

Iran Rank 3rd in ISSF World Cup



TEHRAN – Iran’s team ranked third by grabbing 2 medals in the ISSF World Cup Baku 2023, Azerbaijan.

Iran’s Sajad Poorhosseini claimed a gold medal in the men’s 10-meter air pistol and Haniyeh Rostamiyan won a silver medal in 25m pistol women of the ISSF World Cup Baku 2023, Azerbaijan.

China and India stood in first and second places respectively.

Dozens of male and female sports shooters are taking part in rifle and pistol contests of the tournament.

The 2023 ISSF World Cup started in Baku on May 8 and wrapped up on May 15.

Dominant Barcelona Beat Espanyol to Clinch 27th LaLiga Title



Barcelona’s German goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen (center left) vies for the ball with Espanyol’s Uruguayan defender Leandro Cabrera during the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and FC Barcelona at the RCDE Stadium in Cornellà de Llobregat on May 14, 2023.

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Barcelona claimed their 27th LaLiga title and first for four years after two first-half goals from Robert Lewandowski spurred them to a comfortable 4-2 victory over city rivals Espanyol.

Barca moved to 85 points from 34 matches and extended their lead at the summit to an unassailable 14 points over second-placed Real Madrid.

There was little time for jubilation; however, as the visitors had to quickly rush off the pitch after fulltime as several Espanyol fans invaded the field as Barca started to celebrate their title.

They will have to wait until Saturday to lift the LaLiga trophy as they host fourth-placed Real Sociedad in front of their jubilant fans who will pack out their Camp Nou stadium.

It will no doubt be an emotional occasion for captain Sergio Busquets, who last week announced that he will be leaving Barca after 15 years at the end of the season.

It was Busquets’ ninth LaLiga title and 32nd overall with the club, with his trophy cabinet also including three Champions Leagues, seven Copa del Rey and three FIFA Club World Cups as well as his 2010 World Cup and 2012 European championship success with Spain.

Barca were the superior side against lowly Espanyol, who are second from bottom and fighting to avoid relegation, and opened the scoring early with a close-range strike by Lewandowski.

Alejandro Balde, who put it on a plate for Lewandowski’s opener, scored Barca’s second with a tap-in from a Pedri cross in the 20th minute.

Lewandowski extended Barca’s lead five minutes before the break with another close-range finish from a Raphinha cross.

Defender Jules Kounde headed in Barca’s fourth in the 53rd minute, before Javi Puado and Joselu scored consolation goals for Espanyol.

Barcelona have won 27 of their 34 games this season, with their title charge built largely on their outstanding defense, which has conceded a measly 13 goals, by far the best defensive record in Europe’s top five leagues.

At home, their defensive numbers are even more impressive with only two goals conceded, one from a penalty and the other an own goal.

They are the second highest scorers in the division, having bagged 64 goals, with LaLiga’s leading marksman this season Lewandowski netting 21, four more than Real’s Karim Benzema.

Djokovic Sees Off Norrie to Reach Italian Open Quarterfinals

ROME (AFP) - Novak Djokovic eased into the Italian Open quarterfinals on Tuesday after breezing past Cameron Norrie 6-3, 6-4, although there was tension with the Briton after the top seed was hit by a smash.

The Serb has reached the last eight in each of his previous 16 appearances in the Italian capital and he did again on Tuesday, getting past Norrie on centre court to set up a clash with either Alexei Popyrin or Holger Rune.

Djokovic is gunning for a seventh title on clay in Rome and his chances have been made a little bit easier by the shock elimination of Carlos Alcaraz on Monday.

Alcaraz, who won two consecutive tournaments at Bar-

celona and Madrid, will take world number one spot from Djokovic on May 22 but it is the 22-time Grand Slam champion who could go into Roland Garros with yet another title under his belt.

Djokovic won the first three games against Norrie and closed out the first set with little fuss, without needing to be at his best.

The 35-year-old then took the second set to 2-1 with a break, but in the next game Norrie broke back while angering Djokovic with a smash which hit him on the back of his left leg.

Norrie had the whole court to put the ball away as Djokovic had given up on the point and was walking back to the service line.



Novak Djokovic swept past Cameron Norrie to reach the quarter-finals in Rome

Norrie raised his hand to apologise but at the changeover after the Briton moved to 3-2 Djokovic gave him another long beady-eyed stare as he passed him.

And after Djokovic sealed vic-

tory with his second match point he gave Norrie a cursory handshake at the net, while avoiding eye contact and exchanging no words with his dispatched opponent.

Liverpool Hammer Leicester 3-0 to Add to Relegation Woes



Liverpool’s English midfielder Curtis Jones shoots and scores his team first goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Liverpool at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England on May 15, 2023.

LEICESTER (Reuters) - Two goals from Curtis Jones and a sublime finish from Trent Alexander-Arnold gave Liverpool a 3-0 win away to Leicester City in the Premier League, boosting

their Champions League hopes while deepening the Foxes’ relegation worries.

Liverpool are fifth in the table on 65 points after 36 games, one behind

fourth-placed Manchester United, who have a game in hand over their rivals. Leicester are 19th on 30 points, two behind Everton in 17th spot with two games to go.

Leicester welcomed central defender Jonny Evans back into the starting line-up for the first time since October, but the three-time Premier League winner with Manchester United couldn’t instill the defensive discipline his side needed.

After a sluggish opening, Jones broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute with a superb first-time finish from Mohamed Salah’s cross after Leicester’s high defensive line was caught out by a long ball over the top from Liverpool keeper Alisson.

The 22-year-old midfielder put the ball in the net again three minutes later and once more it was Salah who set him up, with Jones taking a touch on the turn before rifling home.

The home crowd did their best to get their team back in the game and Harvey Barnes went close seven minutes into the second half, but Alisson pulled off a tremendous save to keep the ball out.

Alexander-Arnold then snuffed out any hopes of a comeback with a brilliant third after a free kick was touched into his path by Salah in the 71st minute, and he applied a thunderous finish to quiet the home fans once and for all.

Salah should have added a fourth in the 79th minute when Cody Gakpo put him through, but the Egyptian surprisingly dragged his shot wide of the left-hand post with only the keeper to beat.

Liverpool bagged a seventh league victory in a row, but manager Jurgen Klopp is unconvinced his side can reel in either Manchester United or Newcastle above them.

Barca President Stresses No Plan to Bring Messi Back

MADRID (AFP) - FC Barcelona president Joan Laporta has said that the club has re-established good relationships with Lionel Messi, but it would not pay any price to bring him back to the Camp Nou Stadium.

Speaking on Catalan TV network, TV3 after Barca claimed this season’s La Liga title late on Sunday night, Laporta explained he had tried to build bridges with Messi in the wake of the Argentinian’s move to Paris Saint Germain after being unable to fit his wages into the club’s tight wage ceiling.

“I have spoken with Leo to somehow redirect the situation that occurred when I had to put the institution ahead of everything, including him, the best player in the world,” said Laporta in a Monday

morning TV show.

Messi will be out of contract with PSG at the end of the season.

“We have sent messages lately. The truth is that the conversation was affectionate and pleasant. We have known each other for many years. There is a relationship,” Laporta said.

“He (Messi) is the best player in the world, and any coach would like to have him and with all due respect to Saudi Arabia (cited as a possible destination for Messi), where they are doing a very good job, Barca is Barca. And Barcelona is his home.”

The club president also discussed Gavi, who is still on a B-team contract, and Ansu Fati, who has struggled for form after his long



FC Barcelona’s president Joan Laporta addresses a press conference at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on April 17, 2023.

injury. Laporta said he was “convinced” Gavi would remain at Bar-

celona, but he was less clear about Fati.

11 Footballers Arrested in Hong Kong Match-Fixing Probe

PARIS (AFP) -Hong Kong authorities have arrested 11 footballers from the same team over allegations of match-fixing in a domestic league, the city’s anti-graft body said Tuesday.

After a yearlong investigation, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on Monday detained 23 people in total, including a coach, over the alleged fixing of results in the First Division, Hong Kong football’s second tier.

The alleged offences include bribery manipulating match results and illegal gambling, ICAC principal investigator Kate Cheuk said at a press conference on Tuesday.

“This operation is the largest in recent years carried out by the ICAC against match-fixing,” she added.

ICAC said the match-fixing group was suspected of paying each player up to about HK\$10,000 (\$1,200) for each game, depending on their impact.

“It’s not about how well they played but how well they faked (their performance) or how

much they could help manipulate the results,” ICAC’s Cheuk said.

The suspected footballers would either play passively so their team would lose to a weaker rival, or they sought to achieve a certain score that was unpopular and at high odds, she added.

The group and some of the players then bet on these results in an illegally organized scheme for profits.

The arrested players and the coach belonged to the same club, which ICAC did not name.

Local media, however, cited sources as saying they were from Happy Valley, one of Hong Kong’s oldest football clubs.

The anti-graft body said they belong to a First Division team that had played 26 matches and won eight in the 2022-23 season.

There are currently three First Division teams with eight wins -- Happy Valley is one of them.

ICAC said it has yet to come up with the total amount of money involved as the probe is still ongoing.