

Iran Men's Ice Hockey Team Runner-Up At Russia Tournament



TEHRAN – The national Iranian men's ice hockey team has become the vice-champion of the Islamic Countries Ice Hockey Championship in Tatarstan in the Russian Federation.

The national men's ice hockey team of Iran, who lost their last match to the host team, Tatarstan, finished in second place at the Kazan tournament thanks to a goal difference compared to the teams of

Oman and Tatarstan team.

The UAE national ice hockey became the champion in the men's contest, which was held in three groups of four teams. The Iranian women's team also advanced to the final on Monday to face the host Tatarstan.

The women's contest was held in a group of five teams, where the Iranian national women's team defeated all their opponents to reach the final.

Iranian Handball Team Advances to Next Stage of World Men Championship



TEHRAN – Iranian handball players could advance to the next stage of the 2023 IHF World Men's Handball Championship.

For the first time in Iranian sporting history, Iran advanced to the next round of the tournament however Team Melli was defeated by Spain 35-22.

Earlier, Iranian players earned their first-ever win in the 2023 IHF World Men's

Handball Championship, beating Chile 25-24 on Thursday.

The 28th edition of the IHF Men's World Championship is being held in Poland and Sweden from Jan. 11 to 29.

Iran is drawn in Group A along with Spain, Chile, and Montenegro.

The winners will seal an automatic spot at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Raptors Beat Knicks 123-121 in OT

NEW YORK (AP) — Fred VanVleet scored 33 points, Scottie Barnes had 26 points and the Toronto Raptors recovered in overtime after RJ Barrett's tying slam with 0.6 seconds left in regulation to beat the New York Knicks 123-121 on Monday.

Pascal Siakam had 20 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for the Raptors, but he was on the bench after fouling out when Toronto had to wait out Jalen Brunson's missed



New York Knicks guard RJ Barrett (9) dunks in front of Toronto Raptors forward Scottie Barnes (4) at the end of the second half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Jan. 16, 2023, in New York.

3-pointer in the final second before emerging with the victory.

O.G. Anunoby hit two 3-pointers in overtime as Toronto built a six-point lead, but New York nearly erased that in the final minute.

Barrett, who is from Toronto, scored 32 points and Brunson had 26 for the Knicks, who had their three-game winning streak snapped. Julius Randle finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists.

Ronaldo-Messi Rivalry Set for New Chapter in Riyadh



FC Barcelona's Lionel Messi in action with Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo

LONDON (Reuters) - A new chapter in the celebrated rivalry between Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi will unfurl on Thursday when they meet in an exhibition match as the Portugal forward gears up for his first game in Saudi Arabia since joining Al Nassr.

After a glittering career in Europe that saw him win four Champions

League titles with Real Madrid and two Scudettos at Juventus, Ronaldo signed for Al Nassr, describing it as the "right moment" to share his experience in Asia.

The Saudi club is the latest stop in Ronaldo's career that began in 2002 at Sporting CP before the forward spent two spells at Manchester United, the last of which ended

on a bitter note as he exited following his acrimonious split with the club.

Ronaldo and Messi, who have dominated football's debate about the greatest of all time (GOAT) for the best part of 10 years, will face off on the pitch on Thursday for the first time since December 2020 when Juventus beat Barcelona 3-0.

Ronaldo will lead Riyadh ST XI, a team made up of players from Al Hilal and Al Nassr, against Messi's Paris St Germain in the exhibition contest where nothing is at stake, but fans are still excited by the prospect of watching the two stars clash.

The highly anticipated showdown, which will take place at the King Fahd Stadium in Riyadh, reportedly had more than two million online ticket requests.

The bidding for a VIP "Beyond Imagination" ticket to the match has already topped 10 million riyals (\$2.66 million) in an auction

that is set to end later on Tuesday.

The game has also captivated fans as it comes just over a month after Messi helped Argentina win the 2022 World Cup, the missing piece in his vast trophy collection.

Ronaldo also made headlines during the tournament, becoming the first player to score in five World Cups, but he ended up in tears after Portugal were knocked out in the quarter-finals by Morocco.

While Thursday's friendly will be Ronaldo's first in Saudi Arabia, the 37-year-old's first competitive appearance will come in the Saudi Pro League on Sunday when Al Nassr host Al Ettifaq.

Last month, he signed a two and a half year contract with Al Nassr, estimated by media to be worth more than 200 million euros (\$216.28 million), but has had to wait to play because of a two-match ban by England's FA for knocking a phone out of a fan's hand in April.

French Soccer President Targeted by Sexual Harassment Probe

PARIS (AFP) - The president of the French Football Federation, Noel Le Graet, has been placed under investigation for sexual harassment, prosecutors told AFP on Tuesday.

The probe was opened on Monday after football agent Sonia Souid made accusations against Le Graet in an affair that has shaken French football just weeks after France were beaten by Argentina in the World Cup final.

"He very clearly said to me in his apartment that if I wanted him to help me, I had to let him have his way with me," said Souid, who gave interviews to sports daily L'Equipe and radio station RMC.

Le Graet has been president of the FFF since 2011 but was forced to step down last week pending the outcome of an audit of the federation performed by

France's Sports Ministry.

The 81-year-old is still officially recognized as president by world governing body FIFA.

He had faced calls to resign, including from Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera, after what he admitted were "clumsy remarks" about Zinedine Zidane's potential interest in coaching the French national team.

Le Graet said in an interview with RMC that he "wouldn't even have taken his call" when asked whether Zidane, a World Cup winner as a player and an all-time France great, had rung him to express an interest in taking over as coach from Didier Deschamps.

Deschamps, who led France to World Cup glory in 2018 and oversaw their run to last month's final, recently signed a new contract to stay as coach until 2026.

Le Graet, whose mandate runs



Noël Le Graët, the longtime head of France's football federation, was suspended from the job earlier this month.

until 2024, has been replaced on an interim basis by Philippe Djallo, a vice-president of the organization.

Newspaper Le Monde first reported at the weekend that Le Graet had been reported to pros-

ecutors by officials carrying out the audit of the Paris-based body after a claim of a "sexist outrage" was made against him.

In a statement to AFP on Saturday, he said he was stunned by leaks to the media.

Djokovic Storms Into Second Round on Australian Open Return



MELBOURNE (AFP) – Novak Djokovic swept past Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena to launch his bid for a 10th Australian Open title Tuesday, with the Serb enjoying a rousing reception following his deportation a year ago.

The 35-year-old, who was banned from last year's tournament, showed few signs of the hamstring niggle he picked up in Adelaide this month as he raced to victory on Rod Laver Arena 6-3, 6-4, 6-0.

After not being able to play last year over his Covid vaccination stance, there were concerns over how he might be received by fans in Melbourne.

The city endured lengthy lockdowns during the height of the pandemic.

But, as in Adelaide, the fourth seed walked out to loud cheers and chants of "Nole", with vocal backing during the match from a stadium awash with Serbian flags.

"Thank you for giving me such a welcoming reception that I could only dream of," said Djokovic, who is chasing a record-equalling 22nd major title.

"I feel really happy that I'm back here in Australia and on the court where I have had the biggest success in my career.

He arrived at Melbourne Park in sizzling form after ending 2022 by winning another ATP Finals title, then followed that up by triumphing at the Adelaide International.

As if that wasn't daunting enough for 75th-ranked Carballes Baena, Djokovic came into the clash having won his last 21 Australian Open matches.

He opened with an ace, but didn't have it all his own way at first, needing to save three break points in the fifth game.

But he quickly settled and broke next game to love for a 4-2 lead and

closed out the set.

His hamstring appeared to trouble him briefly when he slid for a shot at 2-2 in the next set, but he pressed on and broke again for 4-3 when Carballes Baena netted a forehand.

Djokovic stepped up a level as the clock ticked passed midnight in Melbourne and he immediately broke in the third set, with the Spaniard out of answers as the former world number one surged to victory.

In Djokovic's absence last year, long-time rival Rafael Nadal won the title to claim a 21st Grand Slam which he stretched to 22 at the French Open.

Djokovic won Wimbledon to take his haul to 21 and he has made no secret about wanting more.

Extra motivation comes from attempting to become just the third player in history to win at least 10 titles at a single Grand Slam.

Heat, Rain Cause Havoc at Australian Open

Intense heat and torrential rain played havoc at the Australian Open on Tuesday, with hours of delays and a slew of matches called off.

With players sweltering in 36 Celsius (96.8 Fahrenheit) temperatures, the tournament's five-part heat stress scale hit five.

The scale measures four climate factors: radiant heat, air temperature in the shade, relative humidity and wind speed.

The lowest level reading is one and the highest five, at which point play is suspended and the roofs are closed on the three main stadiums -- Rod Laver Arena, Margaret Court Arena and John Cain Arena.

The heat led to a three-hour interruption in the afternoon of round one matches on outside courts.