

Iranian Greco-Roman Wrestlers Bag 3 Golds in Junior Asian Championships

HON BURI, Thailand (Dispatches) - Iranian wrestlers bagged three out of five gold medals in Greco-Roman wrestling on the opening day of the Junior Asian Championships in Chon Buri, Thailand on Wednesday.

Winner of gold medals for Iran were Mohammad Naghousi (77kg), Hasan Forouzandeh Ghojehbeiglou (87kg) and Aliakbar Yousofiahmadchali (IRI). The other two gold medals were grabbed by India and Kazakhstan.

Iran's first champion, Naghousi, came back to defeat Aky-lbek Talantbekov (KGZ) 6-3 at 77kg in a battle of cadet world bronze medalists. Talantbekov controlled the first period, scoring a passivity point and then a gut wrench to grab a 3-0 lead at the break. With just over a minute remaining, Naghousi scored a takedown to cut the deficit to 3-2 before executing a four-point throw to go up by three and



eventually give him the victory. Naghousi won a gold medal at the Cadet Asian Championships last year.

Forouzandeh Ghojehbeiglou topped Meirbek Kordabay (KAZ) 5-1 to earn the gold medal at 87kg category. Kordabay scored the first point of the match off a passivity, but the Iranian dominated the rest of the way. He scored a takedown mid-

way through the first period to go up 2-1. Forouzandeh Ghojehbeiglou added to his lead in the second period, scoring a point off a passivity before adding two more points off a gut wrench.

Yousofiahmadchali, a U23 world bronze medalist, dominated Aawesh Aawesh (IND) in the gold-medal match at 130kg. The Iranian heavyweight scored points off a passivity and a step

out to go up 2-0 before throwing Aawesh to his back late in the first period to secure a fall.

At 63kg, Assaukhat MUKHAMADIYEV (KAZ) held on to edge Saeid Arjmand-dashtaki (IRI) 2-2 on criteria in the gold-medal match at 63kg. Arjmanddashtaki scored first with a step out, but Mukhamadiyev responded with a step out of his own and took the criteria lead into the break. The Iranian retook the lead in the second period, scoring off a passivity, but just like in the first period, Mukhamadiyev would respond. He scored off a passivity with just over a minute remaining to take the lead and held on for the criteria win.

The five remaining Greco-Roman weight categories, 60kg, 67kg, 72kg, 82kg and 97kg, will be contested Wednesday at the Junior Asian Championships, with action set to begin at 10 a.m. local time.

FIVB Apologizes to Iran Over Mistreatment in Chicago



President of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) Ary Graça

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) Ary Graça has expressed shame and sorrow over the U.S. mistreatment of Iran's national volleyball team at Chicago airport.

The Iranian national team arrived in Chicago after a 30-hour flight but was held for four hours at the airport, where its members were interrogated and asked silly questions.

"On behalf of the FIVB and entire volleyball family, I would like to apologize to Iran volleyball and we are really ashamed of what has happened in Chicago airport," FIVB Chief Ary Graça wrote in a letter to Iran's Volleyball Federation after the latter filed a complaint with it over the incident.

Graca also added the FIVB will do whatever in its power to ensure that the Iranian delegation would have a smooth entry procedure.

"We were shocked to find out what happened. I can assure you that the world federation will find a way to prevent 'such an incident' in the future. We wish the Iranian team success in the 2019 Volleyball Nations League," Graça added.

Iranian Volleyball team has been drawn with Brazil and Poland in Pool B and hosts the U.S. are pitted against Russia and France in Pool A.

The Iranian team, looking for its first VNL medal, will start the competition with a match against powerhouse Poland on July 11. It will also meet Brazil on July 12.

Yellow Jersey Alaphilippe Brings Panache to the Tour



France's Julian Alaphilippe wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey arrives for the start of the fifth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 175.5 kilometers (109 miles) with start in Saint-Die-Des-Vosges and finish in Colmar, Wednesday, July 10, 2019.

COLMAR, France (AP) - In an era where riders are becoming slaves to power meters, earpieces and all sorts of technological gadgets, Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe is bringing a much-needed dose of flair into the Tour de France.

With his juvenile looks and aggressive style of racing, the 27-year-old took the Tour de France's lead by storm earlier this week with a brilliant attack on a tough climb that left his rivals stranded.

The move earned him the yellow jersey and made him the new national hero.

"It was the victory of panache," said Deceuninck Quick Step team manager Patrick Lefevere after his protege became the first Frenchman in five years to seize the coveted tunic.

Alaphilippe is enjoying a fast

growing popularity. In every small village crossed by the peloton, fans are shouting his name when they catch a glimpse of the yellow tunic, and large groups of excited supporters surround his team bus at the start and finish of each stage.

"I'm not riding my bike to be popular, but of course all this support will help me get beyond my limits in the coming days," Alaphilippe said.

An all-rounder who thrives on sharp and short climbs, Alaphilippe has not come from nowhere. With his devastating attacks, he posted two stage wins and won the best climber's polka dot jersey last summer on the Tour. This year, he has been phenomenal during the first part of the season, posting victories at Milan-San Remo, the Fleche Wallonne and Strade Bianche.

Controversial VAR Debuts in Africa Cup of Nations

CAIRO (AFP) - VAR, the video review system that sparked chaotic scenes at the CAF Champions League final two months ago, made its Africa Cup of Nations debut for Benin's last eight clash with Senegal in Egypt.

The technology used from the quarter-finals of Africa's premier football competition, with officials hoping the drama during some previous VAR matches in the continent can be avoided.

"VAR requires not only equipment, but also expertise," stressed CAF secretary general Moaz Hajji.

"Everything is ready for its implementation."

The technology was supposed to be used in the second leg of the CAF Champions League final between Esperance Tunis and Wydad Casablanca in Tunisia, but malfunctioned be-



The VAR monitor that did not work at the CAF Champions League final in Tunisia two months ago, leading to the match being abandoned.

fore kick-off.

Wydad refused to continue playing when a

disallowed equalizer could not be reviewed,

despite the team having reportedly been told

before the return match VAR would be unavailable.

After a 90-minute delay, an Esperance team leading 2-1 overall were awarded the match only for the organizers to later order a replay at a neutral ground.

No date or venue has been announced amid hints from both clubs they will take legal action over the decision.

In the first leg of the 2018 Champions League final between Cairo club Al Ahly and Esperance, the Algerian referee used VAR to award two hotly disputed goals.

Replays suggested Walid Azaro dived to win a penalty and the Ahly forward later deliberately tore his shirt to gain another spot-kick.

Ahly won the match, but finished overall losers after a heavy second-leg defeat.

Thurman Has Appetite for Destruction of 'Legend' Pacquiao



Keith Thurman (right) says his fight with Manny Pacquiao (left) is a chance to 'destroy a legend'.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Keith Thurman has warned he is targeting the destruction of Filipino boxing icon Manny Pacquiao when the two welterweights face off in Las Vegas later this month.

The undefeated Thurman puts his World Boxing Association welterweight crown on the line against the 40-year-old Pacquiao on

July 20 at the MGM Grand.

Thurman, 30, has relentlessly fanned the flames for the contest by stating he plans to send Pacquiao into retirement.

On Tuesday, Thurman took a more respectful tone against Pacquiao, the eight-division world champion who remains one of boxing's biggest draws as he prepares for

the 71st fight of a two-decade professional career.

Thurman said he plans to take an aggressive approach into the fight as he chases an emphatic victory.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to destroy a legend and create my own legacy," Thurman said on a conference call.

"How can I not Babe Ruth it and step up to the plate, point and start swinging. How can I not go for it? I've got an 'O' and I'm not afraid to let it go.

"If Manny Pacquiao is the man that beats me, he's the man that beats me. I'm going to shake his hand after the fight and congratulate him.

"It is what it is. But when Keith Thurman steps into the ring, you're dealing with Keith Thurman. And he's a bad man."

Thurman sees the fight as his chance to claim victory over one of the greats of boxing in Pacquiao (61-7 with two drawn and 39 knockouts).

"Manny Pacquiao towards the end of his career, all those fights, and his record - it's

as if I'm fighting Sugar Ray Robinson himself. It's as if I'm fighting Roberto Duran," he said.

"This is Manny Pacquiao. It's a tremendous feeling and it's going to feel even greater when my hand is raised at the end of the night."

Thurman (29-0, 22 KOs), who last fought in January when he was made to work hard for a majority decision win over Josesito Lopez, said Pacquiao's victory over Adrien Broner, also in January, had inspired him.

"He wants to prove his greatness. He's still reaching for greatness at the age of 40 and it's admirable," Thurman said.

"I was impressed by his performance against Adrien Broner. It was inspiring. After watching him, I got out into the streets and ran at one in the morning. Because I just watched a 40-year-old man beat a much younger man. Manny has done so much, but he wants to do more," Thurman said.

"I want to do more too, and on the 20th I want to show you more."

Gerard Pique Handed €2.1 Million Tax Bill

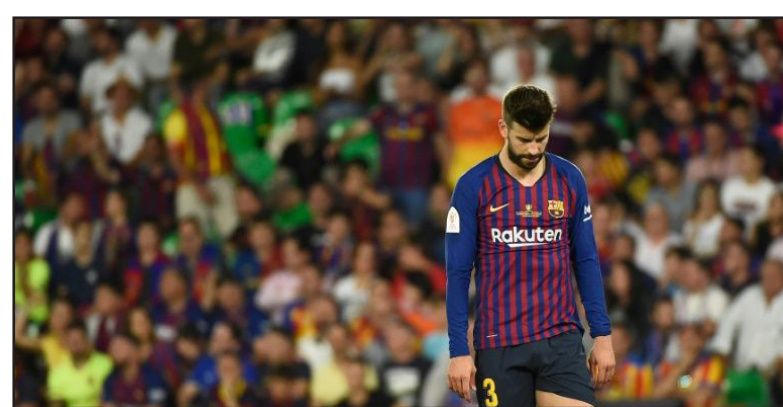
MADRID (AFP) - Barcelona's Gerard Pique will be forced to pay 2.1 million euros (\$2.36 million) to Spain's tax authorities after his conviction for rights-image fraud was confirmed, a legal source told AFP on Wednesday.

According to a May 13 decision the country's National Court rejected Pique's appeal against the 2016 sentence which required the former Spain international to pay 1.5 million euros in tax arrears and a 600,000 euros fine.

The tribunal concluded Pique had faked the handover of his rights images to his Kerad Project company to pay less tax for 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Pique, a World Cup and European Championships winner retains the right to appeal to Spain's supreme court.

The centre-back's former teammate at the Camp Nou Neymar is under investigation by Spain's fiscal authorities over a bonus he received at Barca as well as his world-record transfer to Paris Saint-Germain.



Gerard Pique joined Barcelona from Manchester United in 2008