who started out in coaching with Sporting Lisbon, led Portugal to the semifinals of Euro 2012 but was fired after a disappointing 2014 World Cup and a poor start to qualification for Euro 2016.

He became available in July when he was fired by Chinese Super League club Chongqing Lifan.

Thomas, Froome to Compete in Tour of Britain

LONDON (AFP) - Tour de France champion Geraint Thomas and the man whose crown he took in July, Chris Froome, will compete in next month's Tour of Britain rather than the final Grand Tour of the season, the Vuelta a Espana.

Both riders have rarely graced their home Tour in the past decade, Thomas finishing seventh last year in what was his first appearance since 2011 and Team Sky team-mate Froome last competing in 2009 when he finished 50th for his previous team Barloworld.

Thomas, 32, was only drawn to compete last year because the race finished in his home city of Cardiff and has been lured back for what will be his first major race since the Tour de France as this year's edition begins in Pembrey Country Park, Carmarthenshire, Wales, on September 2.

The Vuelta gets underway on August 25.

"As soon as I'd finished the Tour I knew I wanted to ride the Tour of Britain and race on home roads," Thomas told the Team Sky website.

"It starts in Wales which will be special, and then I get to go and race across the whole of the United Kingdom. I can't wait."

"I want to go to the race in the shape to compete and enjoy it. We'll have to see how the next few weeks go but I'm looking forward to it and I know we will have a strong team there."

Four-time Tour de France champion Froome, who finished third behind Thomas in this year's Tour, said he had focussed on the Vuelta in the past four years finally winning it in 2017.

"It's been a long time since I've raced the Tour of Britain," said Froome.

"The Vuelta a Espana has always been such a big

goal and sadly coincided with the Tour of Britain, but not doing La Vuelta this year gives me the chance to come back to the UK and race on what looks like a great parcours.

"I'm really looking forward to riding. I always remember there being a great atmosphere at the Tour of Britain and the race has only got bigger over the years. I'm really looking forward to coming back," added the 33-year-old Kenyan-born star.

Surprisingly given their dominance especially of the Tour de France, Team Sky has only won the Tour of Britain once when Bradley Wiggins prevailed in 2013.

Following the start in Wales, this year's race will take riders into the West Country and up to Cumbria before returning to its regular finishing circuit in central London on September 9.