

Iran Down Afghanistan at Futsal Asian Cup Opener



TEHRAN – Iran have defeated debutants Afghanistan 3-1 at the 2024 AFC Futsal Asian Cup.

A brace from Saeid Ahmadabasi and a strike from Mahdi Karimi proved to be the difference as Iran eventually broke down hard-working opponents who restricted the Asian futsal powerhouses to just the one goal at half-time, before Mehran Ghorlami wrote his own little piece of history with his nation's maiden goal at the tournament.

Iran will next face Bahrain on Saturday, while Afghanistan meet Kuwait in the day's earlier game at Hua Mark Indoor Stadium.

The competition will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from April 17 to 28.

Iranian Judokas to Participate in Asian Championships



TEHRAN – Iran will take part in the 2024 Asian Judo Championships in Hong Kong.

Iran will send 11 male and female judokas to the competition.

The Asian Championships

Individuals 2024 will be held in Hong Kong from April 20 to 22.

A total of 272 judokas from 36 countries are expected to participate in the competition.

Roma See Off AC Milan to Reach Europa League Semis

ROME (AFP) - AS Roma beat AC Milan 2-1 at a buzzing Stadio Olimpico on Thursday to complete a 3-1 aggregate win and set up a semifinal showdown with Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League.

Defender Gianluca Mancini, whose 17th-minute header had helped Roma edge Milan 1-0 at the San Siro last week, gave them another early lead in the quarter-final second leg, scoring on a rebound from close range in the 12th minute.

Paulo Dybala doubled the advantage for the hosts 10 minutes later with a curled shot inside the far post before Matteo Gabbia pulled one back for Milan five minutes from time, nodding



Roma's Stephan El Shaarawy (center) kicks the ball away as AC Milan's Olivier Giroud tries to score during the Europa League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Roma and AC Milan, at Rome's Olympic Stadium, on April 18, 2024.

home a cross from forward Rafael Leao.

Last season's runners-up Roma, who were beaten on penalties by

Sevilla after a 1-1 draw in the final, advanced to their fourth European semi-final in a row.

They will next face the newly-

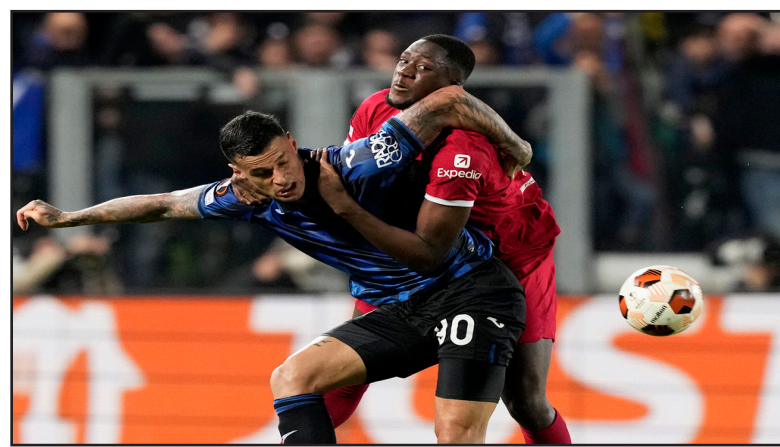
crowned Bundesliga champions Leverkusen, who beat West Ham United.

Roma started off confidently and captain Lorenzo Pellegrini hit the post from outside the box before Mancini grabbed a rebound to score the opener.

Milan's Ruben Loftus-Cheek came close to leveling when he hit the bar minutes later but the visitors' worst nightmare became reality when Dybala made it 2-0 soon after.

Striker Romelu Lukaku raced to win the ball on the right flank before his pass towards front of the goal was cleared by Milan defence but ended at the feet of Dybala who made no mistake slotting home.

Liverpool Eliminated as Atalanta Book Europa League Semifinal Place



Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate fights for the ball with Atalanta's Gianluca Scamacca (left) during the Europa League quarterfinal, second leg, soccer match between Atalanta and Liverpool at the Stadio di Bergamo, in Bergamo, Italy, on April 18, 2024.

BERGAMO (Reuters) - Atalanta progressed to the Europa League semifinals despite losing 1-0 to Liverpool on Thursday as they triumphed 3-1 on aggregate to move one step closer to a first ever European final for the Serie A side.

Atalanta had stunned the Premier League club 3-0 in the first leg of their quarter-final last week at Anfield, levelling another huge blow to Liverpool's dreams of a fairytale ending in manager Jurgen Klopp's final season.

"We gave ourselves a massive hurdle (in the first leg), but I liked the game a lot for a long time, the commitment, the desire, the power the boys showed was incredible," Klopp told TNT Sports.

"It is mixed emotions. We would have wished that we could have gone to Dublin (for the final), but that hasn't happened.

"We now have one competition left (Premier League) and we will throw ourselves into that completely."

Liverpool got off to a quick start in Italy as talisman Mohammed Salah scored from the penalty spot in the seventh minute, fuelling hope that a remarkable comeback was in the making.

But while Klopp's men looked

little like the shaky side who were steamrolled by Atalanta at Anfield, particularly in the first half, Gian Piero Gasperini's team held on in what the manager had called the biggest game in the team's history to earn a semifinal place against Olympique de Marseille.

"If you don't win without danger, there's no glory to your triumph," Gasperini said.

Salah had Liverpool's best chance at a second goal when he was sent in one-on-one against goalkeeper Juan Musso, but he chipped the ball well wide.

Later in the first half, Salah almost set up Luis Diaz with a ball over the top into the area, but it hit the arm of Isak Hien. Liverpool screamed for a penalty to no avail, and Diaz was booked for dissent.

Liverpool, who won the League Cup earlier this season, now turn their attention back to the Premier League. They are level on 71 points with second-placed Arsenal and two points behind leaders Manchester City.

They play at Fulham on Sunday in a quick turnaround. "We won tonight and we kept a clean sheet, so there are so many more positives we can take. Yes, it is a bad feeling to be out so we have to get back up," Van Dijk added.

Olympic Organizers Unveil Strategy for Using Artificial Intelligence in Sports



LONDON (AP) — Olympic organizers unveiled their plans Friday to use artificial intelligence in sports, joining the global rush to capitalize on the rapidly advancing

technology.

The International Olympic Committee outlined its agenda for taking advantage of AI. Officials said it could be used to help identify

promising athletes, personalize training methods and make the games fairer by improving judging.

"Today we are making another step to ensure the uniqueness of the Olympic Games and the relevance of sport. To do this, we have to be leaders of change," IOC President Thomas Bach said at a press event at the former London Olympic Park, which hosted the summer games in 2012.

"We are determined to exploit the vast potential of AI in a responsible way," Bach said.

The IOC revealed its AI strategy as it gears up to hold the Paris Olympics, which are set to kick

off in just under 100 days.

The IOC's AI plans also include using the technology to protect athletes from online harassment and to help broadcasters improve the viewing experience for people watching from home. The IOC earns billions of dollars through the sale of broadcast rights for the games.

The local organizers of the Paris games have already sparked controversy with their plans to use artificial intelligence for security, with a video surveillance system that includes AI-powered cameras to flag potential security risks such as abandoned packages or crowd surges.

Top Three Stripped of Medals in Beijing Half Marathon

BEIJING (Sky Sports) - The top three finishers of the Beijing half marathon have been stripped of their medals following an investigation into the controversial result.

It was alleged that the three African athletes deliberately allowed China's star runner He Jie to win Sunday's race. Footage appeared, external to show Kenya's Robert Keter and Willy Mwangat and Ethiopia's Dejene Hailu pointing to the line and slowing down to wave He past.

Mwangat told the BBC that the trio ran as pacemakers.

But the race's organizing committee, who led the investigation, said that none of the three had been officially

registered as pacemakers for He, so their actions breached the competition rules.

The committee said "all trophies, medals and bonuses will be recovered".

China's state broadcaster CCTV also reported that all four had been "punished" and their results had been cancelled.

After the race, the Chinese Athletics Association said it would seek to improve the organization of road running events in the country.

"In general, the overall operation of road running events has been smooth," it said in a statement.

"But problems in the organization and management



He Jie won the Beijing half marathon in one hour, three minutes and 44 seconds

of the events have also been exposed, which has aroused widespread concern."

China's He won mara-

thon gold at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou and is his country's record holder for the full marathon.