

Two U.S. broadcasters suspended due to remarks about Haddadi

Tehran Times Sports Desk
LOS ANGELES — Clippers TV announcers Ralph Lawler and Michael Smith were suspended one game for their comments in Wednesday's game about Memphis' Hamed Haddadi.
 The duo did not work Friday's night tel-

ecast against the Denver Nuggets at Staples Center by the Fox Sports Prime Ticket cable network.
 Lawler and Smith made their off-the-cuff comments about the Iranian-born center during Wednesday night's telecast from Memphis. The on-air banter offended a viewer



who e-mailed Fox to complain, according to AP.
 "We regret the remarks made by Clippers announcers Michael Smith and Ralph Lawler during Wednesday's telecast," Fox said in a statement.
 "While we believe that Michael and Ralph

did not intend their exchange to be offensive, the comments were inappropriate."
 "We extend our apologies to Hamed Haddadi of the Memphis Grizzlies and to anyone who was offended. We have addressed the situation with Michael and Ralph and have taken appropriate action."



FIFA ban Iraq from international football

PARIS (Reuters) — World football's governing body FIFA on Friday announced its decision to suspend the Iraqi Football Association (IFA) until further notice "because of government interference".

"In accordance with FIFA statutes, the clubs and representative teams of Iraq are no longer permitted to take part in international matches, whether friendly or competitive," read a statement on the FIFA website.

"Furthermore, the IFA is deprived of its right to vote at any congresses held by international bodies and is no longer entitled to receive financial assistance."

Despite FIFA's decision, Iraq's women's under-16 team will be allowed to compete in a youth tournament organized by the Norwegian football federation that is due to take place in Jordan from November 22-29.

On Tuesday, FIFA gave the authorities in Baghdad a 72-hour ultimatum to reinstate the IFA or risk suspension from international football.

Police on Wednesday seized control of the IFA's offices after its governing board was dissolved on charges of links to executed dictator Saddam Hussein.

FIFA said that the current members of the IFA's Executive Committee were "the sole recognized interlocutors for FIFA" and called for them to be "rapidly reinstated".

"The measures taken by the Iraqi Olympic Committee and the security forces are unacceptable to FIFA as they stand in total contradiction of IFA and FIFA statutes," the FIFA statement added.

The Iraqi government described the decision as unjust.

"It's an unfair decision (that) was taken without hearing the Iraqi Olympic Committee," government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said.

"We feel that the IFA was behind the decision of FIFA to suspend the Iraqi federation," Dabbagh, who is also responsible for organizing IFA elections, told AFP.

"We are going to work with the Iraqi Olympic Committee to apply the national laws in respect of the FIFA regulations."

"FIFA has to respect the positions of the football clubs of Iraq who don't want to accept the executive board of IFA, (which) is involved in corruption and violation of Iraqi laws."

But IFA chief Hussein Saeed said the "FIFA decision was expected after the IOC's decision to dissolve the IFA, which is an illegal approach".

Football is highly popular in Iraq and its importance was boosted by the national side's victory in the 2007 Asian Nations Cup.

FIFA has expressed growing concern about possible political interference in the sport in Iraq. In September, it gave the IFA until April 30, 2010 to elect a new board.

Iraq was briefly suspended from international football in May 2008, after the government dissolved the national Olympic Committee. It was reinstated only after the government said the IFA had not been affected.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had also suspended Iraq's Olympic Committee from international competition, but that row was resolved shortly before the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Both the IFA and Olympic Committee were headed by Saddam's elder son, Uday, during the previous regime.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Pacquiao returns a hero in Manila



MANILA (Reuters) — Seven-time world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao returned to a hero's welcome in the Philippines, with his next fight likely to be in the political ring as he prepares to run for Congress in next May's elections.

Pacquiao, widely regarded as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, has set his eyes on a seat in the lower house of Congress, a battle he lost in 2007 when he first attempted to climb into the political arena.

"One of these days, I will file my certificate of candidacy," Pacquiao told reporters at the Manila airport upon his arrival from Los Angeles, California.

Scholes urges Fergie to carry on



MANCHESTER (AFP) — Paul Scholes has urged Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson to shelve any thoughts of retirement and continue in the job for as long as he can.

Ferguson, who turns 68 on December 31, recently celebrated his 23rd anniversary at the helm at Old Trafford and is widely expected to step down at the end of this season or next, having said previously he will not continue into his 70s.

But midfielder Scholes, who has served under Ferguson for more than 15 years, believes the manager can add to his vast array of honors at United, which includes 11 Premier League titles, two European Cups and five FA Cups.

Elmiger to lead Ag2r



SYDNEY (AFP) — Former winner Martin Elmiger will lead French team Ag2r La Mondiale at Australia's Tour Down Under in January.

Ag2r La Mondiale is the only team to have competed in every edition of the Tour Down Under and Swiss rider Elmiger won the 2007 tour.

The French UCI Pro Tour team has produced the most overall winners in the Australian event with Gilles Maignan (2000), Mikel Astarloza (2003), Simon Gerrans (2006) and Elmiger (2007).

The team will comprise Elmiger, Cyril Dessel (France), Bile Kadri (France), Yuriy Krivtsov (Ukraine), Rene Mandri (Estonia), Anthony Ravard (France) and Ludovic Turpin (France).

Westwood has 2-shot lead



DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Lee Westwood held on to his two-shot lead at the Dubai World Championships after shooting a 6-under 66 Saturday in the third round.

Westwood used six birdies to take his total to 15-under 201. Ross McGowan was alone in second after also shooting a 66.

If Westwood wins the last tournament of the European Tour season, he will receive \$1.25 million in prize money as well as a \$1.5 million bonus for winning the Race to Dubai money prize.

Rory McIlroy leads the money list going into the tournament but fell to five shots behind after a 69.

Iran loses to Japan in Grand Champions Cup

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Nagoya — Iran volleyball team was narrowly beaten by Japan in the FIVB Men's World Grand Champions Cup on Saturday.

The Japanese improved their win-loss record to 3-0 with a 27-25, 18-25, 25-23, 20-25, 16-14 victory in front

of 8,000 screaming fans at the Nippongaishi Hall.

"It was a good match, a very difficult match in this situation for my players, for my young players. They played very good in this culture and environment. I think we could have won the first set and if we had won it the result could have been totally different, but we had so many mistakes on the last points of the first set," Hossein Madani said.

Iran will play Poland on Sunday.

The 2009 Men's World Grand Champions Cup started in Osaka and Nagoya, Japan, on November 18 and runs to November 23.

Iran advances to next stage in FIBA Asia U-16 Championship

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JOHOR BAHRU — Iran basketball team beat Malaysia on Day Three of the FIBA Asia U-16 Championship at Bandaraya Stadium on Saturday and proceeded to the next stage.



In Group D, Iran proved too tall and talented for the hosts beating them 97-52. The team had defeated Taiwan and Thailand in the tournament.

Iran has been drawn along with Jordan, the Philippines and Syria in the second round.

The west Asian champion is scheduled to play Jordan on Sunday. The team will play the Philippines and Syria in the following days.

The top two teams of the tournament will qualify for the inaugural 2010 FIBA U17 World Championship to be played in Hamburg, Germany from July 2 to 11.

Cantona slams Domenech and Henry

MARSEILLE, France (Reuters)

— Former French international Eric Cantona launched a stinging attack on national coach Raymond Domenech on Friday following France's controversial qualification for the 2010 World Cup.

"I think that Raymond Domenech is the worst coach in French football since Louis XVI," Cantona told reporters at a press conference ahead of a beach soccer tournament due to take place here from November 27-28.

French king Louis XVI was executed by French revolutionaries in 1793 and is commonly depicted as an indecisive, dithering monarch.

"If it was up to me, I'd put (Bordeaux coach) Laurent Blanc in charge of the France team," the former Manchester United hero continued.



"He continues the season with Bordeaux, he wins the league with Bordeaux and he wins the World Cup! I'm not the only one who thinks that..."

Cantona, who today is an actor and coach of France's beach soccer team, also criticised the attitude of Thierry Henry, whose handball set up France's winning goal in their 2-1 aggregate play-off victory over the Republic of Ireland.

"What shocked me most wasn't the handball, honestly," said Cantona. "What shocked me most was that at the end of the match, in front of the television cameras, this player (Henry) went and sat down next to an Irish player to console him, even though he'd screwed them three minutes earlier."

"If I'd been Irish, he wouldn't have lasted three seconds."

Federer and Nadal ready to battle

LONDON (AFP) — Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal will stage the last chapter of their battle to finish the year as world number one when the ATP Tour Finals get under way in London on Sunday.

Federer goes into the Tour Finals at the O2 Arena top of the world rankings, but the Wimbledon champion knows second placed Nadal can still snatch first place if the Spaniard wins the prestigious end-of-year event.

The race for pole position is the latest installment of an enthralling rivalry between two of the sport's all-time greats.

Although Federer and Nadal remain friendly enough off the court, the Swiss star relishes his position as tennis's pre-eminent force and has no intention of surrendering it over the next week.

"I am aware of it (the race to finish world number one) and I would be lying if I said I was just here to play well," said Federer, who kicks off his Group A campaign against Spain's Fernando Verdasco on Sunday.

"Definitely I am here to win the tournament and to try to stay number one in the world. It is obvious."

"The competition is really stiff so it is not going to be easy for me or Rafa if he wants to get it."

"I think it is fun that it is on the line for the last tour-



namment of the season. I will try my best and see where it takes me."

While Federer is setting his sights firmly on that number one position, Nadal is less concerned about the rankings.

The four-time French Open champion has endured the most traumatic year of his career, with his parents' seperation proving a significant distraction before injury denied him the chance to defend his Wimbledon title.

Now fully fit again Nadal, 23, claims he is just relieved to be able to test himself against the world's best again.

"I feel perfect in all aspects, mentally and physically," he said. "I will play against the best players in the world so I can lose every match but I can win every game as well."

"For me the main thing is to be here and enjoy this experience. The rest, finishing number one doesn't matter. My only goal is to try to play my best tennis here in London."

"If I am competitive then I am more than happy. To be number one I have to win the tournament. I can't lose any matches so for me it is not a real chance."

British number one Andy Murray and Juan Martin del Potro, who beat the Swiss in September's US Open final, are also in Federer's group.