

Six AFC Champions League Games Postponed



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Six matches in the Asian Champions League

were confirmed as having been postponed by the AFC.

Among the Asian Champions League matches to have been postponed to later dates as a result of the novel coronavirus, given the official title of COVID-19 by the World Health Organization, are those that pit United Arab Emirates teams Al Wahda and Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai against Iranian sides Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro, respectively, on March 2 and 3.

Games involving two other Iranian clubs, Persepolis and Sepahan, have also been postponed.

Persepolis was due to face Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun on March 2, while Sepahan had two meetings scheduled with Al Nassr, also from Saudi Arabia, on March 3 and April 6.

COVID-19 has disrupted a wide range of sports competitions including Formula One, Six Nations rugby and Europe's Champions League football.

The rescheduling of the women's Olympic qualifiers is just the latest setback for a tournament that has weathered several setbacks.

The qualifying tournament, originally scheduled for virus epicenter Wuhan, was moved to Nanjing and then Sydney as the health emergency grew.

China's team was quarantined in Australia after arriving for the tournament, and even after reaching the playoffs their home leg against South Korea was moved to Sydney.

Nadal Breezes Into Semifinals at Acapulco Tennis



Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball to South Korea's Kwon Soon-woo during their Mexico Open men's quarter final clash in Acapulco

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - World No. 2 Rafael Nadal has remained on course for his third ATP Mexico Open title by breezing past South Korea's Kwon Soon-woo 6-2, 6-1 in their quarter-final clash.

Top seed Nadal eased into the semifinals with his best performance of the week as he continues to jackhammer his way through the men's singles draw at the hardcourt event in Acapulco, Mexico.

The Spaniard finished the night with 25 winners to 11 unforced errors, and saved all eight break points he faced.

"The match has been much tougher than what the result said. I think it was a beautiful match to see," Nadal said.

"It was a good match against a

tough opponent. I think he's going to have a very good tennis career."

Next up for Nadal is Grigor Dimitrov, who ousted third seed Stan Wawrinka 6-4, 6-4 earlier in the day.

The 2014 champion Dimitrov ended a five-match losing streak against the Swiss Wawrinka. He has now won five of 12 career meetings between the two and improved to 11-2 overall at this tournament.

Nadal boosted his record to 18-2 overall at this event by winning in straight sets over Kwon, who kept the games close but didn't have much to show for it in the final scoreline.

Dimitrov, 28, improved to 7-4 this season and is through to his first semi-final of the year.

Chinese Sun Yang Banned for Eight Years Over Doping Offence

LAUSANNE (AFP) - China's triple Olympic swimming gold medalist Sun Yang has been found guilty of refusing to give a doping sample and banned for eight years in a ruling that excludes him from the Tokyo Olympics and effectively ends his career.

The judgement from the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) upheld the appeal by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) against swimming's ruling body (FINA) and Sun, 28, who had already served a three-month doping ban in 2014.

Sun, idolised in China, was accused of refusing to provide blood and urine samples when drug testers visited his home in China in September 2018, vowed to appeal the ruling, while WADA hailed



Australian silver medalist Mack Horton refuses to share the podium with gold medalist Sun Yang, a man he referred to as a drugs cheat, after the men's 400m freestyle at the 2019 World Championships

the ban as a "significant result".

"This is unfair. I firmly believe in my innocence," Sun told China's Xinhua news agency. "I will defi-

nately appeal to let more people know the truth."

Any appeal would be at the Swiss federal court.

A vial of Sun's own blood sample was smashed with a hammer during the testing session in 2018, but the swimmer was acquitted by FINA of anti-doping violations, agreeing that testers had failed to produce adequate identification.

But the ruling outraged WADA which took the matter to CAS, demanding a ban of between two and eight years for missing the out-of-competition test.

CAS said its panel had "unanimously determined" that Sun had tampered with his doping control. Taking into consideration his previous doping ban, CAS said it had imposed the stiffest eight-year sanction, meaning the 28-year-old will miss this summer's Tokyo Olympics.

Man Utd to Play Austria's LASK in Europa League Last 16



Bruno Fernandes is the joint-leading scorer in this season's Europa League with six goals – five of which came with Sporting Lisbon

NYON, Switzerland (AFP) - Manchester United will meet Austrian club LASK in the last 16 of the Europa League, while Wolves were pitted against Olympiakos in Friday's draw in Nyon.

United, who lifted the trophy in 2017, are one of six former champions left in the competition. The first leg will be played in Linz on March 12 with the return a week later at Old Trafford.

Austrian league leaders LASK made their group stage debut this season and secured a 3-1 aggregate win over Dutch outfit AZ Alkmaar in the last 32.

Wolves progressed to the last 16 of a major European competition for the first time since finishing runners-up in the UEFA Cup in 1971-72, after overcoming Spanish strugglers Espanyol.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side will take on an Olympiakos team that shocked Arsenal in the last round, the Greeks advancing on away goals following a 2-1 extra-time victory in London.

Steven Gerrard's Rangers, the 2008 finalists, face Bayer Leverkusen who dumped out Porto in a clash of two former winners of the competition.

Lewis Hamilton Breaks Down in Formula 1 Testing

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton suffered an engine failure that cut his running to just a handful of laps on the penultimate day of Formula 1 pre-season testing.

The world champion's car had what Mercedes described as "an oil-pressure anomaly, which made the engine shut down as a precautionary measure".

Investigations into the cause meant Hamilton did not get back out on track.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen had an eventful day, losing control twice to take his spins to six in five days.

Verstappen blamed his own error and the difficult windy conditions



for the incidents.

The Dutchman lost control at the chicane and Turn Five and has now had three times as many spins as any other driver in the five days of testing so far.

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel also

had a spin, but ended the day fastest, despite his off at Turn Five, setting a one minute 16.841 seconds best.

That is still more than a second slower than the fastest time of pre-season so far, set by Hamilton's

team-mate Valtteri Bottas last week.

Headline lap times in pre-season testing are a notoriously unreliable indication of actual competitive form because the teams do not reveal the specifications in which they are running their cars and engine modes, fuel loads and other settings can make a significant difference to lap times.

The high number of spins by Verstappen has raised questions about whether the Red Bull is suffering from an instability on corner entry.

But Verstappen said he had simply not seen a patch of water on the outside of the track when he lost control entering Turn Five.



Britain's Adam Yates of team Mitchelton-Scott was declared winner of the UAE Tour after the final two stages were abandoned due to the coronavirus

DUBAI (AFP) - Britain's Adam Yates was declared winner Friday of the UAE Tour, after the final two stages fell victim to the coronavirus outbreak.

Yates led the overall race after Thursday's fifth stage of the WorldTour event scheduled to finish on Saturday. Second was Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia with Kazak Alexey Lutsenko third.

The race was abandoned after two Italian staff members of one of the teams taking part tested positive for the virus, organizers said in a statement Friday. Officials had initially wrongly identified the two as Italian riders.

All riders and staff as well as race officials are to undergo testing for the virus at their hotel in Abu Dhabi, the statement said.

The UAE health ministry said

in a statement that all necessary measures "including quarantine" could be used to contain the virus.

Britain's Chris Froome, among the 140 riders who started the race on Sunday, said late Thursday he was expecting to be tested at the team hotel.

"We are all awaiting testing and will remain at the hotel until further notice. I hope those affected make a speedy recovery and there aren't any further cases of #coronavirus," he tweeted.

Italy has been hardest hit by the virus in Europe with 650 people infected and 17 deaths.

A total of 24 Italian cyclists started the race in the UAE.

The United Arab Emirates has so far recorded 13 cases of contamination from the virus.