

Iran Advance to Final of Futsal Tournament in Brazil



TEHRAN – The Iranian national futsal team defeated Afghanistan 4-3 in their third match in a Brazilian tournament and advanced to the final match on Saturday.

Iran dominated the first half, leading 3-1, with Akbar Kazemi scoring Afghanistan's only goal.

Afghanistan made a strong comeback in the second half, adding two more goals through Kazemi and Hossein Mohammadi, but Iran held on to secure the win.

The Iranian national team will play Brazil one more time in the final of the Intercontinental Futsal Cup hosted by Brazil after beating Afghanistan 4-3.

The Iranian side lost 5-2 to the host team in their first match in the friendly tournament.

The Iran futsal team are led by veteran futsal player Vahid Shamsaei.

Husseini Named in AFC Champions League Round of 16 Best XI



TEHRAN - Captain and goalkeeper of Iran's Esteghlal FC, Seyed Hussein Husseini, has been included in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC)'s Best XI for the first leg of the AFC Champions League Round of 16.

The announcement comes after his standout performance in a goalless draw against Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr last week at Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Husseini played a pivotal role in securing the clean sheet, making several crucial saves to keep Esteghlal's hopes alive ahead of the second leg.

His efforts have earned him recognition as one of the top performers in the first-leg matches of the tournament's knockout stage.

Esteghlal will face Al-Nassr again on Monday in the second leg, aiming to advance to the quarterfinals.

The Iranian side will rely on Husseini's leadership and goal-keeping prowess as they seek to overcome their Saudi opponents and continue their journey in Asia's premier club competition.

Djokovic Again Stunned by a Lucky Loser at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Reuters) - Novak Djokovic was shocked by Botić van de Zandschulp 6-2 3-6 6-1 in the second round of Indian Wells on Saturday as the Serbian suffered an early exit at the hands of a tournament lucky loser for a second consecutive year.

Djokovic fell to lucky loser Luca Nardi of Italy in the California desert last year and history repeated itself on Stadium One court a day after top seed Alexander Zverev also went out.

The twenty-four time Grand Slam champion got off to a horrid start, hitting 14 unforced errors and being broken twice in the opening set.



He regrouped to race out to a 3-0 lead in the second, levelling the contest with a mighty fore-

hand winner and pumping his fist in front of the packed, sun-soaked crowd.

But giant killer van de Zandschulp ran away with the decider, breaking Djokovic for a fourth time with a perfectly executed lob for a 3-1 lead and sealing the stunning upset when Djokovic's shot went wide on match point.

Van de Zandschulp was up a set and 3-0 on Nick Kyrgios in his first-round match on Stadium One on Thursday before the Australian withdrew with wrist pain.

Djokovic, 37, retired from his Australian Open semifinal against Alexander Zverev with a hamstring injury and lost in the Qatar Open first round last month.

Odermatt Secures Third Successive Super-G World Cup Title



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt in action during the men's Super G Cornelius Poppe.

KVITFJELL, Norway (Reuters) - Switzerland's Marco Odermatt won his third successive Alpine skiing Super-G World Cup crystal globe, and moved closer to a fourth overall title in a row, in a shortened

race won by Italy's Dominik Paris on Sunday.

Odermatt was sure of retaining the title in the discipline before leaving the start hut in Kvitfjell, Norway, after Italian rival Mattia Casse was

injured in training and withdrew.

The Swiss finished fourth and missed out on the podium by 0.01, the narrowest possible margin, to Slovenian Miha Hrobat who started 21st and ended a run of 22 men's super-Gs with a Swiss skier in the top three.

Canadian James Crawford finished second, 0.38 behind Paris, after starting fifth.

The win was a second in three days in the Norwegian resort for Paris, 35, who has now reached a career milestone of 50 podiums with 24 wins.

The Italian won a downhill on Friday and Sunday was his first super-G victory since 2019, a welcome return to form less than a year

before home Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina.

"Next year for sure I want to go on, because I have the Olympics," he said.

With one super-G remaining at the World Cup finals in Sun Valley, Idaho, Odermatt has a 210-point lead over Austrian Vincent Kriechmayr.

He could formally clinch the overall crystal globe in a giant slalom in Hafjell, Norway next Saturday.

Odermatt leads Norwegian Henrik Kristoffersen, a technical specialist who has not been competing in speed events, by 570 points with 600 still to be won.

Ankalaev Defeats Pereira to Become UFC Light Heavyweight Champion

LAS VEGAS (Reuters) - Magomed Ankalaev dethroned Alex Pereira to become the UFC light heavyweight champion after securing a unanimous decision victory at UFC 313 on Saturday, handing Pereira his first loss in the weight class.

Russia's Ankalaev, unbeaten since March 2018, outwitted former kickboxing champion Pereira on the feet with forward pressure and tight knees to the body, and left the Brazilian exhausted after pinning him to the fence and forcing him to grapple.

"I can't even put it into words. It has been such a long wait. Here's my dream and it's on my waist," Ankalaev said after finally winning the championship belt, having fought Jan Blachowicz to a split draw in his first UFC title bout in December 2022.

Pereira, who won his last four



Magomed Ankalaev reacts after defeating Alex Pereira (not pictured) during UFC 313 at T-Mobile Arena.

fighters by knockout, repeatedly kicked Ankalaev's lead leg early on in the fight. But Ankalaev fought back in the second round, landing a left hand and leaving Pereira on shaky legs just seconds before the bell.

Ankalaev kept up the pressure in the next round, landing knees from close range as Pereira fought off his takedown attempts. The superior grappling of Ankalaev helped him pin Pereira to the fence and drain his energy in the fourth round.

Pogacar Beats Pidcock in Strade Epic Despite Crash

PARIS (AFP) - Battered and bruised world champion Tadej Pogacar recovered from a crash to beat Tom Pidcock and retain his Strade Bianche title with another famous victory.

Pogacar and Pidcock went clear with 78.5km of the race remaining, before the UAE Team Emirates rider went down at high speed on a corner with 50km to go.

The reigning Tour de France champion swiftly got back to his feet and caught back up to the Briton, the 2023 winner, who eased off once it was apparent Pogacar was continuing to race after the accident.

The 26-year-old Slovenian then made his move on the penultimate gravel sector, with 18.6km to go, and went clear to win by one



Tadej Pogacar becomes the first rider to win Strade Bianche back-to-back.

minute and 25 seconds.

Pidcock came home second in Siena, Italy, while Belgium's Tim Wellens completed the podium, two minutes and 11 seconds after his team-mate Pogacar.

The three-time Tour de

pool midweek in their Champions

League last 16 first leg tie, but the visitors completely dominated proceedings in the opening stages.

Despite all their possession, PSG failed to create any decent openings until Rennes keeper Brice Samba denied Goncalo Ramos but shortly afterwards Bradley Barcola put them ahead in the 27th minute.

After a quick free kick taken on the halfway line, Desire Doue rolled the ball forward into the path of Barcola who beat the offside trap and coolly slipped his shot past Samba.

Rennes' Dutch midfielder #06 Azor Matusiwa (left) and Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #10 Ousmane Dembele fight for the ball.

RENNES (AFP) - Leaders Paris St Germain continued their domination of Ligue 1 with a 4-1 win away to Stade Rennais on Saturday, with substitute Ousmane Dembele scoring twice in added time as the visitors earned their sixth successive league victory.

PSG, unbeaten in the league this season, move to 65 points, 16 ahead of Olympique de Marseille who play Lens later on Saturday, while Rennes remain 11th in the standings on 29 points.

Luis Enrique made eight changes to the side which lost 1-0 to Liver-

pool midweek in their Champions

League last 16 first leg tie, but the visitors completely dominated proceedings in the opening stages.

Despite all their possession, PSG failed to create any decent openings until Rennes keeper Brice Samba denied Goncalo Ramos but shortly afterwards Bradley Barcola put them ahead in the 27th minute.

After a quick free kick taken on the halfway line, Desire Doue rolled the ball forward into the path of Barcola who beat the offside trap and coolly slipped his shot past Samba.