

Persepolis See Off Goa to Stay Perfect in ACL



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Iran's Persepolis football club made it three wins out of three in Group E of the 2021 AFC Champions League with a 2-1 defeat of India's FC Goa on Tuesday.

Persepolis started the tie on the front foot and had its first look at goal after 10 minutes but Ahmad Noorollahi sent his free-kick straight into the arms of FC Goa custodian Dheeraj Singh.

FC Goa gradually grew into the match and was rewarded in the 14th minute when Edu Bedia rose high to nod home Brandon Fernandes' free-kick to register a historic moment for the Indian club.

Persepolis, however, came back fighting and equalized when Mahdi Torabi sent Dheeraj Singh the wrong way from the spot in the 18th minute after Isa Alkasir had been brought down inside the box.

Persepolis increased its intensity of play and captain Seyed Jalal Husseini scored his second goal of the campaign when he angled his header into the back of the net following Torabi's cross from the left flank.

Dheeraj Singh, FC Goa's star in the 0-0 draw with Al-Rayyan on Matchday Two, was at his best in the 42nd minute to deny Hussein Kanaani from the penalty spot following a foul on Ehsan Pahlavan.

The two sides will meet again on Friday with Yahya Golmuhamedi's team aiming to take a step closer to the Round of 16 while FC Goa will surely relish another go at Persepolis.

Europe's Rebel Soccer League Collapses After Fans Demand Exit



Football supporters demonstrate against the proposed European Super League outside of Stamford Bridge football stadium in London on April 20, 2021.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Europe's rebel soccer league crumbled just days after its launch as teams pulled out amid fury from the sport's authorities, politicians and fans.

Juventus Chairman Andrea Agnelli, one of the leading architects of the European Super League, said the project will no longer go ahead, according to a spokesman. Earlier the league had said it was considering "appropriate steps to reshape the project."

The collapse was inevitable after all six English clubs involved pulled out of the project late on Tuesday. The Premier League is home to some of the world's most marketable clubs, and generates billions in sponsorship and broadcasting revenue.

Among the six clubs, Manchester United said it had "listened carefully to the reaction from our fans, the UK government and other key

stakeholders." Chelsea Football Club said it withdrew after considering "the best interests of the club, our supporters or the wider football community." Chelsea's withdrawal came amid a protest from fans at its London stadium.

While Manchester City had been the first to go, Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool also followed.

The planned breakaway kicked off a battle with governing body UEFA and national leagues, and prompted interventions from leaders including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. While ostensibly over plans to take the cream from Europe's most prestigious competition - the Champions League - the fight is also about control of a sport whose finances have been hammered by the pandemic, and the biggest clubs want more money.

Clippers Rally to Beat Trail Blazers 113-112

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Considering the sizable holes in each roster Tuesday, it would have been easy to dismiss the Clippers' 113-112 win in Portland as a shell of the first-round playoff preview this matchup currently appears on paper.

The Clippers, the Western Conference's third-place team, were missing All-Star Kawhi Leonard — who will be out at least three games while managing soreness in his right foot — as well as starters Serge Ibaka and Patrick Beverley and because of it, used this season's 21st different start-



Clippers guard Paul George hits a shot over Portland Trail Blazers forward Rondae Hollis-Jefferson during the first half in Portland, Ore., on Tuesday.

ing lineup.

The sixth-place Trail Blazers, with All-Star Damian Lillard

out for a third straight game because of a hamstring, and center Enes Kanter sidelined,

too, were missing their offensive engine and dominant rebounder.

And yet should these teams meet again for a seven-game series in late May, there could be lessons the Clippers draw on from one month earlier. They swept the regular-season series with Portland by doing the kind of thing that has happened so rarely — winning a tight game in the final minutes — by replicating some of the discomfort they had caused Portland's backcourt in two previous wins, when they had trapped and blitzed Lillard into two ineffective performances.

Kvitova Beats Brady 6-4, 6-3 on Return to Stuttgart



STUTTGART, Germany (AP) — Petra Kvitova opened her delayed title defense at the Porsche Grand Prix with a 6-4, 6-3 win

over Australian Open finalist Jennifer Brady on Tuesday.

Kvitova, who won the previous edition of the tournament in 2019, saved all three break points she faced against Brady to book a second-round meeting with Maria Sakkari.

"It was a fantastic feeling playing on this court again," Kvitova said. "It gave me lots of energy."

The clay court tournament was called off in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Fifth-seeded Aryna Sabalenka needed just over an hour to beat

Zhang Shuai of China 6-2, 6-2 to set up a match against Anna-Lena Friedsam, who beat fellow qualifier Ulrikke Eikeri 6-2, 6-0.

Ekaterina Alexandrova rallied from a set down to beat Karolina Muchova 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, and Anett Kontaveit eased past teenage wildcard entry Julia Middelndorf 6-2, 6-3.

Kontaveit, who lost the 2019 final to Kvitova, next faces third-seeded Sofia Kenin.

Also, Laura Siegemund won an all-German duel against Mona Barthel 6-4, 3-6, 6-1.

Yates Takes Alps Tour Lead After Stage Win

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's Simon Yates has taken the overall lead of the Tour of the Alps following an impressive victory on stage two.

Yates, 28, of Team Bike Exchange, left behind his rivals after launching a devastating attack with 24km remaining.

He now leads Ineos Grenadiers' Pavel Sivakov in the general classification by 41 seconds.

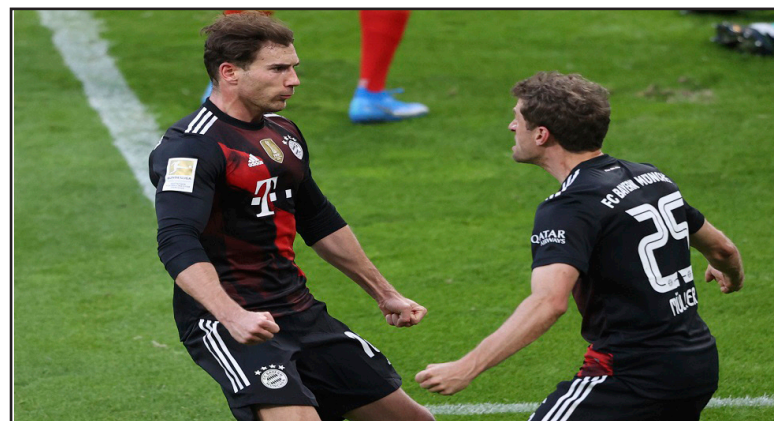
"They weren't easy to get rid of - it was a very tough climb," said Yates. "It really took it out of me on the valley road to the finish. I enjoy these stages - we race from the start rather than messing around for 150km."

Yates even gained 15 seconds on his lead on the descent from the category one climb where he made his break for the win, before finding more time in the final few kilometers.

The Mancunian rider has struggled for form in recent races, but appears to be coming good before his bid to win the Giro d'Italia, which starts on 8 May.



Bayern on Brink of Bundesliga Title After Leipzig's Loss



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Cologne picked up crucial points in the relegation battle after upsetting second-placed Leipzig courtesy of Jonas Hector's brace, awarding a 10-point lead to leaders Bayern Munich on Wednesday.

Leipzig assumed control and controlled possession from the starting whistle while Cologne defended deep and kept all its men behind the ball.

With three minutes gone, Leipzig was able to produce the first chance of the game after Nordi Mukiele's first-timer from eleven meters missed the target just wide.

As the match progressed, Cologne's well-positioned defense was able to keep the visitors at a distance as Julian Nagelsmann's men had to wait until the closing stages of the first half for more chances. Christopher Nkunku lacked accuracy in the 37th minute before Cologne goalkeeper Timo Horn defused Alexander Sorloth's dangerous header moments later.

Leipzig's was caught flatfooted after the restart as Cologne opened the scoring against the flow of the game after Jannis Horn's pinpoint cross allowed Hector to head home the opener from close range in the

46th minute.

The visitors responded well and restored parity at the hour mark when Amadou Haidara unleashed a hammer from 20 meters into the top right corner.

The stalemate did not last long though as Cologne stunned Leipzig with the next attack when Ondrej Duda and Hector exchanged passes before the German international wrapped up his brace with a well-placed shot from 13 meters.

Leipzig pressed frenetically for the leveler but Cologne's defense stood firm and defused promising chances from Angelino and Justin Kluivert in the dying minutes of the match.

With the result, second-placed Leipzig dropped points in the title race whereas 17th positioned, and relegation-threatened, Cologne snatched vital points.

Bayern Munich marches relentlessly towards their next title defense as the German giants are just one victory away from their ninth title in a row after securing a 2-0 win over Bayer Leverkusen.

The Bavarians paved the way for the 22nd win of the season with two quick goals in the opening stages.