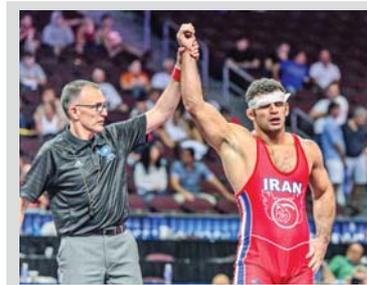


Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho hit back at the mounting criticism being heaped upon Paul Pogba, saying the France midfielder is the victim of jealousy from former professional players now working in the media.



Iran's Qassem Gholamreza Rezaei unitedworldwrestling.org

GR World Cup to kick off in southwestern Iran today

The Greco-Roman Wrestling World Cup 2017 will start in Iran's Persian Gulf city of Abadan, Khuzestan Province, today.

Russia, which has been drawn in Group A along with Iran, Kazakhstan and Germany, will take part in the prestigious event with world and Olympic Games medalists, seeking to overturn three years of runner-up finishes and host the Greco-Roman World Cup for the first time since 2013, Tasnim News Agency reported.



Russia's Roman Vlasov unitedworldwrestling.org

Despite all the firepower, today [in the evening's session] Russia can expect a stiff challenge in the preliminary rounds from defending champion Iran, even though Rio 2016 bronze medalist Saeid Abdevali (75kg) is the lone Olympian on the Iranian roster.

Group B consists of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Belarus and Ukraine.

Wrestling World Cup is an international wrestling competition among teams representing member nations of the United World Wrestling (UWW) the sport's global governing body.

The championships have been conducted every year since the 1973 tournament. The World Cup began as a dual-meet competition for the top teams on each continent, but now features the top teams in the rankings of the previous year's world championships.

Schedule:

- Thursday, March 16
 - 9:00-12:00 – Session 1
 - Group A – Russia vs. Kazakhstan, Iran vs. Germany
 - Group B – Azerbaijan vs. Turkey, Belarus vs. Ukraine
 - 17:20-18:00 – Opening Ceremony
 - 18:00-20:00 – Session 2
 - Group A – Russia vs. Iran, Kazakhstan vs. Germany
 - Group B – Azerbaijan vs. Belarus, Turkey vs. Ukraine
- Friday, March 17
 - 9:15-11:45 – Session 3
 - Group A – Russia vs. Germany, Kazakhstan vs. Iran
 - Group B – Azerbaijan vs. Ukraine, Turkey vs. Belarus
 - 11:45-13:00 – Finals for 7th-8th place and 5th-6th place
 - 16:45-18:00 – Final for 3rd-4th Place
 - 18:00-19:30 – Championship final and award ceremonies

Asian sides learn FIFA U20 World Cup opponents

OFFICIAL DRAW		
FIFA U-20 WORLD CUP KOREA REPUBLIC 2017		
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
KOREA REPUBLIC	VENEZUELA	ZAMBIA
GUINEA	GERMANY	PORTUGAL
ARGENTINA	VANUATU	IRAN
ENGLAND	MEXICO	COSTA RICA
GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
SOUTH AFRICA	FRANCE	ECUADOR
JAPAN	HONDURAS	USA
ITALY	VIETNAM	SAUDI ARABIA
URUGUAY	NEW ZEALAND	SENEGAL

Asian sides learned their FIFA U20 World Cup Korea Republic 2017 opponents on Wednesday following the tournament's official draw in Suwon.

Asia will have five teams flying the continent's flag at the global extravaganza – Japan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Vietnam which all qualified thanks to their top four finishes at last year's AFC U-19 Championship, while Korea Republic will appear as host, the-afc.com reported.

Korea Republic will meet Guinea, which returns after a 38-year absence from the tournament, six-time FIFA U20 champion Argentina, as well as England in Group A.

In Group C, Iran will come up against African champion Zambia, Portugal and Costa Rica, which has qualified nine times.

Reigning 2016 AFC U19 champion Japan will face South Africa, Italy and CONMEBOL champion Uruguay in Group D.

Vietnam will have its work out to progress from Group E where it has France, Honduras and recently crowned Oceania Football Confederation champion New Zealand for company.

Meanwhile, AFC U19 Championship runner-up Saudi Arabia is grouped with Ecuador, USA, which

will be making its maiden appearance, and Senegal in Group F.

The competition is set to get underway on May 20.

FIFA U20 World Cup groups

Group A: A1. Korea Republic, A2. Guinea, A3. Argentina, A4. England

Group B: B1. Venezuela, B2. Germany, B3. Vanuatu, B4. Mexico

Group C: C1. Zambia, C2. Portugal, C3. IR Iran, C4. Costa Rica

Group D: D1. South Africa, D2. Japan, D3. Italy, D4. Uruguay

Group E: E1. France, E2. Honduras, E3. Vietnam, E4. New Zealand

Group F: F1. Ecuador, F2. USA, F3 Saudi Arabia, F4. Senegal

Nadal to meet Federer at Indian Wells



Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal set up a fourth-round tie at the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells – a rerun of this year's Australian Open final.

Fifth seed Nadal beat fellow Spaniard Fernando Verdasco 6-3 7-5, BBC reported.

Switzerland's Federer, who won his 18th Grand Slam title with a five-set victory over Nadal in January, beat American Steve Johnson 7-6 7-6.

Novak Djokovic beat Juan Martin del Potro, while Angelique Kerber, who is set to become world number one, is out.

The German, who is guaranteed a return to the top of the rankings on Monday following Serena Williams' withdrawal from Indian Wells and the Miami Open, lost 3-6 3-6 to Russian Elena Vesnina.

Serb second seed Djokovic was hugely impressive as he won the deciding set 6-1 against Argentine Del Potro and he will play Australian 15th seed Nick Kyrgios, who earlier beat 18th seed Alexander Zverev of Germany 6-3 6-4.

"That's why I came here, to play against guys like Rafa," said Federer, 35, before a 36th meeting with Nadal, 30. "I'd better be excited now otherwise I came for the wrong reasons."

"I try to see it really as another opportunity to build upon something for the rest of the season."

"So regardless of Australia, winning or losing, I'm going to try to go out there and play free again. I think it's really important."

In earlier matches, unseeded American Donald Young beat French 14th seed Lucas Pouille 6-4 1-6 6-3 in the men's draw, while Japan's fourth seed Kei Nishikori swept past Frenchman Gilles Muller 6-2 6-2.

American 17th seed Jack Sock edged a third set tie-break to beat Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 3-6 6-3 7-6.

In the women's draw, American 12th seed Venus Williams beat Peng Shuai of China 3-6 6-1 6-3, and Czech third seed Karolina Pliskova led Timea Babos-Szky 5-1 when the Swiss retired.

S. Korea defeat kills Iran's chance to reach Asian handball semis

Sports Desk

Iran was defeated by South Korea in its second game at the 2017 Asian Women's Handball Championship on Wednesday, to fail to advance to the next round.

The Iranian squad lost 22-44 to its South Korean rival in a match held in Suwon Gymnasium – an indoor sporting arena in Suwon, South Korea, varzesh3.com reported.

Iran, which had conceded a 8-33 defeat to China in



its opener in the tournament, has lost its chance to get through to the semifinal round prior to its third [and last] group fixture against Vietnam on Friday.

South Korea won the first half 23-9 and scored another 21 goals in the second one. Iranian scorers in the fixture were Elnaz Ramezanpour (three goals), Maryam Yousefi (three goals), Mojgan Qahremani (three goals), Sanaz Rajabi (three goals), Narges Sheikh (two goals), Shaqayeq Bapiri (two goals), Mina Vatan-Parast (two goals), Razie Janbaz (two goals) and Elnaz Qassemi (two goals).

The 16th edition of the tournament is being held under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation.

It is the second time that South Korea is hosting the meet, after the tourney was held in the country 1995. The competition also acts as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2017 World Women's Handball Championship.

Group A of the meet comprised South Korea, China, Iran and Vietnam. Group B included Japan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Hong Kong.

The meet, which began on March 13, will wrap up on March 22.

FC Rostov pitch closed by Russian Premier League

A week after Jose Mourinho criticized its pitch, the Russian Premier League "banned" FC Rostov from hosting league games due to "shortfalls" in the playing surface.

Manchester United drew 1-1 at the Olimp-2 Stadium in its Europa League last-16 first-leg tie against FC Rostov last Thursday, BBC reported.



"It's hard for me to believe we are going to play on that field, if you can call it a field," Mourinho had said.

Rostov now has until March 24 to bring its pitch up to standard.

The pitch was dry and bubbly, and after the match Mourinho said the conditions made it "impossible to play a passing game".

The Russian Premier League told BBC Sport that Rostov will have its pitch inspected again on March 24, with its next home game on March 31 against FC Krasnodar.

UEFA had deemed the pitch playable for the Europa League game, but the Russian Premier League says it has different regulations in place.

United and Rostov play the second leg at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Like Rostov, Rubin Kazan's Central Stadium has also been banned by the Russian Premier League.

Gotze ruled out season with illness

World Cup winner Mario Gotze was ruled out for the rest of the season as he recovers from a "metabolic disorder" but is expected to be "fully fit" for the start of next term.

The German and Borussia Dortmund midfielder, 24, has been limited to nine Bundesliga starts because of muscular problems since re-signing from Bayern Munich last summer, BBC wrote.

Gotze is on a rehabilitation program and could be training by early summer, but it depends on how he responds to treatment, said the German club.

Dortmund added: "The long-term target for the player is to be fully fit and ready to play for the start of next season".

"BVB wish Mario Gotze a fast recovery, also in the name of their 10 million fans," said Borussia Dortmund's chief executive officer Hans-Joachim Watzke.

Gotze, who scored Germany's extra-time winning goal against Argentina in the 2014 World Cup final, has played 24 minutes of Bundesliga action in 2017.