

Reza Alipour Cruises Into Semifinal at World Climbing Cup



TEHRAN — Iranian speed rock climber Reza Alipour has advanced to the semifinal at the 2024 World Climbing Cup underway in Wujiang, China.

In the preliminary stage of the men's speed section, Alipour se-

cured the ninth position and progressed to the semi-final.

Meanwhile, Mahya Darabian, another Iranian speed climber, stood in seventeenth place and was eliminated from the tournament.

Teenager Sam Watson broke the

speed climbing world record twice in under an hour at a World Cup competition in China on Friday, signaling his status as one of the favorites for gold at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Watson, 18, from the United

States broke the previous world record of 4.90 seconds by Indonesia's Veddriq Leonardo when he scaled the 15-meter wall in 4.85 seconds in his first run.

He followed that up with 4.79 seconds in his second attempt to lower his own best mark further.

Watson is ranked number eight in the world and will make his debut at the Paris Olympics, having already qualified last October.

Climbing made its debut at the Tokyo Olympics. There will be two events for male and female competitors in Paris, a speed and combined bouldering and lead competition.

A total of 136 sport climbing athletes from 33 countries and regions are competing in the Keqiao event at the Yangshan Climbing Center, the same venue that hosted the climbing event during the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou in 2023.

The International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) World Cup 2024 is underway in Wujiang, China from April 11 to 14, 2024.

President Raisi Congratulates Wrestling Team on Championship



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi

TEHRAN — Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi offered congratulations on the championship of Iran's national freestyle wrestling team in the 2024 Asian Championship.

Hailing the efforts of the Iranian wrestlers and their coaches, Raisi wished increasing success for the country's athletes.

Iranian freestylers Rahman Amouzad, Amir Muhammad Yazdani, and Muhammad Nokhodi claimed three gold medals in the 2024 Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

At 65kg, Amouzad repeated his

victory from last year's final over Tulga Tumor Ochir from Mongolia, while also avenging a loss to the Mongolian for the gold at the Asian Games last October.

Yazdani, a two-time world silver medalist, followed by rallying to a wild 13-9 victory in the 70kg final over world U-23 silver medalist Yoshinosuke Aoyagi from Japan, who added the silver to the bronze he won a year ago.

Nokhodi, winner of the Zagreb Open in January, defeated Mongolia's Byambadorj Enkhbayar 12-2 in the final match of the 79kg.

Sinner, Djokovic Reach Monte Carlo Semis



Italy's Jannik Sinner serves to Denmark's Holger Rune during their Monte Carlo ATP Masters Series Tournament quarter final tennis match on the Rainier III court at the Monte Carlo Country Club in Monaco on April 12, 2024.

MONTE CARLO (Reuters) — Italy's world number two Jannik Sinner beat Denmark's Holger Rune 6-4 6-7(6) 6-3 in the quarter-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters on Friday after his Danish opponent saved two match points.

Top seed Novak Djokovic also advanced to the semis after a hard-fought 7-5 6-4 win over Australian 11th seed Alex de Minaur.

This is the 36-year-old Serb's first semi-final since 2015, making him the oldest semi-finalist in the tournament's history. Djokovic also surpassed Rafa Nadal to make a record 77 Masters 1000 semifinal appearances.

"It was tough for both of us. He's one of the quickest players on tour. He gets a lot of balls back that 99 percent of players don't," Djokovic said. "He did surprise me in several passing shots.

Djokovic will next face Norwegian eighth seed Casper Ruud, who beat Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-3 4-6 6-1.

Rune beat Sinner in the semifinals last year but this time it was the second seed who prevailed as he reached a fifth semi-final in as many tournaments this year.

Rune had played two matches on Thursday, first finishing his rain-affected clash with Sumit Nagal before a 3-1/2 hour thriller with Grigor Dimitrov where he saved two match points, with both games

going the distance.

He looked far from fatigued as he faced the Australian Open champion in bright sunshine but the 20-year-old also took on the crowd, who jeered and whistled at him while he also argued with the chair umpire over a line call.

Sinner took the first set and looked destined to seal a straight-sets victory at 6-4 in the second set tiebreak, but Rune saved two match points once again -- one with a superb cross-court forehand winner -- before leveling the tie.

The final set went with serve until 4-3 when Sinner converted the decisive break point after Rune made a costly double fault and the Italian held his nerve to serve out the contest.

Sinner will face 12th seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who beat Karen Khachanov 6-4 6-2 in a rematch of last year's Australian Open semi-final as the Greek looks to return to form after a mixed record in 2024.

Tsitsipas arrived at the tournament with a 11-6 win-loss record this year but has fond memories of the Monte Carlo Masters where he won the title in 2021 and 2022.

Bolstered by a strong first serve, Tsitsipas put Khachanov to the sword by converting four break points to end his run and improve his head-to-head record against the Russian to 8-1.

Newcastle Rout Tottenham as Isak Scores Twice in 4-0 Win in Premier League



Newcastle United's Alexander Isak, centre, scores the opening goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and Tottenham Hotspur at St. James' Park in Newcastle, England, Saturday, April 13, 2024.

NEWCASTLE (AP) — Newcastle handed Tottenham another drubbing at St. James' Park as Alexander Isak's double helped secure a 4-0 win for Eddie Howe's team in the Premier League on Saturday.

Isak and Anthony Gordon

both scored within 95 seconds of each other in the first half as Newcastle followed up last season's 6-1 home win over Spurs with another dominant performance to damage Tottenham's hopes of a top-four finish.

Isak, who also scored twice in that big win last April, capped a stellar performance with a second goal in the 51st minute to take his tally to 17 in the league and 21 overall this season. Gordon added his second assist of the game with a corner that was headed home by Fabian Schar for the fourth goal in the 87th.

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou, who took charge after last season, had said this week that he had not studied the tape of the 6-1 loss and he probably won't want to watch this one back, either.

Tottenham's defense fell apart repeatedly and star center back Micky van de Ven was partially at fault for the first two goals as he slipped both times and let Isak and Gordon go past him inside the area. Gordon had set Isak up for the opener in the 30th minute and then netted the second himself in the 32nd after pouncing on a poor ball from Tottenham

right back Pedro Porro back toward his own goal.

The third came when Bruno Guimaraes helped Newcastle win possession just outside its own area and then launched a long ball up the pitch for the speedy Isak to run onto. The striker made no mistake when one-on-one with goalkeeper Vicario, calmly slotting the ball inside the far post.

Isak has now scored in six straight league home games and became the first Newcastle player since Alan Shearer in 2003-04 to reach 20 goals in all competitions in a top-flight season.

Schar was then left open to head home Gordon's corner from eight yards out to cap the rout.

The big loss meant Tottenham dropped below Aston Villa into fifth, behind Unai Emery's side on goal difference.

Newcastle is sixth, 10 points behind Villa and Tottenham.

Houston Cruise to 116-107 Win Over Portland

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Jalen Green had 26 points and the Houston Rockets spoiled Portland's final game at home this season with a 116-107 victory Friday night.

Jock Landale had 20 points and Aaron Holiday came off the bench to score 18 for Houston, which had already been eliminated from playoff contention. Rookie Amen Thompson had 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Rockets, playing the second of a back-to-back.

"I was just trying to go hard, bounce back after last night. I felt the team, we brought the energy today, so it was good," Thompson said, reflecting on a lackluster loss to the Jazz the night before.

Scot Henderson had 30 points for the Trail Blazers, who have lost four in a row and 14 of their last 16 with one game left. Portland was second-to-last in the Western Conference.

Houston (40-41) led by 20 points in the third quarter but the Blazers narrowed it to 82-73 on Henderson's dunk and free throw. Henderson added a step-back jumper to get Portland closer.

Cam Whitmore's 3-pointer early in the fourth quarter extended Houston's lead to double digits again and the Rockets cruised the rest of the way.

The Rockets were without Fred VanVleet because of a right hip contusion. VanVleet



Houston Rockets forward Amen Thompson, left, drives to the basket against Portland Trail Blazers guard Rayan Rupert, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, April 12, 2024, in Portland, Ore.

has averaged 17.4 points with a career-high 8.1 assists. He scored a season-high 42 points Thursday in a 124-121 loss to

the Utah Jazz.

Thompson, who also had six assists, helped pick up the slack.