

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Last-gasp winner sends Tractor five points clear

Sports Desk

Tractor closed in on a maiden Persian Gulf Pro League trophy after a 2-1 away win against Foolad Khuzestan in a rescheduled fixture from matchday 22 on Friday. Mahdi Hashemnejad bagged the winner in the 24th minute of stoppage time to help Tractor open a five-point gap over second-placed Sepahan on top of the table with three games remaining. Croatian striker Domagoj Drozdek put the visitors in front in the 46th minute, slotting home Mahdi Torabi's delicate flick-on from inside the box for his seventh goal in Tractor colors since joining the club in January. Things went from bad to worse for the home side in the 81st minute, when, following a VAR review, Malian center-back Moussa Coulibaly received his marching orders for a high boot in the opposition box. A chaotic second half saw the game paused multiple times, resulting in 24 minutes of added time, and Foolad kept chasing an equalizer despite playing with 10 men. The brave performance paid off

in the 16th minute of stoppage time, after Tractor defender Aref Aqassi was deemed by the VAR to have handled the ball inside his own box.

Teenage substitute Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar showed nerves of steel to step up for the spot-kick, and despite having his effort saved by Alireza Beiranvand, managed to level the scoreline on the rebound. Just when the game looked destined for a stalemate – much to Sepahan's delight – Hasehmnejad intercepted a Sina Asadbeigi's back pass before his composed finish found the bottom corner to send the Tractor bench into frenzy.

Friday's result meant third-placed Persepolis, trailing Tractor by 10 points, will miss out on the Iranian top-flight crown for only the second time in nine seasons. Tractor will play away to Shams Azar on Friday, and can secure the coveted title at home against Nassaji Mazandaran on May 8, before visiting Esteghlal Khuzestan on the final day a week later. Sepahan, meanwhile, will play at home against Golgozar Sirjan and Esteghlal, either side of a trip to bottom-side Havadar.



Tractor players celebrate a goal during a 2-1 victory over Foolad Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Foolad Arena, Ahvaz, Iran, on April 25, 2025.

WTT Youth Contender 2025:

Iranian table tennis prodigies crowned in Sarajevo

Sports Desk

Iran's Benyamin Faraji and Nikan Shirvani walked away with a couple of winner's trophies in the latest WTT Youth Contender event in Sarajevo.

Faraji, who won a historic under-15 bronze at the World Championships last year, beat opponents from Czechia, Italy, Croatia, and Slovakia before defeating Slovenian Miha Podobnik 3-1 (11-7, 10-12, 11-2, 11-5) in the boys' singles U19 final.

This was Faraji's third Youth Contender title of the season, after he won the trophy in January's event in Tunis, followed by a runner-up finish in Cappadocia, Turkey, in February. Elsewhere in the boys' competitions, Shirvani came out on top in the under-11 age class, thanks to a 3-0 win (11-7, 13-11, 11-9) against



Moldavan Nicolae Bucur. Shirvani had come from behind to edge out Saleh Allam of Egypt in a five-game thriller (11-13, 11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 11-2) at the Sport Hall ILIJAŠ for a place in the final.

Iran's Nikan Shirvani won the boys' singles U11 trophy at the WTT Youth Contender 2025 event in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

● FARSNEWS

Iranian Basketball Super League:

Shahrdari Gorgan beats Kaleh in Game 4 to head into Finals

Sports Desk

Shahrdari Gorgan secured a place in the Iranian Basketball Super League Finals thanks to a 95-86 victory over Kaleh Mazandaran at home on Friday.

American point-guard Glenn Cosey stole the show for Shahrdari, registering a double-double with 25 points and 11 rebounds, as the home side won the best-of-five series 3-1 to head into the Finals for a fifth successive season.

Shahrdari fell to an 82-76 loss in Game 1, but bounced back to rout Kaleh 122-68 in its own backyard in Amol, before taking a 2-1 series lead with an 89-83 home victory in Game 3 on Wednesday.

Shahrdari had finished fourth in



the regular season with 13 wins in 20 outings, while Kaleh had won 17 games to stand atop the 11-team table.

● IRIBF



Magic forward Franz Wagner dunks against the Celtics during Game 3 of the first round in the NBA play-offs in Orlando, FL, US, on April 25, 2025.

● MIKE WATERS/IMAGN IMAGES

Magic survive to hit back against Celtics in NBA play-offs

BBC – The Orlando Magic survived a Boston Celtics fightback to halve the deficit in their play-off series against the NBA champions. Boston levelled things up with two minutes 31 seconds remaining but consecutive scores by Franz Wagner secured a 95-93 home win on Friday. Magic now trail 2-1 in the first round of the Eastern Conference play-offs. The best-of-seven series continues in Orlando today. Boston led for most of the way before they rallied from a 12-point deficit in the fourth quarter to make it 91-91.

Wagner then scored on consecutive drives over Kristaps Porzingis to finish with 32 points – his team's highest scorer. Jayson Tatum returned for the Celtics after missing game two with a sore right wrist and scored 21 points in the first half before finishing with a game-high 36. LeBron James continued his return to full fitness with a game-high 38 points but was unable to prevent the Los Angeles Lakers losing 116-104 at the Minnesota Timberwolves. Jaden McDaniels scored 30 points and Anthony Edwards 29 as the

Timberwolves finished strongly to take a 2-1 lead in the Western Conference first round. The hosts went on a 13-1 run over the final four minutes 37 seconds after the score was tied by the Lakers' Luka Doncic, who registered 17 points despite playing with a stomach illness. James had 13-for-21 shooting, including three three-pointers in a four-possession span during the fourth quarter. "He was shooting it from Yucatan," said Edwards. "He was shooting it crazy." Lakers coach JJ Redick added:

"He's moving better. It seems like he's getting healthier by the day." Minnesota are again at home on Sunday, as are the Milwaukee Bucks after winning 117-101 over the visiting Indiana Pacers in the Eastern Conference. Indiana led by 12 early in the third quarter but Giannis Antetokounmpo and Gary Trent Jr each scored 37 points as the Bucks fought back to cut their series deficit to 2-1. Trent Jr started in place of Taurean Prince and restricted Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton to 14 points while tying a franchise play-off record with nine three-pointers.