

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has warned England coach Fabio Capello that playing Steven Gerrard in Saturday's friendly against Brazil is an unnecessary risk.



Iran Wins Junior World Sitting Volleyball

Iran's sitting volleyball squad won the third edition of the Junior World Sitting Volleyball Championships held in the holy Iranian city of Mashhad.

The Iranian side, coached by Hassan Mohammadi, won the title after defeating Russia 3-0 (25-22, 25-15, 25-14) at Mashhad's Shahid Beheshti Gym on Saturday, PressTV reported.

"We knew we would face Russia in the final of the event. That's why we concentrated all our attention on this team," the Iranian coach Hassan Mohammadi said.

"Iranian coaches analyzed all of Russia's games and we finally won the championships," he added.

Mohammadi's men reached the final after they defeated Kazakhstan, Croatia, Brazil and Germany. Iran never lost even one set during the four-day tournament which was held from November 4 to 7.

This is the third time Iran has won the Junior World Sitting Volleyball Championships. It won the title in 2005 in Slovenia and 2007 in Brazil.

Germany managed to stand in the third place after beating Kazakhstan 3-1 in the same venue on the same day.

Trentino Beat Peykan

Italy defeated Iran's Peykan to qualify for the finals of the FIVB 2009 Men's Club World Championship.

The Italian volleyball side beat Iran 3-0 (25-18, 25-22, 25-19) at the Aspire Zone Indoor Hall in Doha, Qatar



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on Saturday night.

In another match, PGE Skra Belchatow of Poland also made it to the finals following its victory against

Zenit Kazan of Russia 3-1 (15-25, 25-23, 25-21, 26-24) on the same day.

The Italian outfit will meet PGE Skra Belchatow in the final of the

competition. Prior to this match Iranian Peykan will play against Zenit Kazan of Russia for the bronze medal of the competition.

Osasuna Duo to Miss Iceland Friendly

Osasuna's Iranian midfielders Javad Nekounam and Masoud Shojaei will be absent for the friendly match against Iceland on November 10.

A squad of 28, consisted mainly of home-based players has started training for Iran's upcoming friendly matches with Iceland and Macedonia and the Asian Cup qualifier against Jordan.

Afshin Ghotbi called up 30 players to the national squad to face Iceland and Macedonia, Persian Football wrote.

According to Afshin Ghotbi, based on a mutual agreement, Nekounam and Masoud will join Team Melli training before the match against Jordan.



Masoud Shojaei



Javad Nekounam

Esteghal captain Farhad Majidi, who has not been called up to the national team since 2007, was summoned by Ghotbi to the team.

Iran squad is comprised of Mehdi Rahmati, Vahid Taleblu, Misaq Memarzadeh, Soshia Makani, Mohammad Nosrati, Seyyed Jalal Hosseini, Amir Hossein

Sadeqi, Hadi Aqili, Farshid Talebi, Hossein Ka'bi, Hashem Beikzadeh, Khosro Heydari, Javad Nekounam, Masoud Shojaei, Andranik Teymourian, Mohammad Reza Khalatbari, Javad Kazemian, Majid Gholamnejad, Pejman Nouri, Amir Hossein Feshanghi, Farhad Majidi, Mohammad Nouri, Iman Mobali, Ehsan Hajsafi, Milad Meidavoudi, Arash Borhani, Karim Ansarifard, Amir Mohebbi, Mehrzad Madanchi, Mojtaba Zare'

Iran, which is preparing itself for the 2010 Asian Cup Qualifiers, has been drawn in Group Five along with Singapore, Thailand and Jordan. Iran leads the group with four points.

Zola Looks for Hammer Blow

Gianfranco Zola may be a relative novice in the managerial trade, but already the Italian has experienced more dizzying highs and stultifying lows than many of the most grizzled veterans.

In the space of just over a year, he has led West Ham to a top-half finish in the English Premier League, been forced to contend with myriad off-field financial problems and, most recently, negotiated a slump in form which put his own job prospects on the line.



Gianfranco Zola

That Zola has met all these scenarios with equanimity speaks volumes for his character and serves as confirmation of why he is still considered one of the brightest managerial prospects in the top flight, AFP reported.

Even during the most recent crisis—a nine-match winless streak which dumped West Ham in the relegation zone—Zola remained unflappable, in-

sisting his team's fortunes would take a turn for the better, sooner rather than later.

His faith was justified by a last-gasp victory over Aston Villa last Wednesday and the former Chelsea striker can now confront Sunday's meeting with Everton, who are locked in their own dangerous downward spiral, with genuine enthusiasm.

"Football is about confidence," he reflected.

"We know we have been playing well but not picking up the points we needed. That victory (against Villa) will give us a lot. The rest is all there."

"We know we have the qualities, we know that we can compete at high levels. The mood has been very positive and everybody has been lifted."

Zola's squad might be on the thin side but at least he can call upon genuine quality along the spine of his side in Robert Green, Matthew Upson and Carlton Cole, all England internationals.

There were signs before the Villa victory that West Ham were a team on the rise.

Arsenal were held to a draw courtesy of a stirring fight-back in the dying minutes and the Hammers raced into a two-goal lead at Sunderland before flaky defending cost them two points in the second half.

Haye Too Good for Valuev

David Haye certainly backed up his brash prediction. Haye used his superior quickness to surprise Nikolai Valuev, winning a majority decision on Saturday night and winning the WBA heavyweight title.

The British challenger came close to knocking down Valuev for the first time in his 16-year pro career during the final round, but had to settle for the decision. The scores were 116-112 on two of the judges' cards, and a 114-114



David Haye

draw on the other.

"The key was my speed," Haye said. "People don't realize I am very fast. And I have a powerful punch. I'm athletic, and if I wasn't a boxer I would be playing football or rugby."

The former cruiserweight titleholder won his third fight at heavyweight, despite giving up nearly a foot and 100 pounds to the tallest and heaviest cham-

pion in history.

"Everybody thought I was crazy," Haye said, "but I knew I could make him miss."

Haye had spent months taunting fellow heavyweight champions Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko, and even embarked on a press tour to promote a fight against Wladimir Klitschko before it was called off. Now, he'll probably escape facing the two men considered the best in the division because his first defense of the WBA title is supposed to be against John Ruiz.

The former titleholder earned the shot by stopping Adnan Serin in the seventh round earlier in the night—and already Haye is offering another prediction.

"He's a good fighter who is very underrated," Haye said of the American. "He is not the most spectacular, but I don't feel like I will struggle with him. He's about the same size as me and I think I will knock him out."

Valuev dropped to 50-2, and admitted that Haye was too quick for him.

"Tonight only one thing happened that I didn't expect," Valuev said. "It was like a marathon for me. It was like a track event. I wasn't ready to run that much."

"The judges made their scoring and I think the last round made the difference, especially the end of it."

News in Brief

Bali Title for Rezaei

France's Aravane Rezaei won the Tournament of Champions in Bali after top seed Marion Bartoli returned hurt from the final after just one set.

Bartoli had chances to win the set at 5-4 and 5-5 but the 10th seed held on and a backhand winner after a long rally gave her two set points.

Bartoli sat down in obvious pain and after having her thigh taped promptly double-faulted to lose the set 7-5, BBC wrote. "It's a surprise to finish like that, I'm very sorry for her," said Rezaei.

Bartoli had been looking for her third title of the year after winning tournaments in Monterrey and Stanford.

"I started to feel my leg was pretty tight in the middle of the set," said Bartoli.

"I'm very sad to finish like this. The last thing you want to do is injure yourself in the last match of the season."

Aoyama Clinches Last 250cc Trophy

Hiroshi Aoyama of Japan won the last ever 250cc world title when he recovered from running off the circuit to finish seventh at the Valencia Grand Prix on Sunday.

The Honda rider needed to come in 11th or higher to secure his first championship and the final 250cc title before the category is replaced by the new Moto2 class from next year.

He went off the track on lap nine and dropped down to 11th but his task was made easier when nearest title rival Marco Simoncelli crashed out while leading with seven laps left, Reuters reported.

Spaniard Hector Barbera won the race, making sure of second place in the championship standings ahead of Glera rider Simoncelli. Barbera's Spanish compatriot Alvaro Bautista was second and Italy's Raffaele De Rosa third.

Alex Debon, another Spaniard, was quickest in qualifying on Saturday but crashed late in the session and suffered a suspected broken rib that meant he was unable to race, so Simoncelli started from pole.

In the 125cc category earlier on Sunday, champion Spaniard Julian Simon just managed to hold off Bancaja team mate Bradley Smith of Britain on the final corner to win by 0.220 seconds, his fourth win in five races.

Gordon Out

Scotland and Sunderland goalkeeper Craig Gordon broke his arm in Saturday's 2-0 Premier League defeat by Tottenham Hotspur, the club said.

The 26-year-old, who was substituted in the second half at White Hart Lane after colliding with Jermain Defoe, was taken to hospital where X-rays confirmed the fracture of his left forearm.

"Craig's in a lot of pain," manager Steve Bruce told the club website, Reuters wrote.

The club, who have Hungarian international Marton Fulop and youngster Trevor Carson as reserve goalkeepers and are eighth in the league, said they did not know how long Gordon would be out of action.

Gordon, who moved to Sunderland from Hearts in 2007, had been due to join the Scotland squad in the next few days for a friendly against Wales.

WADAA Studying New Method

The World Anti-Doping Agency is studying a new method that would allow wider testing of the banned blood-boosting hormone EPO.

WADA vice president Arne Ljungqvist said on Sunday that the method still needs to be validated.

Current methods of testing for EPO are expensive, complicated and only have a detection window of up to 72 hours.

Ljungqvist said some researchers attending a two-day scientific symposium in Tokyo on blood doping have developed a new method that could be used more widely.

Ljungqvist said at the conclusion of the meeting that "this is a high priority for us, to have this process rapidly validated in order to expand the analysis for EPO."

Mickelson Holds Off Els

American Phil Mickelson edged out Ernie Els by a shot to win the HSBC Champions tournament in Shanghai.

South African Els applied the pressure with a course record nine-under-par 63.

But overnight leader Mickelson held his nerve on the final hole, despite finding rough twice, to finish with a 69 for a 17-under-par total.

Ryan Moore carded 68 to finish third, with Rory McIlroy boosting his Race to Dubai bid after a brilliant 63 earned fourth at 14-under-par, BBC reported.

Nick Watney's final round of 71 ensured fifth ahead of another Race to Dubai contender Martin Kaymer (67) and an out-of-sorts Tiger Woods.

The world number one began the final round two shots behind Mickelson in second, but a level par 72 left him five adrift and tied for sixth with Kaymer following runner-up finishes on his previous two trips to Shanghai. Mickelson's victory handed him his second HSBC Champions title in three years and also saw him become the first person to win the tournament twice, having previously won it in 2007.