

Persepolis Victorious

Persepolis were crowned champion of the Seventh Premier League on Saturday. The widely popular Tehrani team defeated Sepahan 2-1 in the presence of at least 100,000 spectators at Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Mohsen Khalili's beautiful shot put Persepolis ahead in the 18th minute. This was the 18th goal of Khalili in the league that won him the title of the top scorer jointly with Rah Ahan's Hadi Asghari.

In the 29th minute, the mistake made by Persepolis fullback Masoud Zarei provided Ehsan Haj Safi with the opportunity to score the equalizer for Sepahan.

In the second half, Persepolis lost a few opportunities to score the winner while

Sepahan tried to remain content with the draw, which could have secured the championship crown for them.

Persepolis fans were losing hope about winning the match and the championship title when suddenly after a direct kick in the 96th minute Captain Karim Baqeri chipped the ball in the penalty area and Sepehr Heidari's header sent in the winning goal for Persepolis.

Afshin Qotbi fulfilled his promise to fans and secured the second championship of Persepolis in the league's history. Previous-



ly, the legendary Ali Parvin took Persepolis to championship in the first Premier League competitions.

Iran Names Squad For UAE Match

Iran's national football team head coach, Ali Daei, announced the 26-men squad on Friday for the World Cup qualifier match against United Arab Emirates on June 2.

Iran's National Team captain, Mehdi Mahdavi, is back in the squad following recovery from an injury which sidelined him in Iran's encounter against Kuwait.

Fully recovered Javad Nekounam also joins the squad after a one-year injury layoff, ISP reported.

Other notable additions to the new squad are Fereidoun Zandi, former Iran National Team left-winger who has not been called up to the squad since his appearance in World Cup 2006.

Another notable addition is Hansa Rostock forward, Amir Shapourzadeh--his first callup to the national team following his short spell at Iran B team in June 2007.

Among UAE-based players, Reza Enayati is called up to the Iranian squad again since his spell at the Asian Cup 2007 campaign, while UAE league's top scorers including

Mehrad Madanchi, Iman Mobali and Javad Kazemian are missing from the list.

The list of invitees from Persepolis and Sepahan teams will be announced by Ali

team is also scheduled to play a friendly match against Bosnia on May 26 at Tehran's Azadi Stadium, and a week later Iran will host the UAE National Team at Azadi Stadium on June 2.

Iran is in Group Five of Asian World Cup qualifying tournament with Kuwait, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

The full list is as follows:

Goalkeepers: Mehdi Rahmati, Ebrahim Mirzapour

Defenders: Jalal Hosseini, Rahman Rezaei, Sattar Zare, Morteza Asadi, Hashem Beikzadeh

Midfielders: Mohammad Alavi, Mojtaba Shiri, Majid Gholamnejad, Ebrahim Sadeqi, Mehdi Mahdavi, Javad Nekounam, Fereidoun Zandi, Andranik Teimourian, Ali Karimi, Masoud Shojaei, Maziar Zare, Mohamadreza Khalatbari, Mojtaba Jabbari, Gholamreza Rezaei

Strikers: Amir Shapourzadeh, Reza Enayati, Hadi Asghari, Rouhollah Bigdeli, Milad Meidavoudi.

Daie after the Persepolis-Sepahan match on Saturday.

The national team will commence their training camp in Ardebil on May 18. The



Cafu, Serginho Will Quit Milan

Cafu and Serginho will leave AC Milan at the end of the season, the Brazilian fullback said on Friday.

Last season's European champions are letting the pair go after deciding to bring in fresh blood following a poor campaign, with Barcelona defender Gianluca Zambrotta a target.

World Cup winner Cafu, 37, will return to Brazil but is unsure if he will retire.



"I have had five marvellous years in which I have managed to win everything," the former AS Roma right back told Milan Channel.

"The moment has arrived to leave. It is sad and hard but I knew sooner or later the time would come to go home, to return to Brazil. I don't know if I'll still play when I'm in Brazil."

Cafu, a reserve this term, is not certain of playing in Milan's final game of the season at home to Udinese on Sunday. Fifth-placed Milan will only reach next season's Champions League qualifiers if they win and Fiorentina slip up at Torino.

Serginho, 36, joined the club in 1999 but has also decided to return home.

"After a back problem hit me two years ago, I've not been able to return to my best form, which is why I believe the moment has come to say goodbye to the team," he said.

Federer Advances At Hamburg

Defending champion Roger Federer kept up his good form on clay with a comfortable win over Spain's Fernando Verdasco at the Hamburg Masters.

The world number one, who has won in Estoril and finished runner-up in Monte Carlo in the last month, won 6-3 6-3, BBC reported.

Federer will face Andreas Seppi, who beat Nicolas Kiefer 6-3 5-7 7-5.

Third seed Novak Djokovic saw off Albert Montanes 6-2 6-3 and will now take on Rafael Nadal, who thumped fellow Mallorcan Carlos Moya 6-1 6-3.

The in-form Serb will take over Nadal's number two world ranking if he wins.

"I'll just play the match as any other one and try to stay focused," said Djokovic.

Nadal, the French Open champion the past three years, has spent a record 147 weeks ranked second behind Federer dating back to July 2005.

"If you want it's a little bit more important than a normal Masters semi but it's not as special as if you were playing for the number one," said the Spaniard.

Federer is a four-time champion in Hamburg and got his only win to date over Nadal on a straight last year's final.

In a straightforward quarterfinal, Federer benefited from a Verdasco ankle injury midway through the second set and the Spaniard gave up a double-fault on match point. I think I played well today," said Federer.

Zizou in Sydney Exhibition

French football legend Zinedine Zidane will play an exhibition match in Sydney next month alongside a number of teammates from his 1998 World Cup winning side, his promoter said Friday.

The three-time world footballer of the year will line up with French teammates Marcel Desailly and Robert Pires at the Sydney Football Stadium on June 1, said Alain Barataud.

He will play a team drawn from players from the Australian side, which narrowly failed to qualify for the 1998 World Cup.

Australia and Everton midfielder Tim Cahill, who is recuperating in

Sydney after foot surgery, said bringing Zidane to Australia was a coup.

"Zizou is one of the biggest players in the world, he is poetry in motion, and he is so passionate about football," Cahill told reporters. "What a special opportunity this is for Australian kids to see him."

Zidane will also conduct a coaching clinic for youngsters at the stadium on June 2.

"Once he found out it was for kids, he said OK, no problem, and he is donating his services for free," Barataud said.

Zidane, regarded as one of the game's greats, was famously sent off in the 2006 World Cup final for headbutting Italian defender Marco Materazzi.

News in Brief

Sourian Crowned

Champion of Champions

Hamid Sourian, a Greco-Roman wrestler, was on Friday selected as the Champion of Champions for 2007-8.

The special ceremony for commemorating the champions of 2007-8 was held at Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's (IRIB) auditorium.

Sourian won three gold medals in international Greco-Roman wrestling competitions in 2007-8.

Meanwhile, Behzad Khodadad and Sara Koshjamaal-Fekri (taekwondo), Mehdi Sohrabi (bicycling), Ehsan Haddadi (track and field), Samad Nikkhab Bahrami (basketball), Ahmad Daqaqolehpour (wheelchair basketball) Ali Mazaheri (boxing), Mojtaba Ghiasi (volleyball) and Saeed Ebrahimi (free style wrestling) were selected as champions of 2007-8.

2 Iranians on AFC List

AFC has released the revised list of contenders for the coveted AFC Player of the Year award after the final AFC Cup group matches.

The latest roster of 15 players is led by three players from Uzbekistan, followed by two players each from Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait and Singapore, AFC reported.

The list takes into consideration MVP points since April 22, covering the AFC Champions League, AFC Cup and one AFC Asian Cup 2011 qualifier Match Day.

This list of contenders will be continually revised after the match days of all competitions whose MVP points count towards selection of the AFC Player of the Year.

The procedure for selecting the best player in Asia has been overhauled to inject more transparency into the process with the big announcement scheduled to be made at the awards gala on November 25 in Shanghai.

Loeb Ahead in Sardinia

Citroen driver Sebastien Loeb opened up a 37-second lead on the field after the opening day of the Rally of Sardinia.

World Rally championship leader Mikko Hirvonen, who won the most recent event in Jordan, lies in fourth place nearly one minute behind the leader, BBC reported.

Loeb won two stages and could have had more had he not eased off to avoid the punctures which affected other drivers. Jari-Matti Latvala won the first stage before a blow out and Italy's Gigi Galli was another victim of the gravel.

Hirvonen admitted he had produced a disappointing performance and warned fans he was not sure he could improve. "I don't know why but I can't go any faster," he said.

"I'm pushing hard, the car and the set-up feels good but for some reason the times just aren't there. Second place is the minimum I need to get out of this rally so I'm going to go absolutely flat out."

Laudrup Likely to Leave Getafe

Getafe coach Michael Laudrup announced on Friday he will leave the Primera Liga side at the end of the season.

The former Denmark international steered Getafe to the UEFA Cup quarterfinals in their debut campaign in Europe, a second successive final of the King's Cup and ensured they will remain in the Primera Liga for a fifth season in a row.

"My time at the club has come to an end," Laudrup told a news conference.

"I'm making this announcement so that the club can have a chance to look for a replacement and to express my thanks to them for having given me this opportunity."

This club is a very recent arrival to the first division, but despite that people said to me when I took over here that I had gone to a club which had great expectations.

I replied that they were right but that it was a great challenge and look how it turned out. I hope the person that replaces me will be able to do even better even though the club is going to be in the UEFA Cup again."

Laudrup, who played in Spain for both Barcelona and Real Madrid, took charge of Getafe at the start of the season after the club's previous coach Bernd Schuster left to take over at champions Real.

Although his club made an inconsistent start to the campaign, they notched up some impressive results in the league including victories at home to Barcelona and away to Real Madrid.