

FIBA Names Iran's Haddadi Asia's Top Defender



Hamed Haddai

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran's National Team of Basketball defender Hamed Haddai is the best defender in the field in the Asian region according to the statistics and reports rolled out by FIBA.

On the closing of the year of 2017, FIBA - the International Basketball Federation - issued a list of the five best defensive players who saw action at either of the two biggest continental events in 2017 - the FIBA Asia Cup in August and the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Asian Qualifiers in November.

These rankings are based on the defensive statistics (defensive rebounds, steals and blocks) compiled from both these tournaments, with the top three frontcourt players and top two backcourt players making the list.

At the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, Haddadi led the tournament with the highest average blocked shots per game and rebounds per game, the latter by a wide margin.

The 32-year-old center helped Iran win Asian Championship three times in 2007, 2009, 2013.

Iran's Skier Books Berth at Winter Olympics 2018

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Sattar Seid, a member of Iranian national skiing team, has managed to earn a quota to 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Head of Alborz Alpine Skiing Committee, Sadeq Kalhor, said the Iranian skier scooped up a total of 60 points and was qualified for the Winter Olympics.

“Sattar Seid also occupied fourth and fifth positions in three events

at the international alpine skiing event held recently in Erzurum of Turkey,” he continued.

The 2018 Winter Olympics officially known as the XXII Olympic Winter Games and commonly known as PyeongChang 2018, is a major international multi-sport event scheduled to take place from 9 to 25 February 2018 in Pyeongchang County, South Korea.

Milan Not Pretty But Gattuso Happy With Teamwork



Gennaro Gattuso

MILAN (Reuters) – AC Milan are not pretty to watch but at least they are turning into a team, coach Gennaro Gattuso said after his side ground out a 1-1 draw at Fiorentina in Serie A on Saturday.

Gattuso, formerly a combative midfielder who played for the club for 12 years, was also happy that, for

the first time in the league this season, his side managed to avoid defeat after falling behind.

Big-spending Milan have won one and drawn two out of five Serie A games since Gattuso replaced the sacked Vincenzo Montella. However, they enjoyed a morale-boosting 1-0 win over neighbours Inter Milan on Wednesday.

Australia Beat Canada to Open Hopman Cup Campaign

PERTH, Australia (AP) - Daria Gavrilova and Thanasi Kokkinakis each won their singles matches to give Australia a perfect start to its mixed team Hopman Cup campaign against Canada at Perth Arena on Sunday.

Gavrilova claimed a 6-1, 6-4 win over Eugenie Bouchard, before Kokkinakis wrapped up the Group A tie for Australia by beating world No.108 Vasek Pospisil 6-4, 3-6. 6-3 in the men's singles rubber.

The Canadian team responded in the mixed doubles winning 4-3 (1), 4-3 (4) in the Fast4 format to gain some consolation.

From the outset, world No. 83 Bouchard struggled to find any fluency and conceded the first set to the 25th ranked Gavrilova in under half an hour. Gavrilova then raced to a 3-0 lead

in the second before Bouchard broke back, and three double faults from Gavrilova in the sixth game opened the door for the Canadian to take the upper hand in the second set.

But Gavrilova recovered to hold serve and broke Bouchard again to claim the victory in 78 minutes.

On the back of Gavrilova's victory for the host nation, Kokkinakis, ranked 209th, also started confidently and claimed the first set, before Pospisil responded in the second.

With the match evenly poised midway through the deciding third set, Kokkinakis eventually took a break point opportunity in the sixth game and then served it out for the win in one hour and 53 minutes.

Belgium plays Germany in the other Group A fixture on Monday.

Salah Double Ensures Liverpool Overcome Leicester



Mohamed Salah

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Two second half goals from Mohamed Salah helped Liverpool secure a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Leicester City at Anfield in the Premier League.

The visitors got off to the perfect start when a mix up at the back saw Riyad Mahrez square for Jamie Vardy to tap into an open goal in front of the Kop in the third minute.

Liverpool looked for an immediate

riposte, but Salah missed two gilt-edged opportunities before Sadio Mane saw an effort disallowed for offside as Jurgen Klopp's men grew frustrated.

Salah's persistence paid off just after the restart when he fired in from close range to level and struck his second, and 17th in the Premier League this season, in the 76th after shrugging off Harry Maguire and producing a composed finish.

Polish Skier Pulls Off Bode Miller-Like Run With Only 1 Ski



Polish skier Pawel Babicki

BORMIO, Italy (AP) — When Polish racer Pawel Babicki lost one of his skis during the feared Stelvio downhill, he instantly remembered Bode Miller's single-ski stunt on the same course.

Miller's inspired feat persuaded Babicki to continue skiing all the way to the finish — just like Miller did at the 2005 world championships in Bormio. “It was a spontaneous

decision,” he said. “When I lost the ski I was like, ‘Come on, I’ve seen Bode Miller’s run so many times. I’m going to do everything I can to reach the finish.’”

While Babicki placed 67th out of 67 finishers, 36 seconds behind race winner Dominik Paris of Italy in the race, he became an instant hit with fans and compared to Miller — whose legacy remains strong in Bormio.

Jazz Hand Cavaliers Their Third Straight Loss, 104-101

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points, and the Utah Jazz handed LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers their third straight defeat, 104-101 on Saturday night.

James had 29 points, eight rebounds and six assists on his

from the free-throw line. The Jazz snapped a three-game losing streak.

Mitchell shot 10 for 17 from the field. Ricky Rubio had 16 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists.

James did not record a point or an assist during the game-changing third quarter, which Utah



Kevin Love shoots over Utah Jazz center Ekpe Udoh in the first half on Dec. 30 in Salt Lake City.

33rd birthday as Cleveland lost at Utah for the sixth straight time. The Cavs' three-game losing streak is their second this season.

Mitchell blew by J.R. Smith with the dribble and finished a layup in traffic over James with 35 seconds remaining to give the Jazz a 100-97 lead. James then missed a layup, and Utah finished off the game

opened with a 23-3 run. Cleveland connected on just 4 of 19 shots in the quarter.

James powered the Cavaliers' late rally, but the Jazz were able to hold on.

The Cavs led by 10 in the first quarter. Utah chipped away in the second and trailed 53-48 at halftime.

Hamilton Relishing Verstappen, Alonso Involvement in F1 Title Fight

LONDON (Dispatches) - Four-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton is relishing the prospect of Max Verstappen and Fernando Alonso joining the fight for the title at the front of the field in 2018.

Hamilton saw off a tough challenge from Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel to capture his fourth F1 crown in 2017, hitting some of the best form of his career as a result of the added pressure.

Red Bull showed signs of entering the battle at the front towards the end of the season as 20-year-old Max Verstappen



took two dominant wins, beating Hamilton after a straight fight in Malaysia.

Speaking to British broadcaster Sky Sports, Hamilton said Verstappen had everything

required to be a title contender in 2018 given his performances this year.

“Of course he can be a title contender. His driving at its core, his abilities are fantastic,” Hamilton said.

“We’ve all seen that come to light with the great car he’s racing in and the great team he’s racing in.

Hamilton is also eager to see former team McLaren return to the front of the field led by two-time champion Alonso, having spent the last three years toiling in the midfield amid struggles with engine partner Honda.