

Persepolis Win Iran Pro League Title



Persepolis FC became the champions of Iran Professional League (IPL) again after registering a 4-0 win over Nassaji Mazandaran on Thursday.

TEHRAN – Tehran giants Persepolis won the title of the Iranian Professional League (IPL) for the eight times on Thursday.

The Tehran-based team defeated Nassaji Mazandaran 4-0 on Thursday night, the final matchday of the league, to win the trophy with 66 points.

Sepahan finished runner-up with 63 points after defeating fifteenth-place team Mes Kerman on Thursday.

Mes Kerman and Naft Masjed Soleyman were relegated from the IPL.

Iran's Gorgan Runners-Up at West Asia

TEHRAN – Al Riyadi basketball team of Lebanon won the inaugural edition of the WASL-West Asia following a 114-100 conquest of Iran's Gorgan in Game 2 of the Final at the Nohad Nawfal Sports Complex in Zouk Mikael.

Duop Reath led the way with 29 points and 6 rebounds, together with an assist, 2 steals, and a block as he proved why he's tagged as the club's 'missing piece.'

Gorgan, on the other hand, was led by the triple-double outing of Perry Petty with 29 points, 12 rebounds, and 12 assists in the crushing loss.

Behnam Yakhchali had 19 points and 9 rebounds. Antanas Udras made 17 points



and 7 boards, while Sajjad Pazrofteh added 11 markers as the quartet carried the fight on a night Mohammad Jamshidi got held to only 6 points.

Now, Al Riyadi and Gorgan, together with third-place Beirut Club, will all represent the West Asia League in the highly-awaited WASL Final 8 in June.

Medvedev Downs Hanfmann, to Meet Tsitsipas in Rome Semis

ROME (Reuters) - World number three Daniil Medvedev produced a dominant performance against German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann to reach his first Italian Open semi-final, cruising to a 6-2 6-2 victory on Thursday.

Medvedev, who has described himself as a "hard court specialist", had never won a match in Rome before this year's tournament but has produced some of his best tennis to reach the last four on clay for the first time since Monte Carlo in 2019.

Medvedev soaked up Hanfmann's powerful hitting and controlled the baseline exchanges, dominating with his big first serve to wrap up the



Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns to Germany's Yannick Hanfmann (not in photograph) during their quarterfinals match of the Men's ATP Rome Open tennis tournament at Foro Italico in Rome on May 18, 2023.

win in an hour and 20 minutes.

"He was struggling more than

me and I am happy with the win and being in the semis," Medvedev said of Hanfmann, who upset Monte Carlo champion Andrey Rublev and ninth seed Taylor Fritz to reach the last eight.

Medvedev will meet world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas who triumphed over Borna Coric with a commanding 6-3, 6-4 win later in the evening.

"He's been playing well and I'm playing [well] also," Tsitsipas said on court on the upcoming clash against Medvedev. "I feel good on court, regardless if it's a night session or a day session and I really hope to bring the best out of me against him."

Roma Reach Europa League Final After Goalless Draw at Leverkusen

LEVERKUSEN (Reuters) - AS Roma earned a 0-0 draw at Bayer Leverkusen in their Europa League semifinal return leg on Thursday to reach the showpiece match with a 1-0 aggregate win.

The Rome side have now reached back-to-back European finals under coach Jose Mourinho following last season's Europa Conference League title.

The visitors were on the backfoot for the entire game and had to survive intense pressure from the Germans, who missed a lot of chances and also hit the woodwork, as they advanced thanks to last week's 1-0 win in Italy.

They will play Sevilla in the final on May 31 in Budapest.

"This match is the result of our work, tactical wisdom, experience, knowing how to stay in matches and trying to hide our problems," said Mourinho.

"These guys deserve something special. My concern was always to reach the final, it will be very hard with the experience of Sevilla but we'll think about it later".

Yet it all started well for Leverkusen, looking to reach their first European final in 21 years.

Apart from a second minute chance for Roma's Lorenzo Pellegrini, the hosts had the upper hand in the first half with a dozen efforts on goal compared to their opponents' one.

Moussa Diaby rattled the crossbar with a powerful shot in the 12th minute and Kerem Demirbay's low drive in the 21st was saved by goalkeeper Rui Patricio.

The visitors tried to push up a bit higher in the second half to intercept Leverkusen's attacks earlier but the hosts kept finding ways to create chances.



Leverkusen's Sardar Azmoun (right) fails to score during the Europa League semifinal second leg soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Roma at the BayArena in Leverkusen, Germany, on May 18, 2023.

Demirbay forced another good save in the 67th from Patricio, who thought he was beaten by Sardar Azmoun minutes later only for the Iranian's shot to sail just wide.

Leverkusen, whose last major title dates back to 1993, had 23 efforts on goal but it was Mourinho's Roma that went through even if they had just the one effort on goal in the entire game.

Nuggets Past Lakers 108-103 for 2-0 Lead in West Finals

DENVER (AP) — After Nikola Jokic's monster game in the opener, his pick-and-roll partner Jamal Murray took the spotlight in the Western Conference finals Thursday night.

Murray scored 23 of his 37 points in the fourth quarter, propelling the Denver Nuggets to a 108-103 come-from-behind win over the Los Angeles Lakers for a 2-0 lead in the series.

Murray missed 12 of his 17 shots through three quarters but found his touch in the fourth, going 6 for 7, including four 3-pointers, and fueling a 15-1 run that gave Denver a 96-84 lead.

In all, Denver sank seven 3s in the fourth quarter after hitting seven all night.

Jokic added 23 points, 17 rebounds and a dozen assists a day after ESPN sideline reporter Lisa Salters handed the Nuggets the



Denver Nuggets forward Bruce Brown (11) shoots as Los Angeles Lakers guard Austin Reaves (15) defends during the second half of Game 2 of the NBA basketball Western Conference Finals series, Thursday, May 18, 2023, in Denver.

no-respect card by acknowledging that she'd never seen the two-time MVP play before Game 1, when he had 34 points, 21 boards

and 14 assists.

"For those that don't know him, he's got 13 playoff triple-doubles now," Malone sneered after

Game 2. "It's just incredible what he continues to do on a nightly basis on the biggest stage in the world."

As for Jokic, he brushed off the slights on him and his teammates, saying, "It's nothing new for us."

The Nuggets have never been this close to reaching the NBA Finals in their history. Game 3 is Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena, where James and the Lakers are 8-0 in the playoffs.

Malone said he reminded Murray heading into the fourth quarter not to fret over his shooting woes but to focus on contributing in other ways. He heeded that advice, grabbing three big boards on defense and stealing the ball twice besides hitting 4-of-5 from deep and 7-of-8 from the stripe.

Malone knew that when Murray finally found the net, many more buckets would follow.

Under-20 World Cup Kicks Off in Argentina for Future Soccer Stars

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — Argentina will play on the opening day of the Under-20 World Cup on Saturday just over a month since it replaced Indonesia as tournament host and participant.

After such a dramatic race to the start line, 24 competing teams and soccer's international governing body can breathe a sigh of relief.

Four cities in Argentina will feature some of the sport's best young prospects while the South American nation is still celebrating Lionel Messi and his national team's 2022 World Cup triumph in Qatar.

Protests in Muslim-majority Indonesia against hosting the Israel team forced FIFA into a very late switch of venues. Indonesia does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

Defending champion and war-torn Ukraine will not take part, which makes continental champions England, Brazil and Senegal favorites to lift the title. Argentina, the record six-time champion, failed to qualify initially but FIFA decided it should take the guaranteed spot as tournament host.

Coached by Argentina great Javier Mascherano, the hosts are aiming to emulate the team of 2001 and clinch the title on home soil. Mascherano held the Argentine record for most international caps until it was broken by Messi, who won the 2005 under-20 World Cup at the start of illustrious career.

Clubs needed to authorize their contracted players so they could selected for the Under-20 World Cup, and many talented footballers called by their coaches will not take part in the tournament because they were not allowed.

Champions in 2017, England will bring players who won the Under-19 European title in 2022, including Chelsea midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka. Its main rival for the top of Group E will be Uruguay, runners-up in the South American championship earlier this year.



FILE - Argentina's Lionel Messi scores from a penalty during the final match of the World Championships U20, soccer match Argentina versus Nigeria at the Galgenwaard stadium in Utrecht, central Netherlands, Saturday, July 2, 2005.

Five-time winner Brazil will not be able to field two of its star teenage strikers; Athletico Paranaense's Vitor Roque and 16-year-old Endrick, who has already signed a deal with Real Madrid. Ramon Menezes' Brazil team will have Italy and Nigeria as Group D rivals.

Argentina will kick off in Group A against Asian champion Uzbekistan in Santiago del Estero. The hosts will have to do without striker Alejandro Garnacho of Manchester United or Real Madrid's Nicolás Paz.

Senegal, which had a perfect qualification campaign in Africa, will be in Group C with Colombia and Japan. Winger Samba Diallo is regarded as one of the players to watch in the tournament. That is also the case of 16-year-old Ecuadorian striker Kendry Paez, who plays for Independiente del Valle and is expected to join Chelsea in 2025.

The top two teams of each of the six groups and the four best third-place finishers will advance to the round-of-16.

The U.S. will find tough rivals in Group B, starting with Ecuador on Saturday and then Slovakia on May 26.

European teams have won the latest four editions of the Under-20 World Cup, which is being staged for the 23rd time.