

Zob Ahan comes 3rd in Asian Handball Club League Championship

Tehran Times Sports Desk

AMMAN — Zob Ahan of Isfahan took the bronze medal of the 12th Asian Handball Club League Championship on Monday.

The Iranian representative defeated

Qatar's Al-Saad 22-20 and finished in third place.

Al-Salibikhaet of Kuwait beat Lebanese Al-Sadd 31-29 and claimed the title.

Seventeen Asian teams participated in



the tournament which was held in Amman, the capital of Jordan, from November 7 to 23.

The Asian Handball Club League Championship is the official competition

for men's handball clubs of Asia and takes place every year. In addition to crowning the Asian champions, the tournament also serves as a qualifying tournament for the Super Globe.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Mercedes sign Rosberg



Nico Rosberg will drive for Mercedes Grand Prix next season, in the team's first signing since taking over world championship winners Brawn GP.

Rosberg brought his four-year association with Williams to a close in favor of

joining the newly-branded team, which has seen British world champion Jenson Button move to McLaren and Brazilian Rubens Barrichello fill the vacancy at Williams.

"I am really happy to be a part of the Silver Arrows re-launch in 2010 as a driver for Mercedes. No other brand in Formula One can look back on such a long and successful tradition in motor racing. I am very proud that I will now drive for the new Mercedes team and work with Ross Brawn," added the 24-year-old.

(Source: Skysports)

Khan: Hatton not finished



Amir Khan has backed Ricky Hatton to take a leaf out of his book and bounce back from defeat in style.

Khan is looking to cap a successful year on December 5 when he puts his WBA light-welterweight title on the line against New York-based Ukrainian Dmitry Salita in Newcastle and admits a revitalized Hatton could be a future opponent.

It will be Khan's first defense of the belt he won from Andreas Kotelnik in July, a victory which completed a remarkable turnaround for the Bolton fighter after his first-round knockout against Breidis Prescott in September 2008.

(Source: Skysports)

Babel considers Reds exit



Unsettled Liverpool winger Ryan Babel has revealed he could leave in January if he fails to establish himself in Rafa Benitez's plans.

Babel is unhappy with his lack of first-team opportunities with the 22-year-old failing to hold down a place in

the starting XI.

The Dutchman has been forced to content himself with a bit-part role at Anfield and he plans to hold talks with Benitez before the transfer window reopens in January to resolve his future.

"I have tried to talk to the manager but it isn't of any use. I couldn't really do anything with the feedback Benitez gave me," Babel is quoted as saying in The Sun.

(Source: Skysports)

Zola expects Cole stay



West Ham boss Gianfranco Zola is confident of keeping Carlton Cole at Upton Park.

Cole has been linked with moves to Liverpool and Manchester United in recent weeks after catching the eye for West Ham

this season.

Zola insists the former Chelsea hit-man is happy at West Ham and that the club have no plans to sell the 26-year-old despite reported financial problems.

"Carlton is an important player for this team, not only because he scores goals but also for his presence," Zola told The Sun.

"I know Carlton wants to stay and is happy here. The club has no intention of selling him or any of our important players," Zola said.

(Source: Skysports)

Iran to host AFC U-19 Championship qualifiers

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran football team will play Lebanon in the opening game of the AFC U-19 Championship 2010 qualifiers on December 10 in Tehran.

Later Iran will face Pakistan on December 12. Following that the host plays Turkmenistan on December 14, and finally the team faces Uzbekistan on December 16.

The tournament is scheduled to take place from December 10 to 16, 2009 and features Iran, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Turkmenistan and Pakistan.

The top three teams will join the 13 teams who have already qualified for next year's finals.

Iran advances to FIBA Asia U-16 Championship semifinal

Tehran Times Sports Desk

JOHOR BAHRU — Iran basketball team remained unbeaten in the FIBA Asia U16 Championship extending its winning spree in the event to six games in a row on Tuesday.

Iran beat Syria 69-58 and booked a berth in the semifinal. The West Asian champion is scheduled to play South Korea on Thursday. China and the Philippines will face each other in the other semifinal match.

The final will be played on Friday.

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.

Da Ros hit with 20-year ban

ROME (AP) — Cyclist Gianni Da Ros received a 20-year ban because of doping, one of the stiffest sanctions imposed by the Italian Olympic Committee.

Da Ros was arrested in March while training with Italy's national track cycling team in Padua and immediately suspended by his Liquigas team. Ten other people were arrested as part of an inquiry into a doping trafficking ring in northern Italy.

Da Ros was accused of providing performance enhancing drugs to two amateur cyclists.

Also Monday, CONI banned two other cyclists for doping -- Davide Lucato received an eight-year sentence and Albino Corazzin was suspended for two years.

In another case, Gabriele Bosisio protested his innocence at a hearing with CONI's anti-doping prosecutor.

Beckham suffers from asthma, says player's spokesman

LONDON (Reuters) — David Beckham has suffered from a mild form of asthma since childhood, the England midfielder's spokesman was quoted as saying in British newspapers on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old Beckham was photographed on Sunday using an inhaler during L.A. Galaxy's 5-4 defeat on penalties by Real Salt Lake in Major League Soccer's championship game in Seattle.

"David has suffered with this since he was a young boy, but it has obviously had no effect on his performance," Beckham's agent Simon Oliveira was quoted as saying in The Daily Mail.

"He has never sought to make it public but if it does inspire any sufferer to think they can achieve great things like many other sportsmen have done then so much the better."



Beckham played extra time with Galaxy for the second time in two weeks on Sunday and was coughing badly after the game having struggled with a cold in the build-up to the MLS final.

He had pain-killing injections before the match to cope with a bruised right ankle and limped through extra-time with Galaxy having used all three substitutes.

Beckham scored his penalty but Galaxy captain Landon Donovan was among those to miss and Salt Lake won the shootout after a 1-1 draw following extra time to claim a surprise triumph.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United midfielder will rejoin AC Milan on loan in January as he bids to make England's World Cup squad for next year's finals in South Africa.

Ronaldinho credits fans for return to form

Ronaldinho has attributed his return to form to the support of AC Milan's fans ahead of the visit of Olympique Marseille in the Champions League on Wednesday, where a win would put the Italian club through to the knockout stages.

Milan endured a shaky start to the season in European and domestic competitions, partially because of poor showings from Ronaldinho. Pundits were questioning their ability to challenge for silverware with their star Brazilian misfiring.

But an improving Ronaldinho has coincided with a change in fortunes for Milan, who sit third in Serie A and have put their Champions League destiny in their own hands by taking four points from home and away ties with Real Madrid. Milan top Group C, on the same points as Real Madrid, with Marseille one point back with two games to play.

Ronaldinho, now settled on the left of a front three, blasted in a penalty and produced some exquisite touches in Sunday's 4-3 win over Cagliari.

"For me it's easy to be able to play with intelligent players like Marco Borriello and Alexandre Pato who understand what I can do for them on the pitch," Ronaldinho said. "Right now playing at the San Siro makes me feel good, here I feel at home, the fans understand I needed their support and this makes me happy."



Forward Borriello was so impressive against Cagliari he could keep European specialist Filippo Inzaghi out of the lineup while coach Leonardo will have defender Alessandro Nesta back from suspension after shipping three bad goals on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Marseille boosted morale with a 1-0 victory over arch-rivals Paris St Germain on Friday. The former European champions, four points behind surprise leaders Auxerre in Ligue 1, have a doubt over midfielder Stephane Mbia (ankle sprain).

"It's nice to have beaten Paris before going to Milan, it's good for our confidence," said Argentina defender Gabriel Heinze. "Milan are a different proposition but I believe we can win there. We have to if we want to qualify."

Midfielder Fabrice Abriel said the man to watch would be Clarence Seedorf, who set up both Inzaghi's goals in Milan's 2-1 win at Marseille in September.

"Seedorf is their most important player and we'll have to keep an eye on him," said Abriel. "He's the one who gives all the good balls, he's very intelligent and he's real added value for Milan."

If Marseille lose, Real can go through at their expense with a home win over Zurich.

Capello hails Roma captain Totti

Former Roma boss Fabio Capello has insisted that Francesco Totti's skills are one of a kind and that the striker remains one of the biggest names in world football, despite his age.

The 33-year-old wowed Italian fans last weekend after marking his comeback from knee surgery with an impressive hat-trick against Bari, his left-footed third effort prompting a standing ovation from the Olimpico crowd.

"Only Gigi Riva could kick the ball like him in Italy," Capello said to Il Messaggero.

"But only with his left foot. Totti can use both feet and can hit the ball in several ways. Such champions can shoot ten times per match and eight of them are aimed on target, while five are very dangerous and can turn into a goal.

"Totti's shooting qualities are unique and they will stay intact for life."

Totti is now top of the Capocannoniere chart with nine goals to his name, along with Udinese skipper Antonio Di Natale.

(Source: Goal)



Carragher: Exit not disastrous

Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher has claimed Champions League elimination would not be a disaster as the club can fall back on the Europa League.

The Reds need to beat Debrecen on Tuesday night and hope Group E rivals Lyon avoid defeat by Fiorentina if they are to qualify for the last 16.

Carragher said: "We're still focused and believe we can go through in the Champions League. If not, you move on."



"The club doesn't die because you go out of the Champions League."

Qualification to the knockout stages of the competition seems to be a tall order for the 2005 Champions League winners.

Lyon have already qualified, while Fiorentina are in pole position to progress for the first time in a decade.

If Liverpool were to bow out of the Champions League then the Europa League would, according to Carragher, be a welcome second chance for the Anfield club in Europe.

And the defender maintained that winning the Europa League would "put a different gloss" on a so far disappointing season, which has yielded only one victory in the last 10 games.

"Myself and Stevie Gerrard won that competition before and it's a great competition," stated Carragher.

"There are other things, like the FA Cup. There's a long way to go. We haven't had a great start to the season but it can certainly be turned around between now and the middle of May."

And Liverpool's task in Hungary has been made even tougher following injuries to a host of players, including forwards Ryan Babel, Fernando Torres and Albert Riera.

"The results of the other game is important to us but it's only important at the end of our game," added Carragher, who is expected to return to the centre of defense if Glen Johnson and Daniel Agger pass late fitness tests.

"It doesn't make a difference what's going on through the game, we don't need to know. We just need to know we have to win our game and, at the end of the game, get the result."

"We always believe at this club that we can do special things. We have done it in the past and we know we can do it again."

"We have grown up with this team and the manager over the last five years, so the Champions League is a part of the club."

"We have got ourselves into a bit of a hole and hopefully we can get out of it. It has been done before and we know we can do it again."