

Iranian Female Athlete Wins Gold at Asian Para Canoe Championships



TEHRAN - Female Iranian sailor Shahla Behrouzirad has won the gold medal at the 2023 Asian Para Canoe Championships in Uzbekistan.

Behrouzirad, the 38-year-old athlete from Iran's western province of Kermanshah, won the gold by beating her rivals from Kazakhstan, India and Uzbekistan, according to a Thursday statement by MUhammad Seddiq Heshmatian who leads the provincial branch of Iran's Rowing & Sailing Federa-

tion.

She finished first in KL3 500 meters within 2:22:458, Heshmatian added

The 2023 Asian Para Canoe Championships kicked off in the city of Samarqand on April 22 and will run until May 1.

The team representing Iran in the tournament is made up of 18 sailors and 5 coaches, according to Heshmatian, who said that the Iranian participants have so far won seven golds at the competition.

Iran Edge Nepal at AFC U-17 Qualifiers



TEHRAN - Iran edged past Nepal 1-0 in the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers Round 1.

Arisa Koohgard was on target for Iran in the 81st minute.

Iran will next take on Jordan in Group H on Sunday.

The competition will take place at the Prince Mohammed Stadium in Zarqa, Jordan.

The 2024 AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup qualification will determine the participating teams in the 2024 AFC U-17 Women's

Asian Cup final tournament.

The group winner will qualify for Round 2 of the Qualifiers consisting of eight teams, which will take place in September 2023.

The top four teams from Round 2 will qualify for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Indonesia 2024.

Japan, DPR Korea and China PR have already qualified as the top three teams from the AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2019.

Napoli on Verge of First Serie A Title in 33 Years

ROME (Reuters) - Runaway Serie A leaders Napoli could seal their third Scudetto in record fashion this weekend if they beat lowly visitors Salernitana and second-placed Lazio drop points at Inter Milan.

Victory on Saturday would move Luciano Spalletti's side to 81 points and they will become the first team to win the title with six matches remaining unless Lazio earn their first win away to Inter in more than four years on Sunday.

Spalletti urged his Napoli players not to get ahead of themselves despite being tantalizingly close to ending the city's 33-year wait for the Serie A title since Diego Maradona led the team to two championships in 1987 and 1990.

"I don't like to celebrate in



Napoli's Italian forward Giacomo Raspadori (right) shoots to miss a goal opportunity during the Italian Serie A football match between SSC Napoli and AC Milan on April 2, 2023 at the Diego-Maradona stadium in Naples.

advance," he said. "If we all do it together there will be twice as much joy."

It would be unthinkable for Na-

poli to blow their 17-point lead at this stage but Spalletti's caution is understandable given a tough April in which his team managed

two wins in six games in all competitions.

With no other silverware to play for after Napoli were knocked out of the Champions League by AC Milan in the quarter-finals this month, Spalletti can focus on landing the domestic crown, though he will be without injured defender Mario Rui.

Salernitana have improved dramatically since Paulo Sousa took over from Davide Nicola in mid-February and have pulled well clear of the relegation scrap. They are up to 14th in the table after an eight-game unbeaten run.

Simone Inzaghi's Inter have slipped to sixth place after Juventus won an appeal against a 15-point deduction that sent the Turin club back up to third in the standings.

Verstappen Tops Fiery Baku Practice



BAKU (AFP) - World champion Max Verstappen led the one and only practice session for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix as Formula One returned with a bang on Friday.

A one-month break since racing in

Melbourne had given teams the time back at their factories to try and come up with ways to reduce Red Bull's early supremacy.

Wins for Verstappen in Bahrain and Australia with his teammate Sergio

Perez scoring in Saudi Arabia has left the grid playing catch-up on the streets of the Azerbaijani capital.

Complicating matters is the new-look race weekend with Friday morning's lone practice session followed by qualifying for Sunday's race.

Saturday is now a standalone day devoted to the sprint, with a shortened qualifying version dubbed 'the Sprint shoot-out' now shaping the grid for the 100-kilometre (62-mile) dash.

This is the first of six sprints this season, double the number held in 2021 and 2022.

That gave the practice session on the notoriously hard to navigate streets of Baku added jeopardy, proving encouraging for some like Red Bull but disastrous for others, notably Alpine.

Perez had led early before Fernando Alonso flying this season in the reju-

venated Aston Martin as Lewis Hamilton came in with a brake issue, with George Russell following his Mercedes teammate back to the garage.

Yuki Tsunoda was the first to feel Baku's infamous bite with a spin in the first quarter of an hour, his AlphaTauri's rear right tyre ripped to pieces.

Then disaster struck Alpine, flames flickering from the back of Pierre Gasly's car.

The Frenchman tried to nurse his stricken car back to the pits but with the fire quickly becoming a bonfire he wisely hopped out, prompting the first red flag of the weekend and plenty of work for the Alpine mechanics to get his car fit for qualifying in a few hours time.

Kevin Magnussen's Haas had also come to a halt, the red flag eating into precious practice time.

Celtics Beat Hawks 128-120 for 4-2 Series Win

ATLANTA (AP) — After letting the series go longer than it should have, Al Horford and the Boston Celtics were eager to finish off the Atlanta Hawks.

Horford made sure his former team didn't force a Game 7.

The 36-year-old Horford hit a huge 3-pointer in a late run that carried the Celtics past the Hawks 128-120 Thursday night for a 4-2 triumph in the opening-round playoff series.

After squandering a 13-point lead in the fourth quarter of Game 5, which cost them a chance to end the series in Boston, the Celtics were determined not to wilt again.

Down by three, Boston ripped off an 11-0 run that included three straight 3-pointers, with Horford's big shot sandwiched around 3s from Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown.

Tatum capped the spurt with a dunk off a Horford miss, giving the



Boston Celtics center Al Horford (42) scores against Atlanta Hawks' Bogdan Bogdanovic (13) and Atlanta Hawks' Dejounte Murray (5) during the first half of Game 6 of a first-round NBA basketball playoff series, Thursday, April 27, 2023, in Atlanta.

Celtics a 121-113 lead with 2:07 remaining.

Given how close it had been all night, an eight-point lead seemed like 80 in a game that featured 22 lead changes and 15 ties.

The second-seeded Celtics advanced to face the third-seeded Philadelphia 76ers, who've been resting since completing their four-game sweep of Brooklyn last Saturday.

Record-Holder Shiffrin Looks to Break New Ground in Downhill

NEW YORK (Reuters) - American slalom queen Mikaela Shiffrin is ready to explore her abilities in downhill skiing after becoming the most successful competitor at the Alpine World Cup, the twice Olympic gold medallist told Reuters.

Shiffrin surpassed Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark's record with an 87th World Cup win last month and then extended her haul to 88 titles as she etched her name in the pantheon of sporting greats.

A slalom specialist by trade, having won 53 of her World Cup golds in the event compared to just three in the downhill - the 28-year-old wants to broaden her skillset.

The seven-times World gold medallist was named among Time magazine's 100 most influ-



ential figures this year, with the

ski community pinning its hopes on her to elevate the sport in the United States, which trails behind European powerhouses in terms of both fans and participation.

Shiffrin recently returned from a training camp in Norway, where she spent time working on speed in both downhill and super-

G with new head coach Karin Harjo, the former Alpine Canada women's national coach.

USA's Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates on the podium after winning the Women's Giant Slalom as part of the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Kronplatz (Plan de Corones), Dolomites Mountains, on Jan 25, 2023.