

# Iran Karate Secures Four Olympic Quotas



TEHRAN (Dsipatches) – Iranian karatekas of Kumite discipline secured four quotas in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as two major ranking events have been canceled due to coronavirus.

After Karate 1-Premier League in Morocco, the top-flight event in Madrid has also been canceled as Spain is implementing strict measures to contain the outbreak. "The World Karate Federation regrets to

inform that the event of Karate's first-class series of international tournaments scheduled to be held in Madrid (Spain) from April 17 to 19 had to be canceled due to the Covid-19 outbreak," reads a statement by the WKF.

Karate 1-Premier League was the major event that athletes could gain points and increase their ranking for the Olympics qualification.

According to the Iranian Karate Federation, WKF had announced that the last event held in Salzburg would be considered as the final round of ranking series for the Olympics. With this implemented, Iran has secured four quotas by Bahman Asgari (Male Kumite -75kg), Hamideh Abbasali (Female Kumite +61kg), Sajjad Ganjzadeh (Male Kumite +75kg), Sara Bahmanyar in (Female Kumite

-55kg) who are in the top four of their respective categories according to points collected.

Meanwhile, the Iranian team that had stayed in Germany after the cancelation of travel to Morocco, waiting for the fate of the event in Madrid, will depart for Tehran on Saturday.

Also, Tokyo 2020 Qualification Tournament is scheduled to be held in May in France and if it is not canceled, Iranian kata practitioners can compete for two other quotas of Female -61kg and Male -67kg categories.

Karate is due to make its Olympic debut in Tokyo 2020. There will be eight karate gold medals up for grabs at Tokyo - men's kata, women's kata and three different weight classes for both men's and women's Kumite events.

## Euro 2020 Postponed Until Next Year



ZURICH (Dispatches) -The 2020 European Championships has been postponed for a year as the world fights to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus, the Norwegian FA tweeted on Tuesday.

UEFA, who is yet to confirm the decision, has proposed that the June 12-July 12 tournament to be held in 12 countries be put back to June 11-July 11 next year to give the suspended domestic leagues time to be completed.

The proposal was agreed during a video conference with all 55

of its affiliated national football federations and representatives of clubs, leagues and players.

The decision will go before UEFA's Executive Committee for final sign-off later on Tuesday.

FILE - In this Thursday, Oct. 27, 2016 file photo the Euro soccer championships trophy is seen in front of the logo during the presentation of Munich's logo as one of the host cities of the Euro 2020 European soccer championships in Munich, Germany.

## Poll: 70% of Japanese Don't Expect Olympics to Go Ahead as Planned

TOKYO (AP) - Around 70 percent of Japanese people do not think the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games this summer will be held as scheduled over COVID-19 outbreak concerns, a recent survey showed on Monday.

The poll was conducted from Saturday to Monday by phone by Kyodo News. It showed that 69.9 percent of people do not expect Tokyo 2020 to be held as planned, while 24.5 percent believe the Games could go ahead as scheduled.

The Olympics are scheduled to be held from July 24 to August 9 and the Paralympics from Au-



The logo for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games is seen in Tokyo on March 15, 2020.

gust 25 to September 6, but the spread of COVID-19 has halted a significant amount of international and domestic travel, and prompted closures of schools and businesses in Japan.

To ease the fallout from the outbreak, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has taken emergency measures, including interest-free loans for small and medium-sized businesses that are short of cash because of slumping sales. However, 90.7 percent of respondents said they are worried or somewhat worried about the economic impact of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

## Cycling's Tours of Romandy, Basque Country Axed Due to Virus

Lausanne (AFP) - The Tour of Romandy and Tour of the Basque Country have been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, cycling authorities said on Monday.

Run over a week in late April and early May, the Tour of Romandy takes in the Swiss Alps and is seen as a key warm-up to the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France.

Organisers said the Swiss cantons where the race passes through "are considered

risk zones by the World Health Organization".

Last season's hotly-contested race was won by rising star Primoz Roglic, who then came close to winning the Giro and went on to take the Vuelta a Espana.

The 2018 Tour de France winner Geraint Thomas ran Roglic close but came third.

The Tour of the Basque Country, due to run from April 6-11 in Spain, was post-

poned to an unspecified date "in compliance with orders from local authorities", organisers said in a statement.

They said they had contacted the UCI in order to try and move the race to a later date.

Cycling has been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak with the abandonment of the UAE Tour late last month after two Italian mechanics tested positive.

There was a sense of shock when the caravan of riders, support staff and media were put under quarantine, where some, including Colombian sprinter Fernando Gaviria, remain.

Then came the cancellation of Italy's coast-to-coast Tirreno-Adriatico, with the nation's key one-day Milan-San Remo race also being called off for only the fourth time in over a century.

## Ronaldinho: From World Cup Winner to Paraguayan Prison Football Star

LONDON (The Guardian) - Football in South America is all but shut down as the Covid-19 outbreak spreads across the continent, but one Brazilian star is still making his mark on the game. Ronaldinho, whose last professional game came in 2015 for Fluminense, scored five goals this weekend and set up another six. Admittedly he did this from a Paraguayan jail, but such details are trivial during a global crisis.

As first reported by the Paraguayan newspaper La Nación, Ronaldinho was taken into custody in the country's capital, Asunción, on 6 March. He and his brother had allegedly used fake Paraguayan passports and IDs, although his lawyer maintains that his client did not know the documents were falsified, as they were given to him by a local sponsor.

Ronaldinho is now in a maximum-security prison. There, he shares a cell, which "looks more like a hotel", according to Paraguay's home secretary, with his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira.



The Brazilian legend Ronaldinho

In the same cell block is a former president of Paraguay's football association, who was jailed for money laundering.

South American and Spanish media flocked to the story like tourists to Camp Nou, reporting every possible detail of the former Barcelona star's life in jail. On a local radio show the warden let a few details slip: Prisoner No194 wakes up at eight most mornings, has had visits from former Paraguayan star Nelson Cuevas and is

"just how you might see him on television, always smiling".

The warden would not go into details on the most important issue though: Ronaldinho's football career in prison. Still, the rumors flew, especially after authorities denied his request for house arrest and a bond of \$1.6m. Local outlets reported that the 39-year-old had been asked to play by several teams in prison but initially declined because he lacked boots. Others said he was asked to

play under the stipulation that he would not be allowed to score in the tournament, in which the trophy was a 16kg meat.

Just days later though we had the truth. Photos and videos leaked from the jail showed the 2005 Ballon d'Or winner bringing the magic back for his new team, Negro Cumbiero. Kitted out in a vest, black boots and swimming trunks, Ronaldinho played a part in every goal of his team's 11-2 win (the match was actually futsal rather than football) and treated his fellow inmates to a casual no-look backheel assist.

But while the old skills are there, the lingering feeling from watching the videos is one of melancholy for a man who once graced some of football's biggest stages. Ronaldinho turns 40 this month, and it is likely he will celebrate his birthday behind bars. It's a feeling shared by his 2002 World Cup teammate Rivaldo: "I'm sad over what's happening to my friend. He does not deserve it," he said.

## WTA Postpones Forthcoming Tournaments Until May 2

BEIJING (AP) - The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has postponed its forthcoming tournaments until May 2 due to the COVID-19 outbreak, according a statement released.

According to the WTA, the suspended events include the tournaments in Stuttgart, Istanbul and Prague.

Due to the ongoing global COVID-19 outbreak, the forthcoming WTA tournaments will not be held as scheduled. "We regret this is the

case for all of our loyal fans, players, sponsors and all those who support women's professional tennis," a WTA spokesperson said in the statement.

"At this point in time, the WTA Tour is now suspended until May 2. We will make a decision in the week ahead regarding the remaining WTA European clay court events and will continue to monitor this situation closely and its impact on the 2020 WTA Tour season," the spokesperson added.

## Renault Not Ruling Out Vettel If Ricciardo Leaves



PARIS (Dispatches) -The French car manufacturer's contract with Ricciardo runs out at the end of this year, and the Australian has already been strongly linked with a move to Ferrari should Vettel not stay there.

Both Renault and Ricciardo are hoping that performance uplift this season will be enough for them to extend their partnership, though, but nothing is set in stone.

Speaking to the 'La Grille' program on Canal+, Renault F1 team boss Cyril Abiteboul was not dismissive of a swoop for Vettel, but equally did not suggest it would be his priority.

"I don't want to say no, as he is a great driver, and a great champion," said Abiteboul when asked if the four-time champion was an option. "We worked together on the engine side and we won together.

"[But] I rather aspire to work with tomorrow's drivers than yesterday's. It really is very difficult to sum it up like that, so please don't sum it up like that about Sebastian.

"Still, we also have a driver academy, with drivers who might come out of it in 2021 or 2022. We need to keep this in mind, as we created this academy in 2016 with the goal of having a driver graduate to F1 in 2021.

"Now 2021 is coming, we have to acknowledge it. Typically, there's Christian Lundgaard. He's an option among others: he's got his F2 season to do, we've got our own season to do with Daniel."