

# Iran to Play Uzbekistan in CAFA Nations Cup Final

TEHRAN — Iran's national football team will play Uzbekistan in the final match of the 2023 CAFA Nations Cup.

The match is scheduled for Tuesday at the Milliy Stadium in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. On Friday, Iran defeated Kyrgyzstan 5-1 thanks to a hat-trick from Mehdi Taremi and Sardar Azmoun's brace. Mirlan Murzayev netted a



consolation for Kyrgyzstan.

Iran will meet Uzbekistan, who confirmed the top spot in Group A, while Kyrgyzstan will vie for the group's second-placed team in the bronze medal match.

Team Melli, headed by Amir Ghalenoei, has participated in the first edition of CAFA Nations Cup as part of preparation for the 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

## Verstappen on Pole After Wild Canadian GP Qualifying



*Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen, of the Netherlands, drives during qualifying for the Formula One Canadian Grand Prix auto race, June 17, 2023, in Montreal.*

MONTREAL (Reuters) - Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen took pole position on Saturday in a wet qualifying for a Canadian Grand Prix that could see him secure Red Bull's milestone 100th win.

It was an unpredictable and wild afternoon of racing at a rain-swept Circuit Gilles Villeneuve as teams rolled the dice switching from wet tyres to slicks as the track conditions changed.

The gamble, and a bit of luck, paid off initially for Germany's Nico Hulkenberg, who placed his Haas alongside the Dutchman on the front row but was then handed a three-place penalty for breaching red flag rules.

That elevated Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso to the front row instead, with other post-session penalties causing a further shake-up.

Lewis Hamilton, a seven-times winner in Canada, will line up third with his Mercedes team mate George Russell

fourth and Hulkenberg fifth.

The pole, in a time of one minute and 25.858 seconds, was the 25th of Verstappen's career.

"It was super slippery out there in some places, but we just made all the right calls, the right time on the track to do the lap times, and I'm very happy to be on pole here," Verstappen said. "I like driving in the wet."

"I come from Holland, so we are used to driving in the wet."

Verstappen started from pole last year and held off Ferrari's hard-charging Carlos Sainz for his 26th career win.

Fast forward one year and Verstappen with another victory on Sunday can bring his career total to 41, matching Brazilian Ayrton Senna's haul.

Red Bull have dominated this season winning all seven races, Verstappen taking five to open up a 53 point gap at the top of the driver standings ahead of team mate Sergio Perez, who has won the other two.

## Murray Wins Nottingham Open for Back-to-Back Titles

LONDON (BBC) - Andy Murray won the Nottingham Open for back-to-back grass-court titles to maintain a perfect Wimbledon build-up.

A week after victory in the Surbiton Trophy, the 36-year-old hoisted more silverware with a 6-4 6-4 victory over France's Arthur Cazaux.

He was then left stunned when his four children and wife delivered an even more perfect Father's Day present - surprising him by being in the crowd.

Katie Boulter faces fellow Briton Jodie Burrage in the women's final on Sunday.

Hopes of more British success at the event in the women's doubles were extinguished though, with Heather Watson and Harriet Dart losing 7-6

(8-6) 5-7 10-8 to Norway's

Ulrikke Eikeri and Estonia's Ingrid Neel in the final.

Before last week, it had been seven years since Murray had won a singles title on grass, but the Scot now has claimed two in seven days.

And he has achieved this one without dropping a set.

The former world number one got off to a fast start against Cazaux in a final that had been brought forward because of bad weather forecast for later in the day, going a double break ahead against the 20-year-old world number 181.

The top seed was broken to love by the qualifier while serving for the first set, although then served it out to love at the second time of asking, sealing it with an ace after a series of winners that wrongfooted his

opponent.

The Frenchman made it more of a contest in the second set but Murray made the key breakthrough at 4-4 when Cazaux netted twice in succession to hand the Briton a break that left him serving for the match.

A stunning backhand down the line put him two points from victory before Cazaux netted a service return and Murray wrapped up victory on his first match point when the Frenchman hit long.

Murray is enjoying good form at just the right time, with Wimbledon - where he is a two-time champion - beginning on 3 July.

But these Nottingham and Surbiton titles have come at Challenger events - the second tier of men's tennis - and

he will face a notable step up in the quality of the field at his next event at Queen's, which starts on Monday.

There, he will be unseeded and has been handed a tricky first-round draw against Australian seventh seed and world number 18 Alex de Minaur.

But he can take a lot of confidence into the London event with a winning streak of 10 matches on grass, with just one set dropped, and looking physically fit on the court - the importance of which, four years after hip surgery nearly ended his career, cannot be overstated.

He will return to the world's top 40 on Monday and will seek more wins at Queen's to amass enough ranking points to be one of 32 seeds at Wimbledon.

## Martin Holds Off Bagnaia to Win German MotoGP



*Jorge Martin (R) and Francesco Bagnaia battle it out in the German motorcycle Grand Prix at the Sachsenring circuit*

BERLIN (AFP) - Jorge Martin edged world champion Francesco Bagnaia after a cut-and-thrust battle over the last 10 laps to win Sunday's German MotoGP, to trim the Italian's lead in the standings.

It was Martin's second Grand Prix

victory. His last was in the Styria Grand Prix in Austria in 2021.

"Emotional moment after almost two years fighting for it, finally it arrived," said. Martin in the winner's enclosure. "It was a tough, tough race. Peco (Bagnaia) was pushing

so hard."

After beating Bagnaia in Saturday's sprint race, Martin, a Spaniard who rides for the Pramac Ducati team, this time resisted late counter-attacks to win. Frenchman Johann Zarco, on another Pramac, completed the podium.

On Saturday, Martin, starting from the second row of the grid, overtook pole-sitter Bagnaia, on a factory Ducati, on the fourth lap. On Sunday, he made his move even earlier and took first on the third lap.

Bagnaia gave chase and overtook with 10 laps to go but Martin hit back and regained the lead.

Bagnaia pressed hard and the bikes touched on the second-last lap, but both riders remained upright. Martin stayed ahead to close out the win.

The Spaniard had built a large lead by the middle of the race before Bagnaia started clawing back his advantage.

"I had some issues at the middle of the race with the rear tyre so I didn't strain too much."

He responded aggressively when Bagnaia grabbed back the lead.

"To be in front was my target so when he passed me I tried to keep the front," said Martin.

"The last two laps I was just trying to push the maximum."

Bagnaia said he had been out-fought in the final laps.

"I was gaining and gaining but wasn't enough. I tried in second-last lap but I touch him and then to recover was a bit on the limit and he was too fast."

Martin picked up a maximum 37 points by winning both the weekend's races and with 144 overall, Martin, has cut Bagnaia's championship lead to 16.

"Happy with the second position," Bagnaia said. "I gave my maximum."

## Vinicius, Brazil Teammates Wear Black Shirts in Stand Against Racism

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Brazil sent a message against racism by swapping its bright yellow shirts for an all-black look during a friendly against Guinea in Barcelona.

Brazil said this was the first time its outfield players have worn black shirts. They changed back to yellow for the second half.

Forward Vinicius Junior, appearing for Brazil, has been racially abused in Spain this season while playing for his Real Madrid club at away games.

Another alleged racist incident occurred on Saturday before the friendly. The abuse reportedly happened to a friend and adviser of Vinicius, Felipe Silveira, at the stadium, the

Brazilian Football Confederation said.

"The fight against racism, a crime that needs to stop around the world, is also why we are here," CBF president Ednaldo Rodrigues said in a statement. "That's also why our national team played the first half of the match in black. And today, once again, another criminal was publicly exposed."

At Espanyol's stadium, Brazil and Guinea posed in front of a banner that read "With racism, there is no game" in Portuguese. Vinicius and his teammates also took a knee.

Vinicius added a goal from the penalty spot to round off a 4-1 win for the five-time world champions.



*Brazil's Vinicius Junior kneels before an international friendly soccer match between Brazil and Guinea at the RCDE Stadium in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, June 17, 2023.*

On Thursday, Vinicius agreed to join a revived FIFA task force to tackle racism in soccer.

Brazil plays Senegal in Lisbon on Tuesday and will continue its anti-racism campaign.

## UEFA President Dismisses Idea of Threat to European Soccer From Big-Spending Saudis



*Saudi soccer team Al Ittihad player Karim Benzema holds the Ballon d'Or 2022 trophy during his presentation ceremony at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Thursday, June 8, 2023.*

GENEVA (AP) — European soccer should not be afraid of a player exodus to Saudi Arabian clubs, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said Sunday, suggesting the country was making a mistake investing in stars at the end of their careers.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema have taken hundreds of millions of dollars to join Saudi Arabian clubs this year and similar offers were made to Lionel Messi and Luka Modrić. They have combined to win every Ballon d'Or awarded since 2008 and all are aged at least 35.

More players are expected to follow after four top Saudi Arabian clubs were effectively nationalized this month when taken into majority ownership by the Public Investment Fund sovereign wealth operation chaired by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Čeferin was asked by Nether-

lands broadcaster NOS if he was scared of a player exodus, and answered emphatically: "No, no, no."

"I think that it's mainly a mistake for Saudi Arabian football," the UEFA president said in an interview broadcast Sunday.

Didier Drogba was the star recruit to the Chinese league in 2012 as clubs there bought Europe-based forwards like Nicolas Anelka and Frédéric Kanouté. The Chinese league and men's national team have made little progress internationally in the years since.

The first wave of superstars targeted by Saudi Arabia all won multiple Champions League titles in Europe. Messi won his first World Cup title with Argentina last year and is joining Inter Miami in Major League Soccer while Modrić seems set to stay at Real Madrid for one more season.