

U-16 Volleyballers Beat Japan, Advance to Asian Championship Final



TEHRAN - The Iranian U-16 Volleyballers played against Japan in the semifinals of the Asian Championship in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand on Friday.

Iranian side defeated Japan in three thrilling straight sets (25-20, 25-22, 25-19) and advanced to the finals.

India lost 3-0 (25-16, 25-19, 25-12) to Pakistan in the event.

It was India's second loss in the tournament after Thursday's 3-1 (23-25, 25-15, 25-12, 25-23) defeat against Japan which determined the semifinal lineup.

All four semifinalists - India, Pakistan, Japan and Iran - have qualified for 2026 FIVB Volleyball Boys' U-17 World Championship.

This top-tier continental event is being held from July 12 to 19 in Nakhon Pathom and Ratchaburi, Thailand, gathering 16 formidable teams from across Asia to vie not only for regional supremacy but also for four coveted berths at the 2026 Boys' U-17 World Championship.

The top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2026 World Championship as the AVC representatives.

Women Football Team Falls Short to Lebanon in AFC Qualifiers



TEHRAN — Iran's hopes suffered a setback after a 3-1 defeat to Lebanon in Group A of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 Qualifiers on Wednesday.

The result leaves Iran with six points, standing alongside Jordan, its opponent in Saturday's final round of matches.

Lebanon secured its first victory of the campaign after

suffering two earlier defeats.

Christy Maalouf scored a hat-trick against Iran, opening the scoring in the fifth minute and doubling Lebanon's lead in the 22nd minute.

Fatemeh Shaban reduced the deficit for Iran in the 57th minute, but Maalouf completed her treble with a final goal in the 71st minute.

Pogacar's Solo Masterclass Seals Stage 12 Victory



HAUTACAM, France (Reuters) - Tadej Pogacar unleashed a vintage assault on the unforgiving slopes of Hautacam, crushing the Tour de France 12th stage and leaving chief rival Jonas Vingegaard gasping for air and clinging to fading hopes on a brutal, suffocating Thursday.

The world champion took no prisoners in the 13.5-km climb at 7.8% in stifling heat as two-time Tour winner Vingegaard finished two minutes and 10 seconds behind and now trails the defending champion by a massive 3:31 after the first high-mountain stage.

It was a sweet revenge for UAE Team Emirates-XRG leader Pogacar, who was humiliated by Vingegaard on that same climb three years ago, when the Dane was on his way to snatching his first title in the world's biggest race.

"I had always been looking forward to this climb then came the Tour de France 2022, that year I was trying to get the yellow jersey but Visma were too strong back then," a beaming Pogacar said.

"I almost had forgotten about this and then everyone came to me saying this is revenge time and then we approached the bottom of the climb and it was just a reverse story of a few years ago."

German Florian Lipowitz took third place after the 180.6-kilometer ride from Auch, 13 seconds behind Vingegaard, whose Visma-Lease a Bike team failed to live up to the hype, three years after a tactical coup had trapped Pogacar.

Podium hopeful Remco Evenepoel was dropped early in the Col du Soulor, showing his limits in the first high-mountain stage.

Although he fought his way back

in the descent, his face a mask of pain, the Olympic champion cracked in the final climb and now sits 4:45 behind Pogacar, still in third place overall.

Simon Yates and Matteo Jorgenson, two of Vingegaard's lieutenants for the mountain stages, also struggled and were of no help to their leader when it mattered.

Frenchman Bruno Armirail, the last survivor of the morning breakaway, reached the foot of the climb to Hautacam with a two-minute lead over the favorites' group.

It was never going to be enough of a cushion and Pogacar's teammate Jhonatan Narvaez's brutal acceleration 12.5km from the top was too much to handle for everyone but Vingegaard. However, he could not hold the Slovenian's wheel when he attacked.

The world champion took his earpiece off, cutting communications with his team to focus on his effort as Vingegaard, his face showing his distress, saw his rival disappear in the bends.

The Dane managed to stay within 20 seconds for four kilometers before fading as Pogacar cut through the stuffiness.

His advantage continued to grow, breaking the two-minute barrier as Vingegaard crumpled on his bike as if crushed by the weight of disappointment.

There had been some hope, for Pogacar's rivals, that he would suffer from ill effects from his crash on Wednesday, but the only sign came from the Slovenian's bandaged arm.

Pogacar will now be looking for a fourth stage victory in Friday's mountain time trial, a 10.9km effort up to Peyragudes.

Marathon World Record-Holder Chepngetich Suspended for Doping

PARIS (AFP) - Women's marathon world record-holder Ruth Chepngetich has been provisionally suspended by the Athletics Integrity Unit for the presence and use of the prohibited substance hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ).

The substance, a diuretic, was detected in a sample collected from the Kenyan athlete on March 14, the AIU said in a statement on Thursday.

"Chepngetich was not provisionally suspended by the AIU at the time of notification, however, on 19 April, she opted for a voluntary provisional suspension while the AIU's investigation was ongoing," said AIU Head Brett Clothier.

"In the intervening months, the AIU continued its investigation and today issued a Notice of Charge and imposed its own



provisional suspension."

The AIU said HCTZ is used clinically to treat fluid retention and hypertension, adding that diuretics may be abused to mask the presence in urine of other prohibited substances.

Chepngetich smashed the wom-

en's marathon record in Chicago last October, running two hours, nine minutes and 56 seconds to become the first woman to break 2:10.

In April, Chepngetich withdrew from the London Marathon, saying at the time she was "not in

the right place mentally or physically" to race her best.

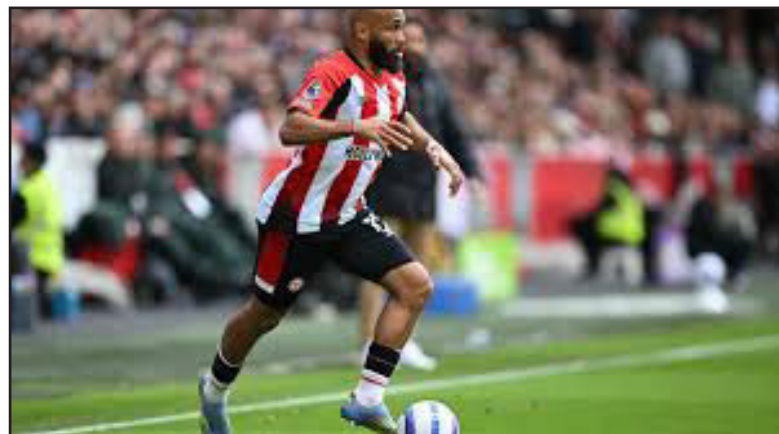
Marathon running has been hit with a spate of high-profile doping cases in recent years, particularly from Kenya which is world renowned for its middle and long-distance runners.

In April 2023, Athletics Kenya said its government pledged \$5 million per year for five years to fight doping in athletics.

In February 2024, Kenya's Sarah Chepchirchir was hit with an eight-year ban after the former Tokyo Marathon winner was found to have violated anti-doping regulations for a second time.

A year later, Kenyan marathon runner Brimin Kipkorir was also provisionally suspended by the AIU after he tested positive for prohibited substances.

Man Utd Agree Deal to Sign Brentford Winger Mbeumo



Manchester United are set to sign Brentford winger Bryan Mbeumo

LONDON (AFP) - Manchester United have reportedly agreed to sign Cameroon winger Bryan Mbeumo from Brentford in a deal worth an initial £65

million (\$87 million) as Ruben Amorim steps up his overhaul of the team's misfiring attack.

Mbeumo attracted Amorim's at-

tention with 20 goals in 38 Premier League games for Brentford last season.

Tottenham, now managed by former Brentford boss Thomas Frank, were also chasing the 25-year-old before United's improved offer sealed the deal after their two previous bids were rebuffed.

United will pay an additional £6 million in potential add-ons to Brentford. Mbeumo is due to undergo a medical in time to travel to the United States on Tuesday as Amorim's men start their pre-season tour.

He is set to become United's third signing since the end of last season, joining Wolves forward Matheus Cunha and teenage Paraguayan defender Diego Leon at Old Trafford.

Amorim has been determined to revamp United's forward options after a woeful campaign.

They suffered a toothless 1-0 defeat against Tottenham in the Europa League final and a 15th-place finish in the top flight that ranked as their lowest since 1973-74.

Rasmus Hojlund and Joshua Zirkzee struggled as Amorim's main strikers last term.

Amorim has reportedly told Alejandro Garnacho to look for a new club, while Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho are expected to leave following their loan spells at Aston Villa and Chelsea respectively.

Mbeumo will be Amorim's latest new recruit in his bid to revitalize moribund United.

Filip Misolic Storms Past Nuno Borges in Sweden

BASTAD, Sweden (Reuters) - Austrian qualifier Filip Misolic rallied from down 5-2 in the second set and saved triple match point to force a tiebreaker on his way to upsetting Portuguese third seed Nuno Borges at the Nordea Open on Thursday in Bastad, Sweden.

Misolic surprised Borges 3-6, 7-6 (1), 6-3, flipping the momentum in his favor during the middle set and finishing with a 35-22 advantage in winners. He advanced the quarterfinals to face Argentine fifth seed Camilo Ugo Carabelli, who outlasted Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-3 in a two-hour, 50-minute marathon.

No. 1 seed Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina beat countryman Mariano Navone 6-3, 6-3. His upcoming quarterfinal foe, No. 7 seed Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia and Herzegovina, rallied for

a 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 win over Frenchman Hugo Gaston.

EFG Swiss Open Gstaad

No. 2 seed Alexander Bublik won 80 percent (24 of 30) of his first-serve points and cruised to a 6-2, 6-3 win over fellow Kazakh Alexander Shevchenko in second-round action in Gstaad, Switzerland.

Fourth seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry wasn't as fortunate, as France's Arthur Cazaux took down the Argentine 6-3, 4-6, 6-4. Cazaux smashed 16 aces past Etcheverry and saved 10 of 11 break points.

Also advancing to the quarterfinals were No. 7 seed Francisco Comesana and Juan Manuel Cerundolo, both of Argentina, plus Swiss wild card Jerome Kym.

Mifel Tennis Open

Top seed Andre Rublev of Russia rallied from a set down to knock off unseeded American



Austria's Filip Misolic in action during his third round match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic.

Emilio Nava 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 in the quarterfinals in Los Cabos, Mexico.

No. 3 seed Denis Shapovalov of Canada swept Australia's Tristan Schoolkate 6-3, 6-2. In the semifinals Friday, Shapovalov will play No. 8 seed Adam Walton,

who defeated fellow Australian James Duckworth 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Thursday.

No. 7 seed Aleksandar Kovacevic played Argentina's Juan Pablo Ficovich in the late match. The winner of that was to face Rublev in the semifinals Friday.