

## AFC Champions League Two:

## Tractor fights back to beat Al Khaldiya



Tractor striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (9) celebrates his goal with teammates during a 2-1 victory over Al Khaldiya in the AFC Champions League Two in Riffa, Bahrain, on February 11, 2025.  
● AFC

## Sports Desk

Tractor will take a 2-1 lead into the second leg of the AFC Champions League Two last-16 meeting with Bahrain's Al Khaldiya in Tabriz next week after the Iranian top-flight side fought back to claim a narrow victory in Riffa on Tuesday. Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh and Domagoj Drozdek found the net inside five minutes for the visitors to cancel out Mohamed Al Romaihi's 48th-minute opener for the home side. Gleison fed the ball to Mahdi Al Humaidan on the right and then the Brazilian, who had continued his run into the penalty area, stepped over the low cross to allow Al Romaihi's tap in past Tractor keeper Alireza Beiranvand. The host's lead, however, was to last for just two minutes. Tractor fullback Mohammad Naderi surged down the left flank and teed up Hosseinzadeh in the six-yard box, before the striker's deft flick found the bottom corner – a seventh goal for the Iranian in the competition. It took January signing Drozdek 10 minutes to make an impact after coming off the bench at halftime. A fine piece of individual skill saw the Croatian flick the ball past Filip Ivanovic before curling home from the edge of the box

to give the away side a well-deserved lead. Tractor still had Beiranvand to thank for making a double save to deny Al Khaldiya a late equalizer, as the Iranian league leader remains on course for a maiden Asian silverware. Despite the victory, Croatian head coach Dragan Skocic was not pleased with his team's performance. "I congratulate my players and Tractor fans for this victory, but we were not close to our real level. "I hope we do better in the second leg. In some games where the team is not performing well, it is important to win. We played against a strong team and our performance will definitely be better in the second leg," said the former head coach of the Iranian national team. Meanwhile, Skocic's opposite number Ali Ashour was frustrated by the final outcome for his side, saying: "For me, it is important to play beautiful football but the most important thing is to achieve results. Everyone is sad and shocked by this result, as we prepared the players mentally because this match is the first half of the challenge. "We have to recover and plan for the return match and it doesn't matter that we have to play away from home," said Ashour. The two sides will square off in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium on Tuesday.

## Fujairah Open International Taekwondo Championship:

## Nasiri, Nouri win golds as Iran bags three cadet medals

## Sports Desk

There was further glory for the Iranian girls at the Fujairah Open International Taekwondo Championship as Aynaz Nasri and Parnian Nouri grabbed a couple of cadet gold medals in the United Arab Emirates. A world junior champion in South Korea last year, Nasri walked away with the ultimate prize of the -63kg contests, thanks to a final victory over her Russian opponent. Nouri, also a reigning world junior gold medalist, had

won a first cadet gold for the country at the expense of the Egyptian participant in the -52kg final. Meanwhile, Rozhan Heidari suffered a final defeat against the Moroccan athlete to settle for the silver medal in the -55kg class. Tuesday's cadet competitions came after the Iranian women had collected 11 medals, including four golds, to finish atop the team table in the seniors' event. Hasti Valinejad (-46kg) and Mahla Mo'menzadeh (-49kg) won double golds after beat-

ing fellow-Iranians Sogand Shiri and Saeideh Nasiri respectively in the final. Nastaran Valizadeh stole the headlines by defeating reigning Olympic champion and world No. 1 Viviana Marton of Hungary to the -62kg title, with Melika Mirhosseini beating Jordanian Rama Abu Al-Rub for the -73kg crown. Elsewhere, Mobina Ne'matza-deh, an Olympic bronze medalist last summer, took the silver medal in the -53kg contests after a defeat against Saudi Arabia's Dunya Abutaleb, who made up for her loss to

the Iranian girl in the third-place bout at the Paris Games. Saghar Moradi also finished her campaign with a silver medal in the -67kg event, with Sogol Shiri (-49kg), Tina Madanlou (-57kg) and Zahra Pour-Esmaeil (+73kg) adding three bronzes to Iran's medal haul.

Parnian Nouri (R), Aynaz Nasri (2nd R), and Rozhan Heidari (L) pose with their medals at the Fujairah Open International Taekwondo Championship in the UAE, on February 11, 2025.  
● taekwondo.ir



## Dubai Para Athletics Grand Prix:

## Iranians win four medals on Day 2

## Sports Desk

The second day of the Dubai WPA Grand Prix – Fazza International Open Championship saw the Iranians collect four medals, including double golds. Two-time Paralympic champion Saeid Afrooz registered a best attempt of 37.76m to win a javelin throw gold in the men's F34 class on Wednesday. There was a one-two finish for the Iranian duo in the blind and visually impaired contests, as Hassan

Bajoulvand claimed the top spot in the men's discus throw F11 class, thanks to a 41.6m effort, with Amirhossein Alipour in second on 35.94m. In the women's competitions, Ma'soumeh Tourani finished with 4.97m in the shot put F54 class. The second-day results took the Iranian 10-athlete squad's haul to three golds, four silvers, and a single bronze medal at the season-opening WPA Grand Prix Series in the Dubai Club for People of Determination.

## City's Guardiola can't explain another late collapse in Real defeat

## Sports Desk

REUTERS – Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola had no explanation for yet another late-game collapse as his team lost 3-2 at home to Real Madrid in the Champions League playoffs on Tuesday to leave their campaign hanging by a thread ahead of the second leg. Brahim Diaz and Jude Bellingham struck late to erase City's 2-1 lead, the latter netting the winner in the 92nd minute at the Etihad Stadium where the mood swung from joy to despair. "We arrived at the last minute with a result and we could not keep it," Guardiola told a press conference. "After 2-1, many games it has happened, against Feyenoord in the Champions League (City led 3-0 in the 74th minute but were held to a 3-3 draw), against Brentford in the Premier League, against Manchester United, many games at the end we give away," he added. "Unfortunately it has happened so many times, it's difficult." Erling Haaland's double, including a penalty in the 80th minute, had City poised for a win over the holders and LaLiga pacesetters but leads have proved slippery this season for Guardiola's side, who are fifth in the Premier League. They have conceded seven goals in the final 15 minutes of Champions League matches this term. City defender John Stones acknowledged that the players had to be accountable.

However, Guardiola said the responsibility "belongs to all of us, not just the players. "I don't have a problem to accept. To blame one specific player, that is ridiculous. It's all of us, me first. And of course the players as well," he said. "They want it, how they run, how they do it, but the truth is we are not stable enough in that (crucial) moment." The second leg is next Wednesday in Madrid.



● MIKE EGERTON/PA