

Persepolis Thrash Al-Rayyan at AFC Champions League



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Persepolis FC flexed their credentials as favorites as they came from behind to defeat Al Rayyan SC 3-1 in Group E of the 2021 AFC Champions League at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Saturday.

Persepolis turned on the power in the second half as they added to the

1-0 opening day win against UAE's Al Wahda FSCC while Al Rayyan were left in search of their first victory, having been held 0-0 by FC Goa on Matchday One.

Persepolis raced off the blocks and wasted no time in asserting themselves, coming close to opening the scoring after just three minutes when

Vahid Amiri raced down the left flank and relayed the ball to Shahriyar Mughanlou, who found himself in a one on one situation with Al Rayyan goalkeeper Fahad Younis, but the forward was flagged offside.

The Iran Pro League champions continued to press with their free flowing passing but Al Rayyan were

up to task with their sound defending.

Perspolis coach Yahya Golmohammadi praised his players for not giving up as his team fought back to defeat Al-Rayyan of Qatar 3-1.

Persepolis, runner-up in 2018 and 2020, was a goal down for the first time this season but mounted a second half resurgence to maintain its perfect start to the campaign after having defeated Al-Wahda 1-0 on Matchday One.

"We entered the second half with the drive and motivation that we could win the match," said Golmohammadi. "We never once lost that self-confidence and therefore we won."

"The whole team is built this way. We achieved this victory with teamwork and never once surrendered or admitted defeat.

"In fact, we wanted to score a fourth goal but that didn't happen. I'm proud of my players for what they accomplished. We owe it all to our fans because without them we will not have that desire to succeed," he concluded.

Lakers Back on Track After Win Over Jazz



Drummond returned to the Lakers starting line-up after a toe injury to score 27 points and add eight rebounds

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Andre Drummond scored a team-high 27 points as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Utah Jazz 127-115 in overtime.

The Jazz, who lead the Western Conference, were without injured starters Donovan Mitchell, Mike Conley Jr and Rudy Gobert.

The Lakers, defending NBA champions, were missing their two biggest stars in Anthony Davis and LeBron James.

"We didn't allow adversity to get us out of our game," said Drummond, who was returning after a toe injury.

The Lakers' Dennis Schroder added 25 points, eight assists and six rebounds with Kentavious Caldwell-Pope also finishing on 25 points.

Jordan Clarkson led the Jazz who have the league's best record (42 wins, 15 defeats) with 27 points. Ersan Ilyasova fin-

ished with 20 points, shooting six of eight from the three-point line.

"We're missing four pretty important guys," said Jazz guard Joe Ingles.

"For most of the game, we did a pretty good job. We were one stop away from winning the game."

The game was played in front of a crowd of 1,700 spectators, the second at the Staples Centre since California relaxed its rules on spectators attending sporting events.

Elsewhere, Jayson Tatum scored 44 points for the Boston Celtics to beat the Golden State Warriors 119-114 despite Stephen Curry's impressive 47-point haul for the Warriors.

The win ends Golden State's four-game winning streak, while the Celtics made it six wins in a row.

Messi Fires Barca to Cup Final Win Over Athletic Bilbao

MADRID (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi scored twice as Barcelona thrashed Athletic Bilbao 4-0 in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday to win the trophy for a record-extending 31st time with all the goals coming in the last half an hour.

Antoine Griezmann put a dominant Barca side ahead on the hour when he turned in a cross from Frenkie de Jong, who doubled the Catalans' lead three minutes later.

Messi suffered some rough tackles from Athletic but got his revenge with a spectacular goal in the 68th, tearing his way through the defence down the right wing and combining with De Jong before dancing around another defender to



Barcelona won the Copa del Rey for a record-extending 31st time.

slot home.

Barca's captain struck again four minutes later in his 10th Copa final when he met a low cross from Jordi Alba and fired the ball into the bottom corner,

his shot proving too powerful for Athletic keeper Unai Simon.

Griezmann thought he had grabbed Barca's fifth goal in added time but his effort was

ruled offside after a VAR review.

"It's very special to lift this Cup as captain of this club, it's a very happy day for this group," said Messi.

"We knew Athletic would play as they did and we had to be patient with the ball and try to create space. We were all over them in the first half and in the second they dropped off."

The Argentine hoisted the trophy for a seventh time while Dutch coach Ronald Koeman earned his first piece of silverware as Barca coach to add to the glut of honors he won as a player with the club, including a Copa triumph in 1990.

Koeman also won the Copa in charge of Valencia in 2008.

Mbappe Scores Twice in Dramatic PSG Win



PARIS (Dispatches) - Mauro Icardi's injury-time winner grabbed a vital three points for Paris St-Germain against Saint-

Etienne.

The PSG substitute headed home Angel Di Maria's cross in the 95th minute to cap a frantic last 12 minutes in which all five goals were scored.

Kylian Mbappe's quickfire double had overturned Denis Bouanga's opener but Romain Hamouma looked to have denied the hosts a win.

The result leaves PSG one point behind leaders Lille with five games to go.

Bouanga's neat 77th-minute finish finally jolted a slumbering PSG side into life.

Mbappe's response was instant, killing a long ball with one touch and burying a low shot into the Saint-Etienne net.

He was then dragged down by visiting keeper Etienne Green and dispatched the penalty confidently.

Hamouma's 92nd-minute equalizer piled more pressure on Mauricio Pochettino's side but Icardi headed in to rescue a much-needed victory.

PSG's domestic inconsistency has blighted them all year but this win keeps them firmly in the title race.

Kipchoge Wins Last Race Before Olympics



The race took place at Twente Airport in the Netherlands

LONDON (Dispatches) - Eliud Kipchoge won the NN Mission Marathon in his final race before he defends his title at the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The Kenyan, 36, clocked two hours, four minutes and 30 seconds in his first outing since his shock defeat at last year's London Marathon.

Compatriot Jonathan Korir was second, two minutes and 10 seconds back, with Eritrea's Goitom Kifle third.

The invitation-only race took place at Twente Airport in the Netherlands.

It was originally due to take place in Hamburg on 11 April, but local Covid-19 restrictions meant it could not be staged in the German city.

"Its mission accomplished. Thank you to the great men and women who organised this race in less than 10 days," said Kip-

choge. "It was in a different environment, in the midst of a pandemic, to tell people you can still run."

"This was the real test towards the Tokyo Olympics, to test your fitness."

World record holder Kipchoge lost a marathon for the first time since 2013 in October 2020 in London, despite being a four-time champion and the favorite to win in St James's Park.

Prior to the NN Mission Marathon, he said he had not changed his training regime since the defeat but that it had taught him how to run without fans, with both taking place on loops closed to the public because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Fans from overseas have been banned from the Tokyo Olympics, where the men's marathon is scheduled to take place in Sapporo on 8 August.

Miami to Hold First F1 Grand Prix in 2022

FLORIDA (Dispatches) - Miami will hold its first Grand Prix in 2022 after Formula 1 secured a 10-year deal for a race in the Florida city.

The event will be held on a 3.36-mile track around the Hard Rock Stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins NFL team.

Miami becomes the second race in the U.S., joining the popular United States Grand Prix in Austin, Texas.

A date for the Miami event has not yet been announced, but F1 president and chief executive officer Stefano Domenicali said it would be "in the second quarter of next year".

Domenicali said Miami would be "kept separate" from the Austin event "to keep the right space for both". This suggests Miami could be twinned with the Canadian Grand Prix in June.

Miami Dolphins chairman Tom Garfinkel, the managing partner of the Miami Grand Prix, said: "The Hard Rock stadium entertainment campus in Miami Gardens exists to host the biggest global events to benefit the entire greater Miami region, and Formula 1 racing is as big as it gets."



F1's original plan for a Miami race included a track that crossed a bridge over the city's bay, but it did not get the go ahead amid objections from local politicians and residents.