

Iran to Play Australia at 2022 Asian Handball Championship Opener



TEHRAN – Iran will start the 20th edition of the Asian Men's Handball Championship with a match against Australia on January 18. Team Melli is scheduled to face India in

Group B on January 19.

Iran will meet host Saudi Arabia on January 20 in its last group stage match.

South Korea is in Group A along with Kuwait, Jordan and Singapore.

Defending champion Qatar is drawn with the UAE, Iraq and Oman in Group C.

Group D consists of Bahrain, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The competition was supposed to be held with 18 teams but Thailand and Japan withdrew from the event.

The 2022 Men's Handball Championship will be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia from January 18 to 31.

It also acts as a qualification tournament for the 2023 World Men's Handball Championship, with top five teams from the championship directly qualifying for the event to be jointly hosted by Poland and Sweden.

Australia Cancels Djokovic's Visa Citing Health Risk



Defending men's champion Serbia's Novak Djokovic practices on Margaret Court Arena ahead of the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Jan 13, 2022.

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Under the section of the Migration Act used to cancel the visa, Djokovic would not be able to secure a visa to Australia for three years, except in compelling circumstances that affect Australia's interest.

The decision to again cancel his visa over COVID-19 entry regulations raises the prospect of a possible second court battle by the Serbian tennis star to be allowed to stay and play in the Open starting Monday.

A source close to Djokovic's team confirmed that he is considering the decision and weighing his options.

The controversy has assumed an importance that goes beyond tennis: it has intensified a global debate over the rights of the unvaccinated and become a tricky

political issue for Prime Minister Scott Morrison as he campaigns for an election that is due by May.

While Morrison's government has won support at home for its tough stance on border security during the pandemic, it has not escaped criticism over the botched handling of Djokovic's visa.

Djokovic, 34, the Australian Open defending champion, was included in Thursday's draw as top seed and was due to face fellow Serb Miomir Kecmanovic for his opening match, probably on Monday or Tuesday.

A relaxed looking Djokovic practiced his serves and returns with his entourage on an empty court at Melbourne Park earlier on Friday, occasionally resting in a chair to wipe sweat from his face.

Bucks Humble Warriors, Grizzlies Beat Timberwolves



Golden State's Stephen Curry shoots over Milwaukee's Khris Middleton in the Bucks' 118-99 NBA victory over the Warriors

Washington (AFP) - Gianni Antetokounmpo scored 30 points in a triple-double as the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks dominated the Golden State Warriors 118-99 on Thursday.

In a clash billed as a potential NBA Finals preview, the Bucks took an early stranglehold in Milwaukee on the way to a wire-to-wire win.

Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo added 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his third triple-double of the season and the 28th of his career.

Milwaukee, with coach Mike Budenholzer back on the bench after missing four games over COVID concerns, roared to a 77-38 halftime lead -- Antetokounmpo pouring in 23 points before the interval.

The halftime lead was two short of the club-record the Bucks set when they led 77-36 against Orlando in November on the way to a 123-92 victory. And it was the biggest halftime deficit for the Warriors since the franchise moved to California in the 1962-63 season.

Khris Middleton scored 23 points for Milwaukee. Bobby Portis added 20 -- draining a three-pointer at the halftime buzzer and giving a shoulder shake reminiscent of Warriors star Stephen Curry's trademark celebratory shimmy. With Curry limited to 12 points, Andrew Wiggins led the Warriors with 16 points.

Klay Thompson added 11, but the Warriors clearly missed Draymond Green, who remained sidelined due to

tightness in his left calf.

Even so, the Warriors battled in the second half, out-scoring the Bucks 34-20 in the third quarter. They cut the deficit to 18 points early in the quarter, but wouldn't get any closer.

Kerr insisted he wasn't worried as the Warriors slipped to a game and a half behind the Phoenix Suns atop the Western Conference with their fourth loss in their last five games.

It was a much different story in Memphis, where the Grizzlies pulled away late to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 116-108 and push their winning streak to 11 games.

Desmond Bane scored 21 points and Jaren Jackson Jr added 20 to lead the Grizzlies.

Memphis star Ja Morant chipped in 16 points with nine assists and eight rebounds as the Grizzlies avenged a 138-95 loss to the Timberwolves in November.

Anthony Edwards led Minnesota with 30 points and D'Angelo Russell scored 29 as the Timberwolves made Memphis work to extend their winning streak.

The final four minutes featured four lead changes, the Grizzlies taking the lead for good on two free throws by Brandon Clarke with 1:47 remaining.

A layup by Bane and a three-pointer by John Konchar helped seal it for Memphis, who trailed 60-53 at halftime but came out strong in the third quarter and led 90-84 going into the final period.

Inter Overcomes Juve in Extra Time to Claim 6th Supercoppa Title

ROME (AFP) - Alexis Sanchez became the hero for Inter Milan, as his last-gasp winner in the extra time helped the Nerazzurri come from behind to beat Juventus 2-1, registering its sixth Supercoppa in history.

The Supercoppa is a traditional clash between the previous season's Serie A and Coppa Italia champions. Juve is the winner of the last edition, while Inter's last victory in this competition came in 2010.

With Matthijs de Ligt and Juan Cuadrado being suspended, Juve also had to play without an injured Federico Chiesa, and Mattia Perin got the nod to stand between the sticks as Wojciech Szczesny failed



FC Inter's players celebrate with trophy after winning the Italian Super Cup final match between FC Inter and Juventus in Milan, Italy.

to get a green pass, while Inter was at relatively full strength. Inter had a more aggressive

start but it was the Bianconeri that broke the deadlock in the 25th minute when Alvaro Mo-

rata floated a cross from the byline and Weston McKennie steered his header into the net undisturbed.

The defending champion of Serie A got back on level terms 10 minutes later, as Lautaro Martinez turned up to convert the penalty after De Sciglio kicked down Edin Dzeko in the box.

The game was dragged into extra time after two sides played out a goalless second half despite some genuine chances.

In the extra time, Sanchez's header following Hakan Calhanoglu's corner went wide while Paulo Dybala blasted it over.

Egypt Wait for Salah Lift-Off After Poor AFCON Start



Mohamed Salah has not scored for Egypt since March of last year

CAIRO (AFP) - Egypt will expect more from star man Mohamed Salah against Guinea-Bissau as the record seven-time champions attempt to bounce back from an opening loss to Nigeria at the Africa Cup of Nations. The Liverpool forward cut an iso-

lated and frustrated figure as Egypt lost 1-0 to the Super Eagles in Garoua, suffering their first group stage defeat at the continental tournament since 2004.

It could be argued there is no better player in the world right now

than the 29-year-old forward, who has scored 54 times for Liverpool since the start of last season.

But Salah has struggled to hit those same heights of late for his country, and is without a goal for Egypt in his last six appearances having drawn a blank so far in 2022 World Cup qualifying.

He has downplayed Egypt's chances of lifting the trophy, suggesting the Pharaohs are not the title favorites, but expectations remain high for a team that bitterly disappointed on home soil in 2019.

Dreams of an eighth Cup of Nations crown quickly turned into a nightmare three years ago as Egypt were bundled out in the last 16 by South Africa in front of 80,000 disbelieving fans in Cairo -- and millions more around the country.

While the 24-team format affords

sides more leeway, Egypt now face the very realistic prospect of drawing reigning champions Algeria or Ivory Coast in the next round -- assuming they advance from Group D.

Carlos Queiroz, hired in September to replace Hossam El Badry, admitted Egypt need to raise their level.

The odds will be heavily in Egypt's favor against Saturday's opponents, Guinea-Bissau, who are making their third consecutive finals appearance but have yet to win a game at Africa's flagship competition.

For Egypt to make a deep run though, they will need Salah, one of three finalists for the FIFA best men's player award, to rediscover his magic on the international stage.

Qatar's al-Attiyah Wins Dakar for Fourth Time

JEDDAH (Reuters) - Qatar's Nasser al-Attiyah won the Dakar Rally for the fourth time in the car category on Friday while British motorcycle rider Sam Sunderland took his second title.

Toyota factory driver al-Attiyah had led from the Jan. 1 start in Saudi Arabia and finished in Jeddah 27 minutes and 46 seconds ahead of France's nine times world rally champion Sebastien Loeb.

Saudi driver Yazeed Al Rajhi was third with the Overdrive Toyota team, his first podium finish in the event.

Al-Attiyah won the Dakar when it was held in South America in 2011, 2015 and 2019 with Volkswagen, Mini and Toyota respectively.



He is now the joint-second most successful car driver in the history of the event, tied with Finland's four times winner Ari Vatanen and

behind France's eight times winner Stephane Peterhansel who also won six times on a motorcycle.

GasGas rider Sunderland, who

took his first title in South America in 2017, finished three minutes and 27 seconds ahead of Chilean rider Pablo Quintanilla on a Honda. Austrian Matthias Walkner was third for KTM.

The Dakar Rally began in 1978 as a race from Paris across the Sahara to the Senegalese capital but switched to South America in 2009 for security reasons.

One of motorsport's most dangerous and gruelling events, the rally moved to Saudi Arabia in 2020 and is now in its 44th edition.

Sunderland is the only Briton to have won the event in any category. Alexandre Giroud became the first Frenchman to win the quad-bike category.