



Iran players training

Iran Mulling US Tour

Iranian Football Federation is considering a 10-day training camp in the US, after being approached by the LA Blues company.

According to Mehdi Taj, the deputy head Iran Football Federation, an official invitation was received by the Iranian Federation on Saturday which has been passed on to National Team's Committee and the head coach, Ali Daei for a decision. A final approval is needed

by Iran's Physical Education Organization if the tour is to get a go ahead, ISP reported.

"If touring the US and holding friendly matches are approved by the National Teams Committee and Ali Daei, and the International Council of Physical Training Organization accordingly, the tour will take place from June 23 to July 3 this year," said Taj.

Iran national football team will play four

World Cup qualifiers in June, the last of which will be against Kuwait in the Azadi Stadium on June 22, just a day before the date given for the US tour.

Iran and the US have played two games in the past. Iran won the first at the 1998 World Cup finals 2-1, while the two teams played to a 1-1 draw in a friendly match played in the United States in 2000.

Kaka's Best Yet to Come

World Player of the Year Kaka predicted on Sunday that he would reach his peak in time for the 2010 World Cup.

In an interview with the Brazilian sports daily Lance, the AC Milan and Brazil player reaffirmed his wish to play at the Olympic Games in August but admitted the matter was out of his hands.

"I think the best is yet to come," said Kaka, who has suffered a dip in form this year. "The year 2007 was marvelous but I still think I can improve technically and physically."

"I want to reach a very high level for the

2010 World Cup. I will be 28, at my peak. It could be a great World Cup for Brazil, a new cycle and new players."

Kaka has had some fitness problems recently, which he blamed on too much football.

"The biggest problem with injuries, today, is the quantity of games," he said. "There comes a time when your body can't take any more."

The 26-year-old said he wanted to help Brazil win their first Olympic Gold medal in Beijing. The Olympic soccer tournament is for under-23 teams but three over-age players are allowed.

"Nobody has won the Olympic gold (for Brazil) yet, that's the big motivation," he said. "But, how I get to the Olympics is something which does not depend on me."



Kaka

He was unsure if he would still be playing international football when Brazil hosts the World Cup in 2014. "I don't know if I will be there," he said.

Rijkaard Admits Ronaldinho Departure

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard finally admitted that he expects his Brazilian superstar striker Ronaldinho to leave at the end of the season.

Rijkaard was asked on the Catalan television station TV3 late on Sunday night whether Barca's last home game of the season, against Real Mallorca on May 11, would be turned into a gala send off for Ronaldinho. "Yes, it could be then," conceded Rijkaard.

"I don't want people to forget what he's done for this club. I hope that he leaves with his head held high and that he demonstrates to the world of football just who he is," added the Dutch coach, who could be leaving as well.

Ronaldinho is currently on the sidelines with a torn right hamstring sustained in training on April 4.

The club originally said that he would be out for six weeks and indicated that the injury had ended his season but there is now the possibility that he could yet play a cameo role in one or two of Barcelona's final games of this campaign. "He could yet play in the last game of the season in the Nou Camp," confirmed Rijkaard.

Nadal Beats Federer

Rafael Nadal won his first title of the season, defeating top-ranked Roger Federer yet again on clay to claim his fourth consecutive Monte Carlo Masters.

The second-ranked Spaniard won 7-5, 7-5 Sunday, and improved his clay-court record over Federer to 7-1.

"Winning four times here is unimaginable," Nadal told AP. "Roger played a great match. We always have good finals."

Nadal has won 98 of his last 99 matches on clay, with a loss to Federer in the 2007 Hamburg final the only blip.

The Swiss star blew commanding leads in each set, breaking Nadal to lead 4-3 in the first and racing to a 4-0 lead in the second. "Disappointing second set," Federer said. "After playing the right way against him and then letting him back into the match, it was disappointing. Maybe I didn't play my best."

Federer committed too many unforced errors, surprisingly on his forehand, and let Nadal back into the match.

"He deserves to win," Federer said. "I'm pushing Rafael today; having the feeling I can beat him if I play the right way. And I think that's the feeling I didn't have after Monte Carlo last year."

Nadal is the only player in the Open era to win four straight titles at Monte Carlo, and the first since Anthony Wilding of New Zealand (1911-14).

Ronaldo on Top Of PFA Poll

Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo has been voted as England's Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Player of the Year for the second straight year.

The 23-year-old Portuguese star, who has scored 38 goals in all competitions this season, beat Fernando Torres, Steven Gerrard, Cesc



Cristiano Ronaldo

Fabregas, Emmanuel Adebayor and David James in the annual poll, AFP reported.

Arsenal midfielder Fabregas was named Young Player of the Year.

Although he did not attend the PFA's awards ceremony at London's Grosvenor House hotel late Sunday, Ronaldo was shown on screen accepting the trophy from his club boss Sir Alex Ferguson.

Ronaldo and United are currently preparing for the second leg of their Champions League semifinal against Barcelona on Tuesday night with the sides level at 0-0.

"I feel very happy. When you work all season to play good, to do something for the team, to do your contribution for the team and then at the end of the season the PFA give you this award, it is a great moment, it is an honor, a pleasure," he said.

"It is a great motivation to carry on like that, working more and getting better."

News in Brief

Asian Gold for Judokas

Iranian duo judoka Arash Mir-Esmaeili and Ali Ma'lumat won the gold medals in 2008 Asian Judo Championship, in Jeju, South Korea on Sunday.

World champion Mir-Esmaeili knocked Mongolian judoka out in the U-66 kg class in the final game.

According to MNA, in the U-73 kg class, Ali Ma'lumat defeated his rival from Kazakhstan and won Iran's second gold medal in the competitions.

Masoud Haji-Akhundzadeh in the under 60 kg lost to Japanese Judoka and came in second place to win the silver medal.

Mahmoud Miran in the open weight divisions bagged the silver medal after being beaten by Japan's judoka.

Iran won the 2008 Asian Judo Championship in total, followed by Japan and South Korea, respectively.

Paykan Beat Esteghlal

Tehran's popular football team Esteghlal lost to Paykan in the 29th week of the Iran's Professional League at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran, ISNA reported.

Esteghlal who qualified for the League Cup semifinal last week, lost 2-1 to Paykan before a crowd of 15,000 fans.

Spain GP for Raikkonen

World champion Kimi Raikkonen helped Ferrari win its third straight race and make it the clear Formula One leader.

According to IHT, the Finnish driver moved Ferrari clear atop the drivers' and the constructors' standings Sunday with his second Spanish Grand Prix win in four years.

Raikkonen's 17th career victory moved him nine points clear of McLaren's Lewis Hamilton while Ferrari took a 12-point lead as a team.

Ferrari's second straight 1-2 sweep was so dominant that it had the whole team fired up—especially 'The Ice Man', as Raikkonen is known because of his even-tempered manner.

"We are leading both championships, which I am happy about."

The whole weekend went well," Raikkonen said after holding off teammate Felipe Massa to clinch a 3.228-second victory and become the eighth straight wire-to-wire winner at Barcelona.

Team principal Stefano Domenicali was visibly pumped up when the team lined up for the traditional post-race winning photo in pit lane.

Raikkonen, who was second to Massa at Bahrain three weeks ago, was smiling from the moment he clinched his 55th podium—to match countryman and two-time world champion Mika Hakkinen.

The slyest of grins crossed his face as he nearly let the bubbly fly with Spain's King Juan Carlos passing to exit the prize-giving ceremony.

Mayelikhohan: I Was Daei's Teacher

The court hearing on a complaint by former national soccer team's captain, Ali Daei against Iran's former coach, Mohammad Mayelikhohan was held in a very tense atmosphere.

According to Fars new agency, Daei's attorney, Asgari Pishbin, told the court, which was presided by Judge Mahmoud Safavi, "We lodged a complaint with the preliminary court saying that after Iran's failure to advance to the second round of 2006 World Cup, a TV program called 'One World One Cup' was aired."

Several experts, including Mayelikhohan attended the program in which the reason for Iran's failure was reviewed.

"Each expert expressed his view. However, Mayelikhohan spared no effort to give the impression that Daei was responsible for the failure."

This made football fans furious and created a tense atmosphere."

Mayelikhohan, for his turn, said, "I observe the rule of law. I believe that some problems of the country pertain to non-abidance of laws."

I believe that people can violate rule of law in proportion to the powers they wield. I did not create tension in the society. At one point, I was Daei's teacher. This is the first time I make such a comment because I am obliged to say so.

Nowhere else I say I am a teacher and another guy is my student." The judge said that a verdict will be issued in a week.