

Tractor to face Sharjah in ACL qualifier



MORTEZA SALEHI/TASNIM

Sport Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor will host the UAE's Sharjah next Tuesday in the AFC Champions League playoffs.

Brazilian Luanzinho was on target twice as the Emirati side defeated Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh 2-0 in Tuesday's preliminary-round clash at the Sharjah Stadium to progress to the next round.

A place in the group stage of the Asian elite clubs' competition will be up for grabs when Tractor and Sharjah square off in the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium. Should Tractor go through, the Tabriz-based club will join fellow Iranian top-flight sides Persepolis, Sepahan, and Nassaji Mazandaran in the group phase of the competition. Under Spanish head coach Paco Jemez, Tractor enjoyed an impressive run in the second half of the domestic league to finish fourth last season.

City's De Bruyne could miss rest of year with injury



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THE GUARDIAN - Pep Guardiola fears Kevin De Bruyne could be out into the new year with the hamstring injury sustained in Friday's Premier League win at Burnley, and has described it as a "big blow". The 32-year-old was forced off after 28 minutes of the season opener in a recurrence of the problem that caused his first-half substitution in June's Champions League final victory against Internazionale.

"It's serious - a big blow, really tough for us," Guardiola said. "We have to decide whether he has surgery or no surgery but it will be a few months out. In the next days we will decide on surgery. The injury is a big loss, Kevin has specific qualities. You can lose him for one or two games but for a long time it's really tough for us. But you have to look forward. "We have alternatives with different skills, different talents. It's another opportunity [for others] - life gives you that. I'm pretty sure they will take it."



Wrestling U20 Worlds: Shakeri, Babalou win double golds for Iran on Day 2

Mohammadreza Shakeri (R) celebrates with the Iranian flag after a victory over American Jesse Mendez in the freestyle 65kg final at the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Amman, Jordan, on August 15, 2023.

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The second day of the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Amman, Jordan, saw Iranians grab a couple of gold medals, as well as a silver, across five weight classes in the freestyle contests. Having finished ninth at the event in Sofia last year, Mohammadreza Shakeri went all the way in the Jordanian capital this time around, walking away with the ultimate prize of the 65kg competitions. Shakeri powered past opponents from Spain and Japan before a thrilling 11-8 win against Russian Dalgat Abdulkadyrov - participating as a neutral athlete - sent the Iranian into the final shown against Jesse Mendez of the United States.

The Iranian young gun opened the scoring against Mendez with a stepout before being handed a second point for the American's inactivity. Shakeri was put on the shot clock in the second period but went on to lead 4-1 through successive stepouts with one minute left. Mendez reduced the deficit to two but the Iranian managed to hold out a desperate push by the American to seal a 5-2 triumph.

Abolfazl Babalou won a second gold of the afternoon for Iran, thanks to a 5-0 beating of Ukrainian Ivan Prymachenko in the 97kg final.

Last time the Iranian was in action in Amman, he had to leave the Asian U20 Championships empty-handed in July, but in a remarkable turnaround, Babalou avenged his losses to Kazakhstan's Kamil Kurguliyev and Indian Deepak Chahal - followed by a 5-1 triumph over American Camden Mc Danel in the semifinals.

Prymachenko's inactivity and a couple of stepouts saw Babalou take a 3-0 advantage into the break and he then rounded off the victory with a takedown in the second period.

A second Iran-USA final showdown on Tuesday pitted Ali Rezaei against American Meyer Shapiro - a cadet world champion in 2021 - in the 70kg contests.

Returning to Amman as an Asian gold winner, Rezaei outclassed wrestlers from Turkey, Poland, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan en route to the final but had to settle for a silver after giving away a 4 - 0

lead to lose 11-6 to Shapiro.

It was still an improvement for the Iranian in the age group following his bronze-winning campaign in the tournament two years ago.

Shapiro's gold proved to be the sole final victory for the American team on Tuesday as Luke Lilledahl - last year's U17 world champion - fell to a 5-0 defeat against Japan's Yuto Nishiuchi in the 57kg decider.

Iranian Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan's run in the category came to a last-eight finish, courtesy of a 3-1 setback against Ruslan Asif Abdullayev of Azerbaijan. Farzad Safi Jahanshahi, meanwhile, failed to finish on the podium in the 79kg event after an 11-1 defeat against Ali Tcokeev - also from Azerbaijan - in the third-place bout.

American Matthew Singleton won the other bronze of the class, while Russian Ibragim Kadiev secured a gold for the Individual Neutral Athletes team with a 17-6 dismantling of Indian Sagar Jaglan.

Iran's Abolfazl Babalou celebrates his win against Ivan Prymachenko of Ukraine in the freestyle 97kg final at the Wrestling U20 World Championships in Amman, Jordan, on August 15, 2023.

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'I want to write new sporting history': Neymar says after Al Hilal move



BBC - Brazil forward Neymar has joined Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal from French champions Paris St-Germain.

The deal for the former Barcelona player, 31, is understood to be worth about 90m euros (£77.6m) plus add-ons.

"I've achieved a

lot in Europe and enjoyed special times, but I have always wanted to be a global player and test myself with new challenges and opportunities in new places," he said.

Neymar was not part of PSG coach Luis Enrique's plans for the new season.

The striker, who joined PSG for a world-record fee of £200m in 2017, was left out of their squad for Saturday's Ligue 1 draw against Lorient.

His exit also fits PSG's strategy of moving away from the 'Galacticos' era of signing high-profile players for big fees and significant wages, with Lionel Messi also leaving the club this summer.

"I want to write new sporting history, and the Saudi Pro League has tremendous energy and quality players at the moment," Neymar added.

"I have heard a lot and learned that I am following a long list of Brazilian players who have played in Saudi Arabia over the years, so I believe it is the desired place."

The forward was understood to be earning an annual income in the region of 25m euros (£21.6m) at the French club.

He will reportedly be paid 150m euros (£129.2m) a year in Saudi Arabia - six times the amount he earned at PSG - having signed a two-year contract.

Al Hilal's chairman, Fahad bin Saad, called Neymar "a global icon" and "an unstoppable attacking force" in welcoming him to the club.

The Brazilian made 173 appearances for PSG, helping the club win 13 trophies, including five Ligue 1 titles, as well as reaching the 2020 Champions League final.

Neymar's departure comes two days after PSG's Kylian Mbappe was reintegrated into first-team training after positive talks with the club.

The France forward, 24, had been in a contract stand-off amid a desire to join Real Madrid but could now extend his contract at PSG, with his current deal due to expire next summer.

Neymar's move continues a remarkable summer spending spree by Saudi clubs, underlining the league's ambition to be one of the top competitions in the world in the next few years.

Karim Benzema, N'Golo Kante, Jordan Henderson, Ruben Neves, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino have all moved to Saudi Arabia.

Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo joined Al Nassr from Manchester United in January.

Neymar's new team-mates include ex-Wolves captain Neves, former Chelsea centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, formerly of Lazio, who were all signed for big fees.

After Riyadh Mahez left Manchester City to join Al Ahli in July, Pep Guardiola said the Saudi league's financial muscle has "changed the market".

"A few months ago when Cristiano [Ronaldo] was the only one to go, no-one thought this many top players would play in the Saudi league," the City manager said. "In the future there will be more and that's why clubs need to be aware of what is happening."