

Soltani Wins Gold Medal in Asian Weightlifting Championships



TEHRAN – Iranian Weightlifter Hssein Soltani grabbed a gold medal in Asian Weightlifting Championships on Tuesday.

Soltani ranked 1st by lifting a total of 184 kg weight in the 81 kg category.

Chinese Taipei's Chuang Sheng-Min won the silver with 154-180-334 and the bronze medal went to South Korean lifter Park Hyeongo with 143-181-324.

The Asian Weightlifting Championships is underway in Jinju, Republic of Korea from May 5 to 13.

The continental championship is the second qualifying event for the Paris Olympic Games after the World Weightlifting Championships 2022.

Iran has sent 10 male and five female weightlifters to the 2023 Asian Weightlifting Championships.

Iran U-17 Football Team to Play Saudi Arabia



TEHRAN – Iran U-17 football team will play two friendly matches with Saudi Arabia in Dubai, the UAE.

The first match will be held on Wednesday and the two teams will lock horns once again on Saturday. Hussein Abdi's side previously

participated in the Belarus "Development Cup" in February.

Iran prepares for the 2023 AFC U-17 Asian Cup, where the team has been drawn in Group B along with South Korea, Afghanistan and Qatar.

Iran is holding a one-week training camp in Dubai.

Messi Set for Megabucks Saudi Move, Says Source

Paris (AFP) - Argentine superstar Lionel Messi will play in Saudi Arabia next season under a blockbuster deal, a source told AFP on Tuesday, potentially joining his arch-rival Cristiano Ronaldo as the kingdom lavishes its oil wealth on sport.

Messi will sign a "huge" deal with an as-yet-unnamed club, said the source, who is close to the negotiations that are taking place just months after the 35-year-old lifted the World Cup in Qatar.

"Messi is a done deal. He will play in Saudi Arabia next season," said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The contract is exceptional. It's huge. We are just finalizing some small details," added the source, who is not authorized to speak to media.

There was no confirmation from Messi's current club Paris Saint-Germain, which noted simply that he was under contract until June 30 when contacted by AFP.



Lionel Messi won the World Cup with Argentina last year.

A separate PSG source said: "If the club had wanted to renew his contract, it would have been done earlier."

Just five years after allowing its first non-Muslim tourists visit and letting women drive, Saudi Arabia is attempting to open up its conservative society and diversify its oil-reliant economy.

The world's biggest oil exporter has thrown hundreds of millions at sports deals including Ronaldo's signing, F1 in Jeddah and the divisive LIV Golf tour, drawing frequent claims it is "sportswashing" its human rights record. Messi was suspended by Qatari-

owned PSG last week for an unauthorized mid-season trip to Saudi, where he is a tourism ambassador.

His expected arrival follows in the footsteps of his long-time sparring partner Ronaldo, who joined Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr in a massive deal in January.

Ronaldo's agreement to June 2025 is said to total more than 400 million euros (\$439 million), making him the world's highest paid athlete according to Forbes.

Both deals -- along with others including LIV Golf and the 2021 purchase of Newcastle United football club -- are being bankrolled by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds, the source said.

Despite several reports linking Messi with Al Hilal, one of the top Saudi teams, club sources told AFP they had not been in direct contact with the Argentine's team.

Matthews Wins Stage 3 of Giro d'Italia, Evenepoel Extends Lead



Team Jayco AlUla's Australian rider Michael Matthews (center) celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the third stage of the Giro d'Italia 2023 cycling race, 216 km between Vasto and Melfi, on May 8, 2023.

ROME (AFP) - Australian Michael Matthews timed his final effort to perfection to win a rain-affected stage

three at the Giro d'Italia onday, following a 216-km ride from Vasto to Melfi.

Matthews and Mads Pedersen were neck-and-neck until the final corner, but the Australian, who was set up perfectly by his Jayco-AlUla team, moved in front on the home straight to emerge victorious and claim a first stage win at the Giro since 2015.

"We rode all day today. They were fully committed for me to win the stage," Matthews said.

"I don't have words at the moment. It's been such a roller coaster this year. Now already on stage three with a stage win? That's more than I could ever dream of."

Trek-Segafredo's Pedersen finished second, ahead of Kaden Groves (Alpecin-Deceuninck) and Vincenzo Albanese (Eolo-Kometa).

Corratec-Selle Italia riders Alex-

ander Konychev and Veljko Stojnic were the early pace-setters, leading the stage for the first half of the race, before being reeled in by the main group with 36 km to go.

Belgian Evenepoel extended his lead after taking three bonus seconds to tighten his grip on the leader's maglia rosa jersey, while Joao Almeida recovered from a fall in slippery conditions to move up to second.

Primoz Roglic, who was eclipsed by rival Evenepoel in the intermediate sprint, climbed to third.

"I went for the time bonus in the intermediate sprint because we were just there as we wanted to stay at front because the rain had made the road a bit dangerous," Evenepoel said.

Lakers Rally Past Warriors 104-101

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Although Lonnie Walker began the season as a starter for the Los Angeles Lakers, he got injured and slipped all the way out of their rotation after they transformed their roster at the trade deadline.

And when it arrived, the unsung pro with inextinguishable confidence outshot Stephen Curry in the fourth quarter of a playoff win that put his Lakers on the brink of an unlikely trip to the Western Conference finals.

Walker scored all of his 15 points in a phenomenal fourth quarter, and the Lakers rallied late to take a 3-1 second-round series lead with a 104-101 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Monday night.

LeBron James scored 27 points and Anthony Davis had 23 points and 15 rebounds for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who moved one



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, left, shoots as Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis defends during the first half in Game 4 of an NBA basketball Western Conference semifinal Monday, May 8, 2023, in Los Angeles.

win away from knocking off the champions with their eighth consecutive home victory since March.

Los Angeles overcame Curry's third career postseason triple-double down the stretch largely because of Walker, who has made

a seismic impact in returning to the Lakers' rotation in this series. He went 6 for 9 in the fourth quarter, starting with a 3-pointer on the opening possession of the period to cut Golden State's lead to four points.

After sitting out Game 1, Walker contributed nine points in Game 2 and 12 more in Game 3. His emergence in this series is a shocker to most, but not to Walker or his teammates.

Walker eventually hit the go-ahead jumper with 1:53 to play. Curry's layup with 1:05 left trimmed the Lakers' lead to one point, but Curry missed a long jumper and a 3-point attempt on Golden State's next possession before Walker made two free throws with 15 seconds left, and Los Angeles got one last defensive stop to seal it.

AFC: Iran Hold Record in AFC Asian Cup



TEHRAN – Iran national football team has played the most games in the Finals in the history of the AFC Asian Cup, the-afc.com reported.

Iran and Korea Republic will each be contesting their 15th AFC Asian Cup, two more than China PR, who are second on the list.

Iran have played the most games in Finals history with 68 and are also the only team to have lifted the trophy three times in a row (1968, 1972, 1976).

Elsewhere, Japan, the tournament's most successful side with four tri-

umphs, and 2007 champion Iraq are the eighth and ninth teams to reach 10 AFC Asian Cup participations.

In just three days' time, Asia's top 24 teams will learn their route to ultimate glory at the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023.

All eyes will be on Doha for the Final Draw ceremony as the stage is set for the Continent's flagship international tournament, which kicks off on 12 January, 2024.

Iran are placed in Pot 1 along with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Japan and Australia.

Sampdoria Relegated From Serie A After Losing at Udinese



Udinese's Adam Masina, third from right, scores his side's second goal during a Serie A soccer match between Udinese and Sampdoria, at the Friuli Stadium, Italy, Monday, May 8, 2023.

MILAN (AP) — Bottom club Sampdoria were relegated from Serie A following a 2-0 loss at Udinese.

Two first-half goals condemned Sampdoria, which was left 13 points from safety with four rounds remaining.

Spezia and Cremonese are the other teams in the relegation zone and they are three and six points, respectively, behind 17th-placed Hellas Verona.

Sampdoria have won just two matches since the start of the year and travelled to Udine on the back of two straight losses

without scoring.

Udinese took the lead in the ninth minute. Festy Ebosele ran almost the entire length of the field before sending the ball through to Roberto Pereyra, who lifted it above onrushing goalkeeper Nicola Ravaglia.

Adam Masina doubled Udinese's lead in the 34th when he headed a chipped pass from Sandi Lovric into the bottom left corner.

Samp almost got back into the match 12 minutes into the second half but Manolo Gabbiadini's effort came off the right post.