

# Persepolis Edge Al-Taawoun to Go Group C Top



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Persepolis FC have repeated their 1-0 win over Saudi Arabia's Al-Taawoun FC on Matchday Four of the 2020 AFC Champions League Group C.

Sharjah's 4-2 win over Al-Duhail earlier on Friday opened the group up, meaning that regardless of the result, both Al-Taawoun and Persepolis would remain in contention going into Match-

day Five, but a win for either side at Education City Stadium would send them top of Group C. Persepolis came closest to opening the scoring in the last minute of the first half when

Isa Al Kasir received Ehsan Pahlavan's pass on the left flank, cut inside and bent an effort that rattled goalkeeper Cassio's upright before going wide.

The Iranians started the second half with a bang, piling the pressure on their opponents and forcing a mistake from Brazilian defender Iago Santos who fouled Al Kasir inside the box, prompting the referee to point to the spot.

With just three minutes gone after the restart, Iraqi midfielder Bashar Resan stepped up and converted from the spot, to hand Persepolis the lead.

The result means Persepolis topple Al-Taawoun off the top of the group, taking the top spot for the first time with seven points.

The Saudi side drop to second, with a superior head-to-head record keeping them above Qatar's Al-Duhail, while Emirati Sharjah remain bottom despite their victory earlier on Friday.

# Lakers Roll Past Nuggets 126-114 in West Finals Opener



Los Angeles forward Anthony Davis drives past Denver's Nikola Jokic in the Lakers' 126-114 victory over the Nuggets in game one of the NBA Western Conference finals

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) -- Anthony Davis had 37 points and 10 rebounds, LeBron James added 15 points and 12 assists hours after finishing a distant second in the MVP voting, and the Lakers rolled to a 126-114 victory on Friday night in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals.

The top-seeded Lakers opened a double-digit lead in the first half that they easily extended in the third quarter.

James acknowledged being "pissed off" at receiving just 16 first-place votes to winner Giannis Antetokounmpo's 85 from a panel of global sports writers and broadcasters who cover the league, and the Nuggets may have felt the wrath of that.

"It definitely sparks him and like he got a chip on his shoulder like he's got something to prove," Davis said.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 18 points and Dwight Howard rejoined the rotation with 13 in a powerful return to the conference finals for the Lakers, who hadn't been to the NBA's final four since winning their last championship in 2010.

Los Angeles dropped Game 1 against both Portland and Houston before winning the next four games. The Lakers quickly knocked off any rust for another long layoff in the bubble against a Denver team that's had things much tougher.

Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray each scored 21 points for the Nuggets, playing in the conference finals for the first time since the Lakers beat them in 2009.

Denver overcame 3-1 deficits against Utah and the Clippers, becoming the first team to do that twice in a post-season. The Nuggets immediately fell behind again, digging themselves a big hole when Jokic and Murray each picked up three fouls in the first half that just got deeper in the second half.

Davis scored 14 points in the first quarter, but the Nuggets shot nearly 64 percent, with Murray's 3-pointer as time expired giving them a 38-36 lead.

Alex Caruso converted a three-point play to open the second and start a 17-1 run by the Lakers to start the period and make it 53-39 before the Nuggets made their first field goal after more than five minutes.

The lead stayed right around there for the remainder of the half, as the Lakers paraded to the foul line while Jokic, Murray and Paul Millsap went the bench with three fouls. Los Angeles shot a whopping 24 free throws in the period - more baskets than either team made in the half - and led 70-59 at the break.

An 11-2 burst in the third blew it open at 92-71 and the Lakers cruised home.

## Djokovic, Nadal Reach Quarters at Italian Open

ROME (Dispatches) -- Top seeds Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal have advanced to the quarterfinals of the Italian Open with straight-set wins.

Djokovic beat his fellow Serb Filip Krajinovic 7-6 (7), 6-3, while Nadal won 6-1, 6-3 against Dusan Lajovic, also of Serbia.

18-year-old Lorenzo Musetti of Italy, who had upset three-time Grand Slam winner Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland and Japan's top player Kei Nishikori in the tournament's opening two rounds, lost to Dominik Koepfer of Germany 6-4, 6-0.

Fourth-seeded Matteo Ber-



retti outlasted Stefano Travaglia 7-6 (5), 7-6 (1) in an all-

Italian contest to reach the last eight.

In the women's draw, top seed Simona Halep of Romania beat Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska 7-5, 6-4.

Second seed Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic also met little trouble in her 6-4, 6-3 win over Russia's Anna Blinkova.

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka of Belarus advanced to the quarterfinals as her opponent Darya Kasatkina of Russia retired during the first set with the scores at 6-6.

Garbine Muguruza, seeded ninth, eased into the final eight. The Spaniard beat Johanna Konta of Great Britain 6-4, 6-1.

## Andersen Doubles Down at Tour de France, Wins Stage 19



Slovenia's Primoz Roglic, wearing the yellow jersey of the overall leader, drinks as he rides with the pack during the stage 19 of the Tour de France cycling race over 166 kilometers (103 miles), with start in Bourg-en-Bresse and finish in Champagnole, Friday, Sept. 18, 2020.

CHAMPAGNOLE, France (AP) -- That's deux for Soren Kragh Andersen at the Tour de France.

The Danish rider who won Stage 14 doubled down and raised his arms in victory

again on Stage 19, with another cunningly timed attack.

Behind him, saving their last reserves of strength for a time trial on Saturday that will decide the Tour podium, race leader Primoz Roglic

and his rivals preferred to coast to the finish while Andersen hared off for the prestige of the stage victory.

He left 11 other riders he'd been with in a breakaway for dead with an acceleration 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the finish in Champagnole in eastern France.

He held up two fingers at the line - one for each of his stage wins.

The focus now shifts to the time trial where Roglic will be aiming to secure his first Tour title, and the first at the 117-year-old race by a Slovenian.

"So far, so good," he said. "It's all on me."

And if he suffers a mishap, Slovenia will still have a second chance, in the shape of Tadej Pogacar, who is second overall.

Just 57 seconds separate the countrymen after more than 3,300 kilometers (2,000 miles) of racing on French roads since the Aug. 29 start.

That cushion should be ample for Roglic, the winner of time trials last year at the Spanish Vuelta, which he won, and at the Giro d'Italia, where he finished third.

But his lead could wither with a tumble, a bad breakdown or other accident on the tricky course into the Vosges, the last of five mountain ranges scaled by this Tour.

At national championships in Slovenia in June, Pogacar beat Roglic by nine seconds in a time trial that also had a similar gain in altitude, about 700 meters (2,300 feet), but was much shorter, at just under 16 kilometers.

## Infantino Speaks of Forces Wanting to Drag FIFA Into Darkness



President Gianni Infantino speaks during a press conference after the virtual FIFA Council Meeting on June 25, 2020 in Zurich, Switzerland.

BERN (Reuters) - FIFA president Gianni Infantino, the subject of criminal proceedings in Switzerland, spoke of forces which he said wanted to drag the global soccer body into the "darkness of the past" as he defended himself at the annual Congress.

The Congress, usually a lavish event in which the representatives of FIFA's 211 member associations enjoy first-class travel and luxury hotels, was held by video conference from FIFA headquarters in Zurich due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It lasted around 90 minutes.

The proceedings against Infantino were launched by a special prosecutor looking into meetings that he had with former

Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber. The AB-BA watchdog, which oversees the Attorney General's office, said that special prosecutor Stefan Keller had found indications of criminal conduct related to their meetings. Infantino and Lauber have denied wrongdoing.

Infantino, elected in 2016 to clean up FIFA after it became embroiled in a scandal, has argued it is perfectly natural for him to meet law enforcement agencies.

"Why was I meeting the Attorney-General? Because it was my duty, my duty as FIFA president, because I want to liberate FIFA from those old toxic values," he said.