

Iranian Judo Athletes Win Three Medals at IBSA Asian Championships



TEHRAN — Three Iranian judo athletes claimed medals in the 2023 edition of the IBSA Judo Asian Championships on Friday.

Meysam Banitaba defeated his Indian opponent in the final match of the 60kg to finish in the first place.

Vahid Jeddi also won a gold medal, beating his Japanese rival in the J2-73kg class.

Mahdi Borchlou also took a bronze in the J1-73kg class.

The competition has brought about 90 judokas (58 men and 27 women) from 11 Asian countries in Astana, Kazakhstan.

It serves as qualification for the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.

Barcelona Edge Closer to Title With 4-0 Win Over 10-Man Betis

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Andreas Christensen, Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha were on target as Barcelona thrashed 10-man Real Betis 4-0 on Saturday to tighten their grip on top spot and moved a step closer to their 27th LaLiga title.

With only six games remaining, Barca recovered from a disappointing midweek loss at Rayo Vallecano and moved to 79 points and extended their lead to 11 points over second-placed Real Madrid, while Betis remain sixth on 49 points.

Christensen opened the scoring for Barcelona in the 14th minute with a point-blank header following a cross from Raphinha.

Barca's job was made easier by Betis defender Edgar Gonzalez,

who came off the bench in the 12th minute to replace an injured Luiz Felipe but was sent off 21 minutes later after seeing two yellow cards for two bad tackles.

The locals made the most of their advantage before the break, scoring twice within three minutes thanks to strikes by Lewandowski and Raphinha.

LaLiga top scorer Lewandowski increased his haul to 19 for the season with a first touch shot from inside the box assisted by Jules Kounde in the 36th minute.

Raphinha had to wait a couple of minutes to celebrate scoring Barca's third as the assistant referee had initially ruled out his effort for offside before the decision was overturned following a VAR replay.



Barcelona's Andreas Christensen (center) celebrates with his teammates after scoring his side's opening goal during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Real Betis at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, April 29, 2023.

Russian Athletes Say IOC Participation Plan 'Excessive, Discriminatory'



MOSCOW (Reuters) - The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) recommendation to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to return to international competition as neutrals is "excessive and discriminatory", the Russian Olympic Committee's (ROC) athletes' commission said.

The IOC sanctioned Russia and its

ally Belarus after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022 but last month recommended that their athletes be allowed to return to international competition as neutrals.

The recommendations include that Russian and Belarusian athletes can compete with no flag or anthem, while athletes who support the war or are

contracted to military or national security agencies are excluded.

In March, ROC head Stanislav Pozdnyakov denounced the recommendations, a position backed by the athletes commission chaired by former Olympic 800 meters champion Yuriy Borzakovskiy.

"The proposed reintegration and admission criteria are excessive and discriminatory - by nationality and by passport, by discipline and sport, and by affiliation to certain entities developing sports for decades in most post-Soviet states," the commission said in a statement.

"In our opinion, a dangerous precedent has been set when no athlete in the world can be sure that his or her human and civil rights will be duly respected from now on, that decisions are taken based on the Law and the Olympic Charter - without exemp-

tions.

"Today we, athletes, are detained as hostages of political games that divide the international sports community and at the same time sow discord within the Olympic family - dictating the parameters of admission, defining who is eligible to perform and who is not."

Table tennis, pentathlon, fencing, judo and taekwondo are among the Olympic sports that have readmitted athletes from Russia and Belarus as neutrals.

The IOC is to decide separately on the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes at the 2024 Games at a later date, while Ukraine has threatened to boycott the Games if Russians are allowed to compete there.

Though the Russian athletes' commission believes the IOC's recommendations to be excessive, others have argued that they are too lenient.

Roma, Milan Share Spoils With Late Goals in Top-Four Battle



AC Milan's Portuguese forward Rafael Leao (right) fights for the ball with AS Roma's Turkish defender Zeki Celik during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and AC Milan at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, on April 29, 2023.

ROME (Rome) - AS Roma and AC Milan shared the points in a 1-1 draw at Stadio Olimpico on Saturday after a stoppage-time goal by visiting winger Alexis Saelemaekers cancelled out a Tammy Abraham strike three minutes earlier as the Serie A top-four race intensifies.

Milan remain fourth in the standings, level on 57 points with Roma in fifth, with both sides two points behind third-placed Juventus who travel to Bologna on Sunday.

Champions League semifinalists Milan, who sneaked back into the top four last weekend after two Rafael Leao goals earned a 2-0 home win over Lecce, have now failed to win in six out of their last eight league games.

Roma, who on Monday suffered a costly 3-1 loss at Atalanta, were without forward Paulo Dybala, who left the pitch in Bergamo with pain in his ankle.

Jose Mourinho's depleted side were also missing injured defenders Diego Llorente and Chris Smalling plus midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum,

who are all expected to return in mid-May. The season had previously ended for right-back Rick Karsdorp.

Roma's back luck, however, did not end there and Mourinho was forced to make an early change when defender Marash Kumbulla clashed inside the box with Milan forward Olivier Giroud.

Milan started cautiously in a game that was frequently interrupted by fouls bringing yellow cards but their attacks increased in number and speed as the first half wore on and Stefano Pioli's men pushed Roma further into their own half.

They had a decent chance just after the half-hour mark but forward Leao fired wide.

However, Roma knew their best bet was to steer the play away from their fragile back line and responded two minutes later with a close-range Lorenzo Pellegrini shot was unfortunately blocked by Abraham.

Milan defenders Davide Calabria and Fikayo Tomori had two more chances before halftime but both missed the target.

Medvedev Follows Alcaraz Into Third Round of Madrid Open

MADRID (Reuters) - After top seed Carlos Alcaraz powered back from a set down to beat Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori to qualify for the last 32 on Friday afternoon, second seed Daniil Medvedev was able to ease his way into the Madrid Open with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Italy's Andrea Vavassori in one hour and 22 minutes on Saturday morning.

14th seed Tommy Paul also made it into the third round after defeating Roman Safiullin 6-3, 7-6(3), while two of the lower-seeded players failed to make it through.

31st seed Jiri Lehecka was beaten convincingly 6-1, 6-1 in just 45

minutes by Alexander Shevchenko, while 32nd seed Ben Shelton lost a three-set marathon 4-6, 7-6(4), 7-5 against Jan-Lennard Struff.

In the women's tournament on Saturday morning, second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus needed almost two hours before she got past Colombia's Camila Osorio.

14th seed Ludmilla Samsonova defeated Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 6-0 in a surprisingly comfortable win in an hour and two minutes, while 24th seed Elise Mertens progressed with a 6-3, 6-4 triumph over Germany's Jule Niemeier.

Verstappen Fumes at Russell After Sprint Clash

BAKU (Reuters) - Max Verstappen swore angrily at Mercedes rival George Russell after a first lap clash in Saturday's Baku sprint race ripped a hole in the Formula One champion's Red Bull.

The Dutch driver, who still finished third in a race won by Mexican team mate Sergio Perez, refused to let the matter drop despite later taking back the place after a safety car deployment.

"I don't understand how he can keep the position when he's damaging my car," he said over the radio.

When the Dutchman regained the place Verstappen was congratulated pointedly by the team for a "lovely job, without contact as well".

Verstappen and Russell exchanged words after the race,



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands stops his car in the pit lane during a practice session at the Baku circuit in Baku, Azerbaijan, April 28, 2023.

television microphones picking up Verstappen hinting at future revenge and calling Russell a 'dick-head' as the Briton walked away.

Russell, who finished fourth for a

team playing catch-up after a disappointing start to a season so far dominated by Red Bull, defended himself separately and said he was there to fight.

Murray Scores 34, Nuggets Beat Suns 125-107

DENVER (AP) — Jamal Murray kept imploring the crowd to get louder and louder with each trip down the floor.

As if the Nuggets point guard even needed to. His play was already rocking the arena.

Murray scored 34 points, hitting six of Denver's 16 3-pointers, and the Nuggets sprinted past the Phoenix Suns 125-107 on Saturday night in Game 1 of their second-round series.

And maybe show a nation that doesn't always get to watch the Nuggets — you know, because they're usually on so late — what the players have known all season: They're talented and worthy of their top seed in the Western Conference. They don't mind if the Suns, as the



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, left, looks to pass the ball as Phoenix Suns forward Torrey Craig defends in the second half of Game 1 of an NBA second-round basketball series Saturday, April 29, 2023, in Denver.

fourth seed, are the trendy pick to beat them, either.

Reigning back-to-back NBA MVP Nikola Jokic had 24 points and 19 rebounds, while Aaron Gordon finished with

23 points. But this was the Murray Show, where he went 6 of 10 from 3-point land and frequently exhorted for more noise from the already raucous crowd.