

Zob Ahan Beat Al Naft to Reach WASL-West Semis



TEHRAN — Iran's Zob Ahan basketball team has pulled away late to beat Al Naft, 95-83 at the Azadi Basketball Hall in Tehran to reach the WASL-West Asia Semifinals.

Arsalan Kazemi led the way with 28 points, while Sajad Mashayekhi produced 22 points and 6 assists.

Zob Ahan will face Iran's Gorgan in the semis. The long-time Iranian foes will start their WASL rivalry next Thursday.

"We will play Gorgan, obviously these are two teams who know each other very well and played against each other in the Finals last year in Iran league and I think it's gonna be a great match," Kazemi said.

Sevilla Launch Late Fightback to Draw With Man United

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Manchester United conceded two late own goals to allow Sevilla to snatch a 2-2 draw in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final at Old Trafford.

Marcel Sabitzer's quickfire double in the first half put Erik ten Hag's team in control of the tie, but Sevilla, record six-times Europa League champions, pulled one back in the 84th minute when Jesus Navas's shot pinged off the feet of Tyrell Malacia and keeper David de Gea into the net.

United were reduced to 10 men when defender Lisandro Martinez was carried off injured and Youssef En-Nesyri's stoppage-time header glanced off Harry Maguire into the goal to give Sevilla a huge lift ahead of next week's second leg.

"I think we had the game in hand," Ten Hag told BT Sport. "We should have scored three or four. . . and then some unlucky moments with injuries. And then we conceded two own goals



Sevilla's Jesus Navas (left) challenges Manchester United's Anthony Martial during the Europa League first leg quarterfinal soccer match between Manchester United and Sevilla at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, on April 13, 2023.

and that's bad luck. We have to deal with it. Of course, we have to learn that we have to kill the game."

Sabitzer, who is on loan from Bayern Munich, netted his first European goal for United in the 14th minute, when he controlled a pinpoint pass from Bruno Fer-

nandes and shot past keeper Bono.

The Austrian doubled his tally seven minutes later, latching on to a fine pass from Anthony Martial and finishing well.

Sabitzer, however, said it was tough to find words after his team's late meltdown.

"A roller-coaster," Sabitzer said. "We had to finish the game off, it's a draw, was not what we wanted, have to go to Sevilla and get it down there."

"We had the chances, we were confidence in the game and I think we controlled the game, but unfortunately we gave easy goals away."

Martinez appeared to suffer a serious ankle injury and was carried off the pitch by two Sevilla players who are his Argentina team mates.

United, bidding for their second trophy of the season after winning the League Cup, thought they had scored seconds after kickoff, but Jadon Sancho's effort was disallowed for offside.

Sevilla, languishing in the bottom half of La Liga, were outplayed in the first half but they nearly got on the scoreboard seconds before the interval when De Gea stopped Tianguy Ninazou's close-range header and Raphael Varane cleared it off the line.

Report: Mehdi Taremi Linked With Al Hilal



TEHRAN — Portuguese media reports suggest that Al Hilal has set sight on signing Iran international forward Mehdi Taremi.

Taremi currently plays at Portuguese side Porto.

The 31-year-old striker has been linked with European teams over the past years but Porto has not

allowed its iconic player to leave the team.

Now, local media report that the Saudi Arabian giants are determined to hire Taremi.

Taremi joined Porto in 2020 from Rio Ave and has scored 50 goals in 93 matches for the Dragons.

Iran to Send 100 Athletes to FISU World University Games



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TEHRAN — Head of the National University Sports Federation of Iran Hadi Bashirian said that his country will send 100 sportspersons to the 2023 FISU World University Games.

The upcoming multi-sport event, sanctioned by the International University Sports Federation (FISU), is scheduled to be held

from July 28 to August 8 in Chengdu, Sichuan, China.

"We will compete in 11 events in the Games and send 100 athletes to the competition," Bashirian said.

"I think this edition of the Games will be the most spectacular edition because the Chinese officials want to make history," he added.

UEFA Receives Three Bids for Euro 2028 and 2032

GENEVA (AFP) - UEFA has announced it received three bids from Britain and Ireland, Turkey and Italy to host the 2028 and 2032 European Championships.

These includes a joint bid from Britain and Ireland, represented by the football associations of England, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland and

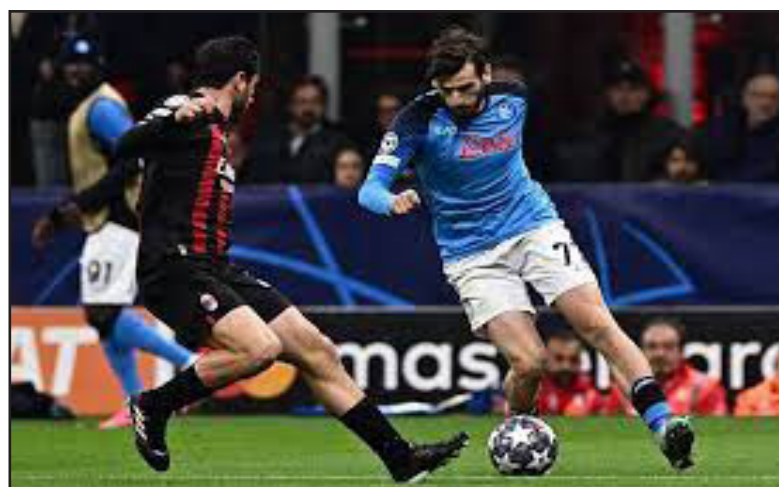
Wales to bid for EURO 2028, while Turkey is interested in either EURO 2028 or 2032, the UEFA said.

The Italian Football Federa-

tion submitted its bid dossier for EURO 2032.

The UEFA Executive Committee will decide the hosts in October.

As Napoli Prepare for Historic Title, Fans Feud With Owner



Napoli's Georgian forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (R) challenges AC Milan's Italian defender Davide Calabria during the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals first leg football match between AC Milan and SSC Napoli on April 12 at the San Siro stadium in Milan.

ROME (AFP) - Napoli fans are preparing for their biggest party in over three decades but a row between hardcore supporters and club owner Aurelio De Laurentiis threatens to take the shine off the colorful festivities already beginning in Naples.

Napoli host Verona on Saturday on the verge of their first Scudetto since the days of Diego Maradona but while the city is starting to be decked out in blue and white, the atmosphere at recent home matches has been positively toxic.

The 4-0 home thumping at the

hands of AC Milan this month was marred by fights breaking out in the stands between Napoli supporters as fans chanted "out, out, out" at hardcore "ultras" who decided to watch the match in near silence.

The ultras' protests are ostensibly about being prevented from bringing drums, flags and banners to the stadium to create an atmosphere worthy of a season in which Napoli should win Serie for the first time since 1990, with weeks to spare.

Coach Luciano Spalletti said in the aftermath of the 1-0 Champions

League loss to Milan on Wednesday that he would resign if those supporters continued "to hold the team hostage" during next week's second leg of their all-Italian quarter-final.

But this latest row is just another episode of an ideological feud with Rome-born film mogul De Laurentiis, who is distrusted despite taking control in 2004 when the club was bankrupt and bringing them up from the third tier to the brink of glory.

"Culturally De Laurentiis has always been a foreigner in Naples. He has never been seen in a good light, neither by the hardcore supporters nor by large chunks of the city in general," says Massimiliano Gallo, who runs popular Napoli website Il Napolista.

"In Naples there is a sort of fundamentalist religion in which the city is a god that needs to be worshipped... But he has thrown in the faces of Neapolitans, and above all the top strata of Neapolitan society, the fact that he has taken their business and made money with it.

"This Scudetto is totally different to the ones won with Maradona. It's more Milanese, a result of planning and balance sheet management... the club has given a lesson in management to both Milan and Turin."

De Laurentiis' cold business phi-

losophy, which goes against the ultras' philosophy, was highlighted by the cheapest seats for Tuesday's return leg with Milan being priced at 90 euros (\$100).

"De Laurentiis says he wants to bring families to matches but he doesn't offer any discounts either for them or young people," says Emilio Coppola, a Napoli fan and a lawyer who works on supporter-related issues.

"It seems to me that he simply wants to select who goes to matches on the basis of their financial status."

Coppola says that a mass fight between Napoli and Roma fans at a service station in January, which cost both sets of supporters a two-month ban for travel to away matches, caused the latest flare-up of "a climate of tension" dating back to at least 2019 when supporters suddenly started being fined for not sitting in their assigned seat.

"The owner's way of seeing football is quite simply in stark contrast to that of the people who watch matches on the terraces... we're the only customers who are never right," he says.

"He calls the club 'the family plaything'; you could say that about a hotel, or a restaurant. But Napoli is about the passion of the supporters.

Musetti Stuns Djokovic to Set Up All-Italian Clash With Sinner



Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Italy's Lorenzo Musetti (not in photograph) during their Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament round of 16 tennis match in Monte Carlo on April 13, 2023.

MONTE CARLO (Reuters) - Daniil Medvedev beat Alexander Zverev to book a spot in the quarterfinals, while world number one Novak Djokovic was stunned by Lorenzo Musetti on Thursday in the third round of Monte Carlo Masters.

Djokovic's quest for a record-extending 39th Masters trophy was prolonged on Thursday after falling to a 4-6 7-5 6-4 defeat at the hands of Musetti.

Djokovic's last meeting with the Italian on clay was a gruelling Roland Garros clash in 2021, in which he battled back from two sets down to win, but this time it was Musetti that claimed a comeback victory in windy conditions.

Both players struggled on their serve in a contest littered with 15

breaks of serve, but Djokovic appeared to have the match in hand as he comfortably took the first set.

However, Musetti refused to go down without a fight and the Italian stepped on the gas in the second set to level the topsy-turvy encounter.

Not even a lengthy halt in play due to rain could dampen Musetti's momentum, and the 21-year-old once again took advantage of a weak serving performance from Djokovic to break and take the win.

"I'm struggling not to cry. It was a really long match, not easy conditions. It was a bit windy, cold," Musetti said. "I'm really proud of myself. The rallies were long, it was a tough, physical battle. Beating Novak is something remarkable for me."