

Iran's Soltani bags two Asian weightlifting golds, double bronzes for Javadi

Sports Desk

The sixth day of the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Jinju, South Korea, saw Mir Mostafa Javadi claim a couple of bronze medals in the men's 89kg class.

Javadi's medals came a day after Hossein Soltani had opened the account for the country in the men's event by grabbing three medals – including double golds.

On Wednesday, Javadi failed to stand on the podium in the snatch contest but lifted 205kg to finish third in the clean & jerk event and bagged his second bronze thanks to a 364kg tally in total.

Li Dayin stole the show by setting three new world records en route to a clean sweep of the 89kg golds.

Chinese weightlifter registered a 180kg snatch lift before re-

cording 222kg in the C&J competition and 396kg in total.

Representing Iran in the 81kg weight class, Soltani had to settle for the silver medal in a tight snatch contest on Tuesday, where the top three were only separated by one kilogram in their best lifts.

Kazakhstan's Yelaman Seitkazy won the gold with 155kg, with bronze winner Chuang Shengmin of the Chinese Taipei equaling Soltani on 154kg.

An Asian junior gold medalist in 2018, Soltani then went on to top the clean & jerk event with 184kg before a total tally of 338kg gave the Iranian a second gold of the day.

Home favorite Park Hyeon-go took the clean & jerk silver with 181kg but stood third in total with 324kg – standing behind Chuang, who lifted 180kg for the C&J bronze and tallied 334kg in total.

Soltani's compatriot Fatemeh Keshavarz had collected two bronzes on Monday to become only the second Iranian woman to win a weightlifting medal in the Asian Championships – following Hamideh Hosseini who won three golds last year in Manama, Bahrain.

Keshavarz finished fifth in the 64kg snatch event but overcame the 109kg weight in the clean & jerk contest, registering 194kg in total.

Iran's main focus in Jinju is on the Olympic categories, including the 102kg class – in which the country will be represented by the Rio 2016 gold winner Sohrab Moradi.

Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Ali Davoudi has recovered from an injury but the event in South Korea came a bit too soon for the Iranian super-heavyweight as he will be back in action in next month's IWF Grand Prix in Cuba.



Iran's Hossein Soltani is seen in action in the men's 81kg contest at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Jinju, South Korea, on May 9, 2023. **AWF**

City's Haaland shackled, but De Bruyne shows his class in Real draw

REUTERS – For once Manchester City goal monster Erling Haaland was shackled, but when his side needed a moment of magic the old reliable Kevin De Bruyne conjured it against Real Madrid in an absorbing Champions League semi-final first leg on Tuesday.

The 31-year-old De Bruyne, like the rest of City's high-quality collection of internationals, has been outshone by Haaland's record-shredding first season in England.

Norwegian powerhouse Haaland has netted 51 goals in all competitions but he found Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger and David Alaba a little less accommodating than the Premier League centre backs he has bullied mercilessly all season.

He was kept relatively quiet, with Alaba denying him with one sensational cov-

ering tackle, but De Bruyne popped up to make sure City emerged from the Bernabeu with a 1-1 draw.

With Real looking comfortable and threatening to add to the lead given to them by a Vinicius Jr wonder strike, De Bruyne showed again why he remains so indispensable for City as they seek to finally win the Champions League and perhaps a treble.

His shot from outside the area was a thing of beauty, the ball rising no more than a foot off the turf as it streaked like a missile through the Madrid air and past Thibaut Courtois.

"Kevin is a massive player for us. Always he has been great and he helped us in the moment we most needed it," City midfielder Rodri said of the Belgium talisman who has been a key component in four Premier



Kevin De Bruyne (C) celebrates scoring for Manchester City in a 1-1 draw against Real Madrid in the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid, Spain, on May 9, 2023. **JUAN MEDINA/REUTERS**

League winning teams. "We were suffering a bit because they were keeping the ball and with the goal he

gave us the confidence to keep pushing." De Bruyne's 14th Champions League goal for City

means he is the first player in Champions League history to score in separate away games against Real in the

knockout rounds.

It also swung the tie in favour of Pep Guardiola's side who will be slight favourites in the second leg next Wednesday in the Etihad Stadium where they are unbeaten for five years in the competition.

They will have to be wary, however, of a Real side who will also take a large amount of comfort from the first leg as they seek to win the trophy for a record-extending 15th time.

Despite ceding the lion's share of possession to City, especially in the first half, they oozed serenity, never panicked, and looked razor-sharp on the counter-attack.

The reigning champions also managed to shut down the supply to Haaland and in Brazilian livewire Vinicius Jr they had the best player on the pitch on Tuesday.

No wonder wily old manager Carlo Ancelotti did not look too perturbed at not winning the opening leg.

"We have to play like this again next week," the Italian, who has won the competition twice with Real and twice with AC Milan, said. "Our strategy was good, we weren't worried when they had possession. Then the second half was completely different. We are left with good sensations."

Guardiola, too, was happy with what he saw, although said some tweaks might be needed.

"Now it's like a playoff. We can defend better in some departments, maybe we can attack a little differently," he said.

"Alaba and Rudiger were so close to Erling, so there were very few spaces. Maybe we can adjust a couple of things."

AFP – The Philadelphia 76ers moved to within one win of a series victory over the Boston Celtics in the NBA Playoffs on Tuesday while the Denver Nuggets thrashed the Phoenix Suns to edge closer to a place in the conference finals.

A towering performance in Boston from NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid helped the Sixers power to a 115-103 victory over the Celtics to stun the home fans into silence.

The result gives the Sixers a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series, meaning they will advance to the Eastern Conference finals with a win in game six back in Philadelphia tonight.

In the Western Conference, the top-seeded Nuggets are also in the driving seat against Phoenix after pummeling the Suns 118-102 in Denver.

Denver star Nikola Jokic finished with a 29-point triple-double for a win that leaves the Nuggets 3-2 up in the series, with game six in Arizona tonight.

The Sixers will head into their clash with Boston brimming with confidence after an assured game-five display.

Embiid led the scoring in a superbly balanced Sixers offensive performance, with five players finishing in double figures.

Tyrese Maxey tormented the Celtics with 30 points, including six three-pointers, while point guard James Harden was a constant thorn in the side of the Celtics, finishing with 17 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

"I thought Joel did a great job of shooting when he needed to shoot and passing when he needed to pass," Sixers coach Doc Rivers said.

"Our composure overall was good. You know they're going to make shots, they're going to make runs. That team is tough, and you've got to breathe through it. I thought our guys did that." Rivers reserved special praise for the contribution of Harden.

"I thought James was a magician tonight. He called a perfect game. He was aggressive early on, when he needed to be aggressive. And then he got everybody else involved."

Boston never recovered after the Sixers pulled away to lead by 14 points in the second quarter.

Although the Celtics closed the deficit to nine at half-time they were unable to apply sustained pressure.

The Sixers always found a way of responding to keep them at arm's length throughout the second half, with Phila-

delphia leading by double digits for almost the entirety of the third and fourth quarters.

Boston's scoring was led by a 36-point display from Jayson Tatum while Jaylen Brown finished with 24 points.

In Denver, the Nuggets took control early on with a 35-point first quarter before Phoenix roared back to outscore the home side 25-17 in the second quarter. Phoenix took a brief lead in the final minutes of the first half but Denver hit back to lead 52-49 at the break.

The Nuggets then roared out of the blocks in the opening minutes of the second half, outscoring Phoenix 21-6 to open up a 73-55 lead. Denver outscored Phoenix 39-25 in the third quarter and led by as much as 24 points in the final frame.

Phoenix coach Monty Williams pulled his starters from the floor long before the end as Denver celebrated a crucial win.

Jokic finished with 29 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists to lead Denver's scorers, while Michael Porter Jr. had 19 points including five three-pointers.

Devin Booker led the Suns with 28 points, while Kevin Durant finished with 26.

Embiid shines as Sixers sink Celtics; Nuggets rout Suns



Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid (21) blocks the shot of Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown in game five of the NBA Eastern Conference semi-final series in Boston, MA, US, on May 9, 2023. **BOB DECHIARA/USA TODAY SPORTS**