

Iranian Karateka Grabs Gold in Morocco Premier League

Iranian Karateka Sajjad Ganjzadeh in the weight category of +84kg received a gold medal in 2019 Karate 1-Premier League held in Rabat, Morocco.

RABAT (Dispatches) - Iranian karateka Sajad Ganjzadeh has won the gold medal at the World Karate Federation (WKF) Karate1-Premier League in Rabat, Morocco.

Ganjzadeh won the top honor after defeating Turkey's Alparslan Yamanoglu 2-nothing in the male kumite +84kg final match. Iran also reached the final of the -75kg category, where its representative Ali Asghar Asiabari won silver after narrowly succumbing to Ukraine's Stanislav Horuna 9-8.

Iran had earlier won three bronze medals in the male +84kg division, female -55 Kg and female +68kg categories. The Karate1-Premier League, which ran from April 19 to 21, is the most important league event in the world of Karate. 661 Karateka from 78 countries participated in the games in Morocco.

Djokovic Extends Lead as World No. 1, Fognini Climbs Rankings

PARIS (AFP) - Novak Djokovic stretched his lead over Rafael Nadal at the top of the ATP rankings on Monday, after the Spaniard's failed bid to win a 12th Monte Carlo Masters title.

Djokovic, winner of the last three Grand Slam tournaments, is now over 3,000 points clear of old rival Nadal despite a quarter-final defeat by Daniil Medvedev in the Principality last week.

World number two Nadal dropped ranking points after his title defense ended with a shock semi-final loss to eventual champion Fabio Fognini.

The 31-year-old Italian reached a career-high ranking of 12th after claiming his maiden Masters trophy with a straight-sets win over unheralded Serbian Dusan Lajovic in Sunday's final.

Fognini jumped six spots



Djokovic was beaten by Medvedev in Monte Carlo

to close on the top 10, while Lajovic climbed 24 places to 24th.

ATP top 20

1. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 11,160 pts
2. Rafael Nadal (ESP) 8,085

3. Alexander Zverev (GER) 5,770
4. Roger Federer (SUI) 5,590
5. Dominic Thiem (AUT) 4,675
6. Kevin Anderson (RSA) 4,115 (+1)

7. Kei Nishikori (JPN) 3,690 (-1)
8. Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) 3,240
9. Juan Martin del Potro (ARG) 3,225
10. John Isner (USA) 3,085
11. Marin Cilic (CRO) 2,845
12. Fabio Fognini (ITA) 2,840 (+6)
13. Karen Khachanov (RUS) 2,730 (-1)
14. Daniil Medvedev (RUS) 2,505
15. Borna Coric (CRO) 2,480 (-2)
16. Milos Raonic (CAN) 2,050 (-1)
17. Marco Cecchinato (ITA) 2,041 (-1)
18. Nikoloz Basilashvili (GEO) 1,930 (-1)
19. Gael Monfils (FRA) 1,875
20. Denis Shapovalov (CAN) 1,820

Benzema Scores Hat Trick for Madrid in 3-0 Win Over Athletic

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Karim Benzema has hit a hat trick to lead Real Madrid to a 3-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish league, extending his scoring run since the return of coach Zinedine Zidane.

After not finding the net in Zidane's first game back, Benzema has struck eight times in five matches.

The French striker stands out as the only Madrid player who is playing well in a very disappointing season for the traditional powerhouse. Out of the Champions League, and trailing Spanish leader Barcelona by 13 points in third place, Madrid's players have nothing to play for other than pride.

And a place on the team next season.

Zidane has acknowledged that the club will make changes to its squad in the summer. Benzema was already one of Zidane's favorite players when they won three Champions League titles together before Zidane stepped down last summer—only to come back last month.



Van der Poel Gives Dutch Home Amstel Gold Victory



Mathieu van der Poel sprinted to victory in the Amstel Gold

VALKENBURG, Netherlands (AFP) - Rising star Mathieu van der Poel has sprinted to victory in the Amstel Gold to give the Dutch a first victory in the

sole cycling classic on their soil this century.

"I still can't understand what's happened," said van der Poel after snatching away a victory Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe appeared to have in his grasp.

Alaphilippe, who has been in sparkling form this spring for the dominant Deceuninck Quick-Step team, broke away with Danish Astana rider Jakob Fuglsang with a little more than 35 kilometers to go. With three kilometers left, the two had a lead of 38 seconds.

But as they started eyeing each other, Pole Michal Kwiatkowski of Sky riding solo, closed the gap. Behind him van der Poel, who rides for Corendon-Circus, launched a frantic pursuit dragging the chasing group with him.

"I was hoping they would look at each other, but I thought it was over," said van der Poel.

When Kwiatkowski caught the leaders with less

than 500 meters to go, van der Poel was not far behind.

"It was only 300 meters from the line that I realized that it was possible to win," said van der Poel.

An exhausted Alaphilippe launched a sprint but was overtaken by the speeding van der Poel, who was far enough ahead by the finish to cradle his face in his hands as he crossed the line. The 24-year old became the first Dutch winner since Michael Boogerd in 1999.

"I started my sprint far too far out because I wanted to win. But I kept going to the line," he said.

Van der Poel, the Dutch prodigy, has begun to deliver on his promise.

He is the son of Adri van der Poel, who won six one-day classics, and the grandson of Raymond Poulidor who won the Vuelta a Espana and finished on the Tour de France podium eight times.

PSG Bag Ligue 1 Title But European Failure Looms Large



PARIS (Reuters) - Paris St Germain may have clinched their long-expected sixth Ligue 1 title in the last seven seasons but that triumph cannot mask the French club's shortcomings on the European stage where results have failed to match their huge investment.

Even the prospect of another domestic double -- PSG play Stade Rennes in the French Cup final next Saturday -- cannot soothe the pain felt by fans at seeing their galacticos again fall at the last-16 hurdle in the Champions League.

On the domestic front, their financial power helped them once

again crush the opposition as they have so far scored 95 goals and conceded 27, losing three Ligue 1 games this season.

Lagging far behind, second-placed Lille have benefited from Nicolas Pepe's scoring form, the Ivory Coast striker having plundered 19 goals and set up 11 this term.

He is, however, far off the pace set by league top scorer Kylian Mbappe who has found the back of the net 30 times.

Usual contenders Olympique Lyonnais and AS Monaco have also been unable to compete with PSG's financial clout.

Boston Celtics Beat Indiana Pacers to Reach Eastern Conference Semi-Finals



Boston (green shirts) claimed the final quarter 37-34 at Indiana's Bankers Life Fieldhouse venue

BOSTON (Dispatches) - Boston Celtics became the first team to advance from the NBA play-offs, taking an unassailable 4-0 lead over Indiana Pacers in the best-of-seven series.

Celtics trailed 49-47 at half-time but had the better of both the final two quarters to seal a 110-106 win.

On Sunday, Toronto Raptors beat Orlando Magic 107-85 to take a 3-1 lead, while in the Western Conference, both Golden State Warriors and Portland Trail Blazers also took 3-1 leads with wins over Los Angeles Clippers and Oklahoma City Thunder respectively.

Liverpool Return to Top Spot; Everton Humiliate Man United



Liverpool's Georginio Wijnaldum celebrates scoring against Cardiff City during the English Premier League soccer match at The Cardiff City Stadium, Cardiff, Wales, April 21, 2019.

LONDON (AP) — Before returning to the top of the Premier League, Liverpool got to savor a Manchester United humiliation.

Now, unusually, Liverpool need a swift recovery by their great rival after United's despair at being routed 4-0 by Everton on Sunday.

Liverpool's hopes of ending a 29-year English title drought could hinge on a big favor from sixth-place United when they host Manchester City on Wednesday.

After beating Cardiff 2-0 on Sunday, Liverpool are two points ahead of City with three games remaining. But Pep Guardiola's champions have a game in hand over Liverpool so defending the title is still under their control — unless they fail to beat United.