

Iran's Nemati Qualifies for World Archery Para Championships



Iran's Zahra Nemati

DUBAI (Dispatches) — Iran's Zahra Nemati has qualified for the final round of the Fazza Para Archery World Ranking Tournament.

More than 70 Para archers from 11 nations are taking part in the seventh edition of the event in Dubai, the UAE.

The back-to-back Paralympic champion defeated Nataliya Malikh from Ukraine 6-0 at recurve women semifinal.

"In regard to my preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, this is a very important competition," said Nemati.

Arsenal, Milan Reach Europa League Last 16

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal needed a late comeback to secure their place in the draw for the Europa League last 16 where they will be joined by Ajax Amsterdam, Manchester United, AC Milan and Rangers but Napoli and PSV Eindhoven crashed out on Thursday.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's 87th-minute header secured Arsenal a 3-2 win over Benfica for a 4-3 aggregate victory, but the Premier League side had been staring at the exit door.

After the first leg, played in Rome because of COVID-19 restrictions, ended 1-1, Arsenal's home leg was played in Athens and all looked com-



Arsenal's Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (left) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Europa League round of 32 second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Benfica at the Karaiskaki Stadium in Athens, Greece, on Feb 25, 2021.

fortable when Aubameyang scored early on.

Diogo Goncalves curled home a free kick for Portuguese giants Benfica just before halftime,

however, and when a terrible mistake by Arsenal midfielder Dani Ceballos allowed Rafa Silva to put Benfica 2-1 ahead just past the hour it looked grim

for Arsenal.

Kieran Tierney fired home the equalizer, however, before Aubameyang headed in from close range to seal a dramatic win.

Milan squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals after their tie ended 3-3 on aggregate following a 1-1 draw in the San Siro. Franck Kessie's penalty gave Milan the lead but Red Star hit back through Ben Nabouhane and pushed hard late on despite being reduced to 10 men.

Roma completed a 5-1 aggregate in over Braga while Manchester United also eased through after a 0-0 home draw against Real Sociedad, following a 4-0 first leg win.

Messi Double Helps Barca See Off Elche



BARCELONA (Reuters) - Lionel Messi has scored twice as Barcelona overcame an uninspiring first half to beat Elche 3-0 at home in La Liga and keep leaders Atletico Madrid in their sights.

The Catalans created little in one of their worst first-half displays at the Camp Nou this season but found a breakthrough early in the

second when Martin Braithwaite released Messi with a classy backheel and the Argentine did the rest.

Barca, who failed to hold onto a narrow lead in Sunday's 1-1 draw at home to Cadiz, got an all-important second goal in the 69th when Frenkie de Jong received the ball after some clever play from 18-year-old Pedri.

Pogacar Holds UAE Lead as Vingegaard Wins Fifth Stage

DUBAI (AFP) - Tadej Pogacar has maintained his lead in the UAE Tour by keeping closest challenger Adam Yates at bay in fifth stage, won by Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard.

Reigning Tour de France champion Pogacar finished three seconds behind Vingegaard and just ahead of Briton Yates, who now sits 45 seconds behind the Slovene in the general classification.

The road now seems clear for the UAE Emirates rider to claim the overall title on Saturday.

"I'm glad I've retained the lead but I'll stay focused in the next two days," said Pogacar. "There are no more mountains, but I haven't won the UAE Tour yet."

To take the fifth stage, Vingegaard imitated his usual Jumbo-Visma team leader Primož Roglič, who lost last year's Tour de France to countryman Pogacar on the penultimate stage.

Vingegaard attacked at the highest point of the week-long race, at an altitude of 1,489 metres, just one kilometre from the finish to deny Kazakh Alexey Lutsenko.

Lutsenko's dream of victory vanished 250 metres from the finish line in the rocky setting of the Hajar Mountains, very close to the



Jonas Vingegaard of Jumbo-Visma wins the fifth stage of the UAE Tour

border with Oman.

It was Vingegaard's second success on the World Tour circuit after a stage of the 2019 Tour of Poland.

Nets Beat Magic for Eighth Straight NBA Win



Orlando Magic guards Michael Carter-Williams (7) and Evan Fournier (10) defend Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021, in New York.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Point guard Kyrie Irving scored 27 points and produced nine assists as the Brooklyn Nets won a season-high eighth successive game with a 129-92 victory over the Orlando Magic.

The Nets are on their longest streak since 2006 and won their sixth straight game without the injured Kevin Durant.

James Harden added 20 points, seven assists and nine rebounds, while reserve Landry Shamet added 19 points.

Brooklyn are second in the NBA Eastern Conference.

Leaders the Philadelphia 76ers defeated Dallas Mavericks 111-97, thanks partly to centre Joel Embiid's 23 points and nine rebounds.

Point guard Ben Simmons added 15 points and seven assists while shooting guard Seth Curry also scored 15 points.

Greek player Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded 38 points as third place Milwaukee Bucks overcame the New Orleans Pelicans 129-125.

Small forward Khris Middleton added 31 points and shooting guard Donte DiVincenzo scored a career-high 24 points.

Former U.S. Gymnastics Coach Commits Suicide After Sexual Assault Charges



In this 2012 photo, gymnastics coach John Geddert is seen at the American Cup gymnastics meet at Madison Square Garden in New York.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Former U.S. Olympics gymnastics coach John Geddert committed suicide on Thursday, hours after he was criminally charged in Michigan on Thursday.

Geddert, who led the U.S. women's gymnastics team at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, was charged with 20 counts of human trafficking and forced labor resulting in injury, one count of racketeering, two counts of criminal sexual conduct and one count of lying to police, according to a state criminal complaint filed in Eaton County.

In the two criminal sexual conduct counts, Geddert, 63, was accused of "sexual penetration" of a girl under 16 in January 2012, according to the complaint.

"John Geddert used force, fraud and coercion against the young athletes that came to him for gymnastics

training for financial benefit to him," Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel told reporters.

"The victims suffer from disordered eating, including bulimia and anorexia, suicide attempts and self-harm, excessive physical conditioning, repeatedly being forced to perform even when injured, extreme emotional abuse and physical abuse, including sexual assault," she said. "Many of these victims still carry these scars from his behavior to this day."

The charge of lying to police was tied to allegations that Geddert's knew about Larry Nassar's crimes.

The U.S. Gymnastics team doctor Nassar received two prison sentences in Michigan of 40 to 125 years and 40 to 175 years for molesting young female gymnasts. He is also serving a 60-year federal term for child pornography convictions.

Holloway Breaks World Indoor 60m Hurdles Record

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - American Grant Holloway has broken the world indoor 60m hurdles record that had endured since 1994, finishing in 7.29 seconds to shave 0.01 seconds off the previous mark set by Briton Colin Jackson.

Holloway, the 110m hurdles world champion, won the race at the Villa de Madrid by 0.22 seconds, extending his victory streak in indoor sprint hurdles to 54 races.

World indoor champion Andrew Pozzi of Britain finished second in a time of 7.51 seconds.

Holloway's initial time was recorded as 7.32 seconds but was changed to 7.29, and the athlete was informed of his record achievement by a photographer.

IOC: Vaccines Not Compulsory for Athletes at Tokyo Olympics

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Athletes are being encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19 ahead of the Tokyo Olympics but it will not be compulsory, IOC Vice-President John Coates said on Thursday.

"Not compulsory, we can't do that," Coates, head of the IOC's Coordination Commission for the Tokyo Games, told reporters in Brisbane.

"But it is certainly being encouraged and the IOC has an agreement with COVAX where it's helping to facilitate the distribution of vaccines." COVAX is the World Health Organization's global vaccine-sharing scheme.

IOC President Thomas Bach said last month it was up to national Olympic committees to coordinate with their governments over access to vaccines but he was not in favor of athletes "jumping the queue".