

Taekwondo Athlete Arian Salimi Books 2024 Paris Place



TEHRAN – Male taekwondo athlete Arian Salimi of Iran secured a quota for the 2024 Olympic Games on Saturday.

Salimi booked his place in the final match of the Asian Qualification Tournament in Tai'an, China.

He defeated Qatar's Wadhah Al-Ahmed 2-0 and Lebanese Ray Al-Rahi 2-0 in the men's +80kg weight category.

Iran's Mobina Nematzadeh had secured her place in the 2024 Olympic Games in the W-49kg on Friday.

Nahid Kiani in the -57kg category and Mehran Barkhordari in the -80kg had previously earned two quotas for the Games.

There were 16 quotas for the Paris 2024 Olympic taekwondo event on offer at the 2024 Asian Qualification Tournament in Tai'an, China.

Shiffrin Claims 97th World Cup Win

Saalbach (AFP) – Mikaela Shiffrin ended her campaign by claiming her 97th World Cup victory in the season-closing women's slalom at Saalbach on Saturday.

The U.S. ski great was placed second after the first run, trailing Anna Swenn-Larsson by 0.11sec.

But after Swenn-Larsson failed to nail her second run Shiffrin topped the podium by 0.54s from Norway's Mina Fuerst Holtmann, who was placed only eighth at the mid-way point.

Swenn-Larsson had to settle for third at 0.63s.

After landing her 60th World Cup slalom, Shiffrin, who

turned 29 this week, was all smiles as she collected her favorite discipline's crystal globe trophy.

Shiffrin arrived at the World Cup finals in Austria intent on ending a season marred by injury on a high note.

The Colorado-born skier had returned from six weeks on the sidelines to win the slalom in Are last weekend and, with it, the discipline's title for the eighth time.

She is out of the running for the overall title which looks destined to go to Lara Gut-Behrami, who sat out Saturday's slalom.

Gut-Behrami is also targeting the giant slalom, super-G and



Mikaela Shiffrin with her slalom globe after taking her World Cup tally to 97

downhill titles and if successful she will join Shiffrin, Lindsey Vonn and Tina Maze as the only women in history to secure four titles in a single season.

Shiffrin meanwhile was just happy to be doing what she does best.

"These days make me feel so invigorated, so alive. There's no pressure, it's just a privilege for me."

Still not fully recovered from her fall in Italy she is opting out of Sunday's giant slalom and next week's speed events.

Bologna Cement Top Four Spot With Last-Gasp Win Over Empoli



Bologna players celebrate after the goal of 0-1 of Giovanni Fabbian during the Serie A soccer match between Empoli and Bologna at Castellani Stadium Empoli, Italy, March 15, 2024. (PHOTO / AP)

ROME (Reuters) - BOLOGNA'S Giovanni Fabbian scored in added time to snatch a 1-0 win at lowly Empoli and consolidate their hold on fourth spot in Serie A on Friday as they battle for a Champions League place.

Bologna have 54 points, six ahead of AS Roma in fifth, while Atalanta and Napoli are also chasing European qualification with 47 and 44 points respectively. Empoli are 17th with 25 points.

Substitute Fabbian was in the right place to put home the rebound from goalkeeper Elia Caprile, who could not hold a long-range attempt four minutes into stoppage time.

Fabbian netted the decider after several wasted chances in a match played in heavy rain at Stadio Carlo Castellani.

Amir Sarkhosh Qualifies for World Snooker Tour



TEHRAN – Iran's Amir Sarkhosh came through the WPBSA Q Tour Global Play-Offs to earn a place on the World Snooker Tour for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 seasons.

The 2023-24 WPBSA Q Tour season saw the tour go global for the first time by incorporating series in the Middle East, Americas and Asia-Pacific region alongside the UK/Europe series which has been held since 2021-22.

Cueists from across the globe have been competing all year to earn a coveted spot in the Global Play-Off. The season's best

24 players came together in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina this week, split into three sections of eight.

Sarkhosh beat Iulian Boiko 10-8 in the final of his section and will turn pro for the first time, joining fellow Iranian cue-man Hussein Vafaei on the circuit next season.

"I am happy that snooker is growing in the Middle East and I think it will get better day by day. I know it will be difficult on the professional tour but I am really excited by it," said Sarkhosh, whose top break in the final was 125.

Pelicans Top Clippers 112-104 to Tighten Race for No. 4 Seed



Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard (2) shoots against New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Friday, March 15, 2024.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Zion Williamson snagged an inbound pass in the back court with just less than 4 seconds remaining in the third quarter, embarked on a sprinting end-to-end dribble and sank a driving floater just as the horn sounded.

The crowd roared wildly, and so did Williamson, who left little doubt about his intent to control the outcome of a potentially pivotal contest with the Los Angeles Clippers.

Williamson scored 34 points, and the New Orleans Pelicans beat Los Angeles 112-104 on Friday night, pulling within two games of the Clippers for the No. 4 seed in the Western Conference.

New Orleans won its season series with the Clippers, 3-1. The fourth and fifth seeds meet in the first round of the NBA playoffs, and the Pelicans would own the regular-season, head-to-head tiebreaker over the Clippers if it came to that in mid-April.

Williamson was sidelined by various injuries for most of his first four NBA seasons, including the stretch runs of the previous two campaigns, when New Orleans was making a push to secure a Western Conference play-in spot.

This is the most meaningful basketball Williamson has played, and it appears to be fueling him.

Green also was gratified by New Orleans' defensive play, exemplified by Herb Jones' block of Paul George's 3-point attempt, which Jones converted into a break-away

basket. Spending most of the game as New Orleans' primary ball-handler, Williamson initiated the Pelicans' offense and ultimately took over the game, scoring time after time on explosive moves to the hoop that were both powerful and shifty.

Trey Murphy III scored 14 points and Brandon Ingram 13 for New Orleans, which made five 3-pointers in the fourth quarter to keep the Clippers at bay.

The Pelicans also outscored the Clippers 58-36 in the paint, with Williamson being a big reason for that.

George scored 26 points and Kawhi Leonard had 23 for Los Angeles, which played without James Harden (left shoulder strain) for a second straight game. Harden has averaged 17.4 points this season.

Norman Powell scored 15 for the Clippers, the 51st time in his 65 games played this season that he's had at least 10 points coming off the bench. But he appeared to be hurt after diving for a loose ball in the fourth quarter, throwing his shoe in disgust as he limped toward the bench.

The Clippers were as close as 100-96 after Ivica Zubac's inside basket with 6:21 left. But the Pelicans did not allow the game to get any tighter. Williamson responded with a short hook shot, Ingram hit a 3 and Larry Nance Jr., who had 12 points, scored two clutch baskets inside before Williamson finished it off with a driving layup.

Novak Djokovic Withdraws From Miami Open

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will skip the Miami Open, saying less than a week after a surprise loss at Indian Wells that he needs to balance his "private and professional schedule."

Djokovic's announcement Saturday on his social media accounts follows his 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 defeat to unheralded Luca Nardi on Monday in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open.

"At this stage of my career, I'm balancing my private and professional schedule. I'm

sorry that I won't experience some of the best and most passionate fans in the world," Djokovic wrote.

Nardi, who is ranked No. 123, became the lowest-ranked player to beat Djokovic in a Grand Slam or ATP Masters 1000 level event, surpassing No. 122 Kevin Anderson in 2008 in Miami.

The 20-year-old Italian got into the field as a "lucky loser," which is a player who stumbled on the final hurdle in qualifying but made it into the main draw as a replacement for an injured player



Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, returns a shot Luca Nardi, of Italy, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament Monday, March 11, 2024, in Indian Wells, Calif. Nardi won 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

who pulled out before the first round.

The 36-year-old Djokovic is

a six-time champion in Miami. The hardcourt tournament begins next week.