

# Iranian Teams Shine in AFC Champions League



TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Three Iranian football team Esteghlal, Persepolis and Sepahan cruise past their rivals in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

Three first-half headers helped Iran's Persepolis football team to a 4-0 win over Sharjah of the UAE and a place in the 2020 AFC Champions League Round of 16 from Group C on Thursday.

Persepolis came racing out of the blocks and within two minutes they were in front after Ehsan Pahlevan displayed great skill to get past two players down the left and cross for Shojae Khalilzadeh who headed home his second goal of the campaign.

Three minutes before the end of the first half, Persepolis doubled its advantage. Following an out-swinging Bashar Resan corner, Al Kasir climbed unmarked and powered in a header that clipped Adel Al Hosani's hand and went into the back of the net despite the Sharjah goalkeeper's best efforts.

Just as the half headed to a close,

Vahid Amiri made it a trio of headed goals for Persepolis. The Iran international winger found space at the far post to head in a Pahlevan cross from the left in an identical fashion to Khalilzadeh's opener.

With just seconds to go, Persepolis signed off with a fourth goal as substitutes Arman Ramzani and Mehdi Abdi combined with the former setting up a header that Abdi converted from inside the box to make it 4-0 at the final whistle.

Al-Taawoun's 1-0 win over Al-Duhail in the other Group C fixture means Persepolis topped the group and will face Group D runner-up Al-Sadd in the Round of 16, while Al-Taawoun progress as runner-up and set-up an all-Saudi clash against Al-Nassr in the next round.

## Esteghlal Cruises Past Al-Ahli Saudi



On Wednesday, Iran's Esteghlal cruised into the 2020 AFC Champions League Round of 16 with an

emphatic 3-0 victory over Group A leader Al Ahli Saudi FC in Matchday Six.

Head coach Majid Namjoo Motlagh's men went into the game with the knowledge that only a two-goal margin win would secure their place in the Round of 16.

Al-Ahli advanced to the Round of 16 with six points as the first team and Iraq's Al-Shorta finished in third place.

The Iranian dominance produced a goal in the 28th minute. Farshid Esmaeili received the ball down the left and fed Ghaedi on the edge of the box. The Esteghlal number 10 drilled a powerful drive that nestled into the bottom corner despite Al Owais' best efforts to save.

Al-Ahli's troubles were doubled seven minutes before the break as Ghaedi turned from scorer to creator, sending a cross from the right flank into the far post for Ali Karimi who evaded his marker and headed home Esteghlal's second.

After the restart, Esteghlal was quick to cement its place in the Round of 16 with a third goal.

Karimi supplied a chipped cross from the edge of the penalty area for Cheick Diabate and the Malian forward guided his header past Al Owais to make it 3-0.

The result means Esteghlal finishes second behind confirmed Group A winner Al-Ahli, goal difference giving the Iranian the advantage over Al-Shorta who is

consigned to a narrow group stage exit.

## Sepahan Defeat Al-Sadd in 2020 ACL



And also, Sepahan football team of Iran defeated Al-Sadd of Qatar 2-1 to end its 2020 AFC Champions League on a high.

Sepahan ended their campaign in third place with seven points in Group D.

Al-Sadd finished in second place with nine points and will face the Group C winner in the Round of 16.

Reza Mirzaei and Sajad Shahbazzadeh scored for Sepahan in the 14th and 53rd minutes respectively and Hashim Ali pulled a goal back in the 82nd minute.

Al-Sadd coach Xavi made 10 changes to his starting XI that played out a 1-1 draw against Al-Nassr three days earlier, with only center-back Tarek Salman retaining his place in the team, before being swapped for Abdelkarim Hassan at half time.

# Bayern Win UEFA Super Cup



Bayern Munich's captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer lifts the trophy after the UEFA Super Cup soccer match between Bayern Munich and Sevilla at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary, Sept 24, 2020. Bayern won the match 2-1 after extra time.

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) -- Bayern Munich beat Sevilla 2-1 in an epic battle for the UEFA Super Cup that lasted 120 minutes on Thursday.

Bayern controlled the match from the start, while Sevilla were stable in defense and focused on counterattacks.

In the 11th minute, the Spanish team were awarded a penalty after David Alaba felled Ivan Rakitic, allowing Lucas Ocampos to open the scoring in the 13th minute.

After the goal, the Spanish team gained momentum and put pressure on Bayern, but the German side equalized in the 34th minute through Leon Goretzka's finish.

Bayern then reestablished control of the game, but Robert Lewandowski

and Leroy Sane both had goals chalked off.

Sevilla did create a great chance to score later, but Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer managed to keep the scores level to send the match into extra-time.

It wasn't until the 104th minute that Bayern finally sealed the win, thanks to a header from substitute Javi Martinez.

The UEFA Super Cup is an annual match between the reigning champions of the two European major football competitions, the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League.

Around 16,000 spectators were allowed in to watch the game in Budapest's Puskas Arena.

# Lakers Beat Nuggets to Take 3-1 Lead in West Finals

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) -- The Los Angeles Lakers are a victory away from returning to the NBA Finals - and only another comeback from 3-1 down by the Denver Nuggets can stop them.

Anthony Davis scored 34 points, LeBron James had 26 and the Lakers beat the Nuggets 114-108 on Thursday night in Game 4 of the Western Conference finals.

Davis got the Lakers off to a fast start with his scoring and James helped them finish it with his defense, forcing Jamal Murray into some late misses after the guard had kept the Nuggets in it with an array of high-difficulty baskets.

James added nine rebounds and eight assists, and the Lakers had 12 offensive rebounds for a whopping 25-6 advantage in second-chance points.

Game 5 is Saturday night, when the Lakers can reach the NBA Finals for the first time in a decade. Davis said he expects to be fine for it after rolling his ankle in the fourth quarter.

The Nuggets will be fac-



ing elimination for the seventh time in the bubble. They were down 3-1 against Utah in the first round and climbed out of the same hole against the Los Angeles Clippers in the West semifinals.

But they couldn't come back in this game, getting within one point in the opening minute of the fourth quarter but constantly turned back from there by a key stop or rebound by the Lakers.

The Lakers have 16 championships, one behind Boston for the most in NBA history, but they haven't played for one

since winning their most recent title in 2010.

The Lakers started Dwight Howard at center and he had 12 points and 11 rebounds, helping put Nikola Jokic into foul trouble.

Murray had 32 points and eight assists, but Jokic finished with just 16 points and seven rebounds.

Davis scored 27 points in Game 3 but the 6-foot-10 forward acknowledged that his two-rebound performance was "unacceptable." He came out much more aggressively Thurs-

day after the Lakers played from behind much of the last game.

With an array of short jumpers, Davis made his first six shots before anyone else on the Lakers made a basket. Then Howard scored on consecutive follow shots before James followed with his first two field goals.

Murray kept the Lakers from getting too far away with a 7-for-8 start. He followed his acrobatic layup around James with 2 1/2 minutes remaining in the half with a pair of free throws that cut it to four, before the Lakers took a 60-55 edge to the locker room.

The Nuggets shot 59% in the first half but the Lakers had an 18-2 advantage in second-chance points.

The Lakers seemed to be taking control when Rajon Rondo and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope combined for a flurry that pushed the lead to 11 with under 4 minutes remaining in the third, but Michael Porter Jr. hit two 3-pointers late in the period that cut it to 87-84 going to the fourth.

# Quartararo Dominant in First Barcelona MotoGP Practice



BARCELONA (dispatches) -The final part of the second triple-header this season got underway in cool conditions at the Catalunya circuit, with Quartararo setting the early pace on his Yamaha at the scene of his debut MotoGP podium in 2019.

The French rider is battling illness this weekend, but leaped to the top of the order at the start of the session with a 1m41.551s, before bettering that to a 1m41.377s.

Factory Yamaha counterpart Maverick Vinales edged ahead soon after with a 1m41.272s, improving on his next effort to a 1m41.105s as he went out straight away on a full fuel tank to start understanding the feeling of his M1 under race conditions.

Quartararo returned to top spot with a 1m40.872s just over 10 minutes into the session, which stood as the benchmark right up until the closing stages. And it was the Petronas rider who

put it under threat, lighting up the timing screens across the final three sectors of the Catalunya circuit with three minutes to go to post a 1m40.584s.

On his final lap, Quartararo found more time and ended the session with a 1m40.431s, heading Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso.

The Italian was top Ducati runner in a low-key session for Desmosedici riders, with Dovizioso jumping up to second in the latter stages with a 1m40.861s after fitting a fresh soft rear tyre.

Suzuki's Mir crashed at Turn 5 in the opening stages, but was soon back out on track and ended the morning third fastest with a 1m31.060s.

Vinales was fourth at the chequered flag ahead of Aleix Espargaro on the Aprilia, with the sister Petronas bike of Franco Morbidelli completing the top six.

# Bottas Fastest in First Practice for Russian Grand Prix

SOCHI, Russia (AP) -- Valtteri Bottas was fastest in the first practice session for the Russian Grand Prix on Friday as his Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton was slowed down by damaged tires.

Bottas set the pace with a time of 1 minute, 34.923 seconds, beating Renault driver Daniel Ricciardo by half a second. Max Verstappen was third quickest in his Red Bull, a further .147 back.

Hamilton could only manage 19th fastest after locking up his tires and leaving them with a flat spot. Ferrari again struggled to find pace with Sebastian Vettel ninth and Charles Leclerc 11th.

The session was briefly red-flagged when Nicholas Latifi crashed his Williams into the wall. Carlos Sainz Jr. spun his McLaren backwards into a barrier and broke off his rear wing.

# Nadal Faces Tough Path to French Final, Murray to Play Wawrinka

PARIS (Reuters) - Rafael Nadal, who is seeking a record-extending 13th French Open title and a record-equalling 20th Grand Slam singles crown, was handed a relatively tough path to this year's final at Roland Garros when the draw was made on Thursday.

The Spaniard will take on Bulgaria's Egor Gerasimov in the

first round and faces a potential last-eight clash with US Open runner-up Alexander Zverev, who has never made it past the quarter-finals at the claycourt Grand Slam.

Nadal then faces a possible semi-final clash against last year's runner-up and US Open winner Dominic Thiem.

