



## News in Brief

## Perspolis 1, Saipa 0

In the 31st round of IPL, Perspolis defeated Saipa 1-0 at Azadi Stadium in Tehran on Saturday. Misaq Memarzadeh scored an own goal.

In another game of the week, Sepahan drew against Barq 3-3 in Shiraz. Emad Reza scored twice and Ehsan Haj-Safi scored for Sepahan. This is while Farbod Abedi scored once and Sattar Zare twice for Barq.

## Wrestlers Bag 2 Golds

Iranian junior wrestlers won two gold and two bronze medals at the Victory Cup wrestling tournament which is being held in Turkey.

According to Press TV, Behnam Ehsanpour in the 54 kg category and Ali Aqajan-zadeh in the 69 kg category claimed two gold medals in freestyle wrestling while Vahid Ahangari in the 54 kg category won a bronze on Friday.

Meanwhile, Saman Abdoli in the 54 kg category snatched a bronze medal in Greco-Roman wrestling.

Iran has sent 21 wrestlers to the two-day event, which began on May 2 in Turkish resort city of Antalya on the Mediterranean.

## 3 Medals for Iran Shooters

Veteran Iranian shooters have managed to grab one gold and two silver medals at 2008 shooting competition which was held in Ankara, Turkey.

Seyyed Ramezan Salehnejad won the air rifle gold medal with 591 points.

Salehnejad also managed to get the silver medal when he came second at running targets, Press TV reported.

Meanwhile, the Iranian female shooter, Nayyereh Akef, snatched the air pistol silver medal with 374 points.

Another Iranian shooter, Bahman Karimi, stood sixth in the air pistol category with 559 points.

Some 110 shooters from 22 countries participated in the event. The Iranian shooters are slated to return home on Monday.

## Del Piero 'Deserves Italy Recall'

Juventus captain Alessandro Del Piero believes he deserves an Italy recall for Euro 2008 after scoring 18 goals in Serie A this season.

The World Cup winner has not played for his country since giving a poor performance in a goalless qualifying match against France in September.

But calls to bring him back have been mounting as the forward has been instrumental in helping third-placed Juventus secure a Champions League qualification slot on their return to the top flight after relegation over the 2006 match-fixing scandal.

"I think I have deserved a place at the European championships with a beautiful season," Del Piero told Juve's in-house TV channel.

"In the end Italy Coach Roberto Donadoni will calmly make his selection and he'll bank on those who deserve it."

Donadoni said last week that in current form Del Piero had a strong case for a place in his squad.

## Kovalainen Ready to Return

Heikki Kovalainen insists he is ready to return to racing at next weekend's Turkey Grand Prix after his 150mph crash in Barcelona last Sunday.

But the McLaren driver, who was knocked unconscious, must first pass a fitness test and the team will also carry out a full neurological examination.

Kovalainen told BBC, "I want to get back to racing as soon as possible."

"Since the accident at Barcelona, it has been my only focus, but the FIA will make the decision on safety grounds." Kovalainen emerged unhurt after ploughing into the tire barrier at Campsa corner at the Circuit de Catalunya on the 22nd lap of the race.

But he was knocked out by the impact and says he has no recollection of the accident.

The Finn, 26, was released from hospital on Monday after several CT scans and described his injuries as a 'slight headache and stiff neck'.

But he has now put the crash behind him and is turning his attention to racing in Istanbul.

"Formula One is a risky business," said Kovalainen. "You know that as a driver, but you don't think about it."

"If you worry about things like that, you lose focus. I guess it's just not in my psyche. I can't wait to get back into the car and race with the team next weekend."

Kovalainen left Spain on Thursday and is now in his native Finland where he has resumed training. His team-mate Lewis Hamilton will join him there over the weekend.

If Kovalainen is cleared to race then he will use the team's spare car from Barcelona in Turkey.

# Nekounam Hopes to Play Against Real Madrid

With many people doubting that Javad Nekounam would even kick a ball in anger this season, the 27-year-old midfielder marked his season debut for 20 minutes against Valencia on April 27. With no reaction to his injury, Nekounam spoke to reporters ahead of this weekend's clash against Real Madrid, ISP reported.

Nekounam expressed satisfaction about coming on as a substitute after 70 minutes in Osasuna's last match against Valencia, after 243 days of injury lay-off, and claimed he could have made his come back in earlier matches, but based on Ziganda's decision, he had to wait until the Valencia encounter.

Regarding Osasuna's upcoming match

against title contenders, Real Madrid, Nekounam doubted the prospect of starting the game as he is not physically ready to play 90 minutes yet, as Osasuna coach said.

However, Nekounam insisted that he has great desire to play against Real Madrid and its star players and he expects to play some part in the game. He also hoped to star for Osasuna if given the chance to play some part in the game.

Concerning Osasuna standing in La Liga, he described Osasuna's alarming situation in La Liga standing to be due to fear of relegation, and insisted on Osasuna's aim is to get maximum points from the remaining fixtures to ease the relegation fears.

"This cannot be positive in Clemente's

career résumé," he insisted.

Regarding Iran's upcoming World Cup qualifiers, Nekounam vowed to play against UAE if called up to National team squad.

With reference to Iran's encounter against UAE, he asserted on joining national team training camp immediately after the end of Spanish season, for an ever strong performance against UAE in both legs.

Enthusiastic Nekounam shared his high motivation for this clash and while reviewing Iran's previous wins in all competitions against the UAE, he urged his fellow Iranian players to produce a strong display in the remaining group matches to emerge as group leaders in the next round of qualifying games.

## Rossi Tops Practice in China

Motorcycle racing legend Valentino Rossi topped practice on Friday at the China Moto GP, pipping defending world champion Australian Casey Stoner by two-hundredths of a second.

According to AFP, Rossi clocked 1.59.906 aboard his Fiat Yamaha for the fastest time of the day, as rival Stoner signaled his intent by being quickest in the afternoon, and Spain's Dani Pedrosa on a Repsol Honda was third.

The seven-time world champion from Italy lost a tightly fought contest to Stoner of Ducati Marlboro in Shanghai last year, but hopes to notch up another win here after taking top honors at the inaugural China race in 2005.

"My first impression is that me and Casey are little faster than the other guys," a pleased Rossi told reporters after practice. "I think it will be a good battle, and I expect to go even faster."

Third in the championship standings on 47 points, Rossi is out to end a winless streak of seven races, his longest since he joined the premier Moto class in 2001, but will face a strong challenge from Stoner's powerful Ducati.

Rossi, 29, has been outshone this year by rookie teammate Jorge Lorenzo, whose spectacular debut season has included three podium finishes in as many races, with a maiden victory last month at the Portuguese GP in Estoril.

## Jazz Oust Rockets

Utah Jazz will be playing on the road Sunday, but not in Houston.

The Jazz beat the Rockets 113-91 on Friday night to win the series 4-2 and avoid having to play a Game 7 on the road. The Jazz did that a year ago against the Rockets and didn't want to push their luck again in Texas.

The third quarter all but guaranteed they wouldn't have to. Deron Williams scored 13 of his 25 points in the period, making three of four 3-pointers as the Jazz outscored the Rockets 27-11, Reuters reported.

It was Utah's second chance to clinch the series and went significantly better than the first. The Rockets avoided elimination with a 95-69 win on Tuesday and the Jazz came home embarrassed and demoralized.

"Our guys got ready to play them here after they beat us pretty good down at their place," Utah coach Jerry Sloan said.

By ending the series Friday, the Jazz earned a trip to Los Angeles for Game 1 against the Lakers on Sunday.

Williams had just seven points at halftime, and then took over the game in the third quarter. He was 4-for-7 from the field and pumped up his teammates as Utah pulled away on a 20-5 run. Houston had already cut a 17-point lead to four and Williams wanted the Jazz to pull away—and stay there.

"As a point guard, I feel you have to be an extension of the coach—be a leader out on the floor. I just tried to get guys hyped up for tonight," Williams said.

## Gattuso Wants to Play In Premier League

AC Milan midfielder Gennaro Gattuso has said he would like to play in the English Premier League.

Rumors that Milan stalwart Gattuso was considering leaving have been circling for weeks but the Italy international, who played in Scotland with Rangers in 1997 and 1998, had been quiet on his future until now.

"I would like to have the possibility to play in the Premier League," he told Italy's Sky television on Friday.

"It's a dream I have always had and never hidden. I think I have the characteristics to play in that league."

Fifth-placed Milan faces Serie A leaders Inter in the city derby on Sunday and is desperate for a win to pressure Fiorentina in the battle for the fourth Champions League spot.

"Many people have asked me why I've not talked in this period. I don't want to talk because I don't want to bring personal problems into the group," he said.

"We are concentrated on the derby. Our objective is fourth spot and afterwards I will have time to talk about my situation."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti said recently the tough-tackling midfielder was too important to the club and would not be able to leave whether he wanted to or not.

Despite the speculation he wanted to move, no clubs have been linked in the media with the 30-year-old.



Valentino Rossi



Gennaro Gattuso