

Iran, Serbia Sign MoU on Sports Cooperation



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar and Serbian Ambassador to Iran Dragan Todorovic have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on sports cooperation.

Both sides considered the MoU as a serious measure in expanding mutual relations in sports.

It was signed in Iran's Sport Ministry in Tehran to reinforce cooperation and promote the

development of sports.

"The MoU is an opportunity for the youth of the two countries. The countries have also had bilateral relations in tourism and medical fields," Soltanifar said.

"Iran and Serbia volleyball teams are among the world's top 10 and Serbian coaches have already worked in Iran and we can also send our coaches to the (European) country," he added.

LeBron's 40 Bests Zion, Sends Lakers Past Pelicans 118-109

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- LeBron James sees a long, prosperous future ahead of Zion Williamson and the up-tempo New Orleans Pelicans.

In the immediate present, James and Anthony Davis are a whole lot closer to basketball's ultimate goal, as they proved in their first meeting with their fellow No. 1 overall draft pick.

James had 40 points and eight rebounds in his first career meeting with Williamson while leading the Los Angeles Lakers to their sixth straight victory, 118-109 over New Orleans on Tuesday night.

Williamson had 29 points and six rebounds in his first showdown with James and Davis, his predecessor as the Pelicans' centerpiece.

James and Williamson still haven't talked, but the 35-year-old James sees greatness in the teenager.

Williamson was still injured for the Pelicans' first two meetings of the season with the Lakers, but his delayed debut in Hollywood was as entertaining as everyone hoped. In his 13th NBA game, Williamson scored at least 20 points for the ninth consecutive time, but managed only one field goal in the fourth quarter.

The Lakers still haven't lost to the team with which they made the blockbuster summer trade that has appeared to benefit both teams. Davis has been just as good as the Lakers hoped in propelling them back to NBA championship contention, while the Pelicans are get-



Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James (23) drives to the basket against the New Orleans Pelicans during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020, in Los Angeles.

ting an All-Star season from Brandon Ingram alongside Williamson in an increasingly potent core.

Davis had 21 points, 14 rebounds and six blocked shots while improving to 3-0 against New Orleans. Davis and Williamson briefly were theoretical teammates during the time between the draft and Davis' departure for the Lakers, and Williamson admitted he entertained the idea they might play together, even though Davis had requested a trade.

Although Davis missed 15 of his 21 shots and failed to score 40 points against New Orleans for the first time, James picked him up with a masterfully efficient, 17-for-27 performance that included five 3-pointers.

Williamson had several impressive dunks in his usual fearsome floor game, and only six missed free throws kept him from surpassing his career high of 32 points.

Manchester City Appeal UEFA Ban of Two Years



David Silva of Manchester City shoots as Issa Diop of West Ham United attempts to block during the Premier League match between Manchester City and West Ham United at Etihad Stadium on Feb 19, 2020 in Manchester, United Kingdom.

LONDON (Dispatches) - British soccer club Manchester City has filed an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) over a 30 million euros fine and a two year ban from Champions League competitions.

The sports court announced the appeal on Wednesday morning. This move is directed against UEFA Club Financial Control

Body decision's from Feb 14, in which Manchester City was deemed to have contravened UEFA's Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations. The team has denied any wrongdoing.

CAS said it is currently not possible to determine when a final award on the appeal will be issued.

Asian Soccer Meetings Postponed Because of Virus Outbreak

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) -- Asian soccer leaders on Wednesday postponed two key meetings because of the spread of a virus.

The Asian Football Confederation was due to hold an executive committee meeting in Bahrain on March 14 ahead of a congress of member nations on April 16 in Kuala Lumpur. The AFC told media that both gatherings had been postponed,



with no new dates for the meetings given.

Governments have announced more than 20 cases of the virus in both Malaysia and Bahrain.

The virus has already impacted soccer matches on the continent with Asian Champions League games involving Chinese clubs Guangzhou Evergrande, Shanghai Shenhua and Shanghai SIPG postponed to April-May.

Djokovic Strolls to Win in Dubai Opener



Serbia's Novak Djokovic greets the public after defeating Tunisia's Malek Jaziri during round 1 of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in the United Arab Emirates, on Feb 24, 2020.

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Serbia's Novak Djokovic, back in action for the first time in three weeks, didn't get much of a test Monday in the first round of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in the United Arab Emirates.

The tournament's top seed routed Tunisia's Malek Jaziri 6-1, 6-2 in

exactly one hour.

Djokovic put 70 percent of his first serves in play and never faced a break point. Jaziri faced eight break points and lost four of them.

In other opening-round action, Gael Monfils continued his winning streak. The third-seeded Frenchman, who won tournaments

in Montpellier, France, and Rotterdam, Netherlands, earlier this month, topped Hungary's Marton Fucsovics 6-4, 7-5.

Sixth-seeded Andrey Rublev and seventh-seeded Karen Khachanov, both of Russia, also posted straight-set victories.

Sixth-seeded Hugo Dellien of Bolivia held off Italy's Marco Cecchinato for a 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 victory in the first round at Santiago, Chile.

Dellien won 72 percent of his first-serve points despite serving just one ace. Cecchinati had 11 aces but offset those with seven double faults. He won just 60 percent of his first-serve points.

Also moving into the second round were two wild-card entrants, Marcelo Tomas Barrios Vera and Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild, as well as Roberto Carballes Baena,

who won an all-Spanish showdown with Jaume Munar.

And also, the five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova, one of the world's most recognizable sportswomen, on Wednesday announced her retirement at the age of 32.

"Tennis — I'm saying goodbye," Sharapova said in an article for Vogue and Vanity Fair magazines.

"After 28 years and five Grand Slam titles, though, I'm ready to scale another mountain — to compete on a different type of terrain."

Sharapova burst onto the scene as a supremely gifted teenager and won her Grand Slams before serving a 15-month ban for failing a drugs test at the 2016 Australian Open.

The Russian former world number one's ranking is currently 373rd.

Kubica Fastest Early as F1 Preseason Testing Resumes

MONTMELO, Spain (AP) -- Reserve Alfa Romeo driver Robert Kubica was fastest as Formula One preseason testing resumed Wednesday at the Barcelona-Catalunya Circuit.

Kubica had a time of 1 minute, 16.942 seconds, becoming the first driver other than Mercedes teammates Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas to go faster than 1:17.000 this year.

Alfa Romeo driver Kimi Raikonen had led one of the tests sessions last week.

Mercedes continued to show good reliability, with Hamilton's



Sebastian Vettel steers his Ferrari during the Formula One pre-season testing session at the Barcelona Catalunya racetrack in Montmelo, outside Barcelona, Spain, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2020.

88 laps being the most among all 10 drivers who went to the track in the morning. The defending champion was fourth-fastest.

Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri was second, nearly six tenths of a second slower than Kubica, with Red Bull driver Alexander Albon finishing third.

Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel was sixth, but he ran 84 laps in the morning. He caused the first red flag of the day, though, after running wide and losing the rear of his car.

Kubica also spun out early in the morning session.