

Iran Fail to Beat Qatar at 2020 Asian Handball Championship



TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran national handball team has suffered a defeat against Qatar at the 2020 edition of Asian Men's Handball Championship.

11 but the defending champion finished the game 31-25.

Iran started the campaign with a 53-21 victory against New Zealand at Kuwait's Shaikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall Complex. The team then suffered a narrow 22-20 defeat against Bahrain before overpowering the host, Kuwait, 28-24. With the results, Iran advanced to Group II of the second stage along with Qatar and South Korea.

The team will lock horns with

South Korea, the most decorated team of the event with 9 titles, on Thursday and can secure a place in the semifinal with a win.

The 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship is the 19th edition of the championship held under the aegis of the Asian Handball Federation at Kuwait City, Kuwait from Jan. 16 to 27. The event acts as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship in Egypt.

Leonard Scores 36 to Lead Clippers Past Mavericks 110-107



Dallas Mavericks forward Dorian Finney-Smith (10) tries to defend against a shot by Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard (2) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2020 in Dallas.

DALLAS (AP) - The Dallas Mavericks brought back one big man but lost another Tuesday night, and in the end, they couldn't rein in the reigning Finals MVP.

Kawhi Leonard scored 36 points, Landry Shamet hit two clutch 3-pointers late and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Dallas Mavericks 110-107 Tuesday night for their fourth straight win.

Dallas ended a four-game winning streak, and more importantly, lost a key piece in center Dwight Powell just as they welcomed back Kristaps Porzingis.

Powell went down to a non-contact, right Achilles tendon injury in the first quarter, and though he will have an MRI on Wednesday, the team is fearing a worst-case scenario.

"Guys like him define the culture we want here," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. "It doesn't get much tougher than this, if it ends up being what we fear it might."

Luka Doncic had 36 points,

10 rebounds and nine assists for Dallas. He scored 24 points in the second half to help rally the Mavericks after they trailed by double digits from late in the second quarter through most of the third. Shamet helped the Clippers seize the game late in the fourth quarter. His 3 from the left wing to give Los Angeles a 100-98 lead with 2:48 to play. Montrezl Harrell added two free throws, then Shamet sank another 3 from straight-on to put the Clippers up by seven. He finished with 18 points.

Leonard added 11 in the fourth quarter, including his only 3 of the game with 1:15 left, which put the Clippers up 108-100.

But Dallas rallied, as Doncic hit a 3 and Maxi Kleber a dunk. After a Clippers turnover, Tim Hardaway Jr.'s potential tying 3 spun around and out. JaMychal Green missed two free throws for LA, but then Doncic missed two - the second intentionally - and Leonard sealed it with two free throws.

Serena, Federer Into Third Round in Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Fifteen-year-old prodigy Coco Gauff set up an Australian Open blockbuster with defending champion Naomi Osaka on Wednesday, as a pumped-up Serena Williams took another step towards a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

On a day when men's seeds tumbled, Serbia's Novak Djokovic strode into the third round to be joined by Roger Federer, who dismissed Filip Krajinovic 6-1, 6-4, 6-1.

American teenager Gauff, showing a tenacity which is becoming her trademark, clawed her way back from a set down to beat the experienced Sorana Cirstea 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Gauff, who screamed and



Serbia's Novak Djokovic weathered windy conditions in his won over Tatsuma Ito.

pumped her fists as she completed her victory, said her "will to win" had got her through the tough second-round match at a windswept Melbourne Park.

"My parents always told me you

can always come back -- no matter what the score is," said Gauff, who beat seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams in round one.

Gauff also beat Williams on her

Grand Slam debut last year at Wimbledon, and in another quirk, she faced Osaka in the U.S. Open third round, going down meekly in straight sets.

Japan's Osaka, 22, beat China's Zheng Saisai 6-2, 6-4 but briefly lost her cool mid-match, hurling and kicking her racquet when she gave up a break in the second set.

Former world number one Wozniacki, playing her final tournament before retiring, came from behind in both sets for a 7-5, 7-5 win over Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine.

Serena Williams shouted at the top of her voice during a testing second set against 70th-ranked Tamar Zidansek, before seeing off break points to win 6-2, 6-3.

Maduro Welcomes Maradona to Caracas Ahead of Forum



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (R) has thanked Argentina's former football player Diego Armando Maradona for his support

CARACAS (AFP) - Former Argentine footballer Diego Maradona met Tuesday in Caracas with Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who thanked the icon for his "unconditional support," as the leader was set to begin three days of meetings at the leftist Sao Paulo Forum.

"How lovely to see Maradona again in our beloved homeland! Venezuela is your home, friend and soul brother. Welcome!" Maduro tweeted, attaching a video of the two men hugging.

"Here we are," Maradona, now manager of Argentina club team Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata, said to the socialist leader in the

video.

"I see you rejuvenated ... What did you do to yourself? Is it Gimnasia that has you like this?" Maduro responded, with his hand still on Maradona's left shoulder after an embrace.

In another post to Twitter, Maduro thanked the legendary player for his "unconditional support" during the "pleasant visit."

Caracas is set to host Sao Paulo Forum meetings Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

The 1986 World Cup champion will remain in the Venezuelan capital until Thursday, according to Argentinian press reports.

Soccer Players Union Promises to Defend Olympic Protesters

GENEVA (AP) -- Soccer players who defy Olympic rules by making protest gestures at the 2020 Tokyo Games will be supported by their global union.

Freedom of speech on issues like anti-discrimination and gender equality needs to be protected from "a hypocritical rule," FIFPro general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann said Wednesday at a United Nations labor agency conference.

The International Olympic Committee revived the debate on athlete rights this month by publishing details of protests in venues and

medal ceremonies that can lead to disciplinary action, including being sent home from Tokyo.

Taking a knee, hand gestures with political meaning - such as raised fist salutes - and snubbing a fellow medalist on the podium are specific types of demonstrations long prohibited by Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter.

He praised players who have fuelled "these fundamental debates" in soccer by speaking out about racism and equal pay for women.

"This is absolutely unacceptable," the union official said on the

sidelines of an International Labor Organization conference about athlete working conditions, also attended by Olympic officials.

The IOPolitical opinions can be expressed in Olympic venue interviews and on social media accounts, according to the new guidelines drafted after consultation by the IOC athletes' commission.

The Tokyo Games soccer tournaments are a 16-team event for men and 12 for women. They kick off on July 22, two days before the opening ceremony, and end on Aug. 8.



FILE - In this Oct. 16, 1968 file photo, U.S. athletes Tommie Smith, center, and John Carlos raise their gloved fists after Smith received the gold and Carlos the bronze for the 200 meter run at the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City.



Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews (C) made his 10th Test century

HARARE (AFP) - Angelo Mathews struck his highest Test score with an unbeaten 176 as Sri Lanka built a sizeable lead over Zimbabwe on the fourth day of the series opener at Harare on Wednesday.

Former skipper Mathews eclipsed his previous Test best of 160 against England in 2014 with a marathon knock spanning 427 balls, featuring 15 fours and two sixes.

Sri Lanka reached tea on 466 for six to take a lead of 108 runs over Zimbabwe's first innings total of 358.

The 32-year-old Mathews brought up his 10th Test century, his first since December 2018, with a single tucked towards square leg off Kyle Jarvis in the morning session.

He received considerable support from Dhananjaya de Silva, who made 63 before he was caught at mid-on after mistiming a lofted drive off Victor Nyauchi.

Regis Chakabva put down a difficult chance offered by Mathews shortly after he reached his century,

the Zimbabwe wicketkeeper unable to hold an edge off left-arm spinner Ainsley Ndlovu.

Niroshan Dickwella, who was dropped by Craig Ervine on 45, added 63 before he fell lbw to Sikandar Raza just before tea to break a partnership worth 136 runs.

Zimbabwe opening batsman Kevin Kasuza was ruled out of the rest of the match due to concussion after he was struck on the back of the helmet at short leg by a pull from Kusal Mendis on day three.

No replacement has yet been named for Kasuza, one of three Test debutants in the Zimbabwe team.

The two-Test tour was only announced by the Sri Lankan cricket board last week.

Zimbabwe were readmitted as an ICC member in October following a three-month suspension over political interference.

The Sri Lanka games represent their first Tests since a 1-1 series draw in Bangladesh in November 2018.