

Germany eased past host Belarus 2-0 with goals from Leroy Sane and Marco Reus to make it two wins from first two Euro 2020 Group C qualifiers.

Iran routs Japan, moves up to second in VNL table

Sports Desk

Iran overcame Japan in straight sets in Tokyo to move up to the second spot at the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League.

On Sunday, Igor Kolaković's men beat their host 25-22, 25-21, 25-19 to make it five-out-of-six at the end of Week 2 of the competition.

Milad Ebadipour and Pouriya Yali chipped in 14 and 13 points, respectively, and topped the scoring chart for Iran, while Yuki Ishikawa got 14 points to his name in the Japanese outfit with Yuji Nishida scoring 10.

The Asian powerhouse jumped up one spot in the table, overtaking France on sets ratio, as the European giant conceded its first defeat of the competition at the hands of Bulgaria by a 3-2 scoreline in Ningbo, China.

Brazil, meanwhile, continued its perfect run as it edged past Argentina in five sets (25-20, 21-25, 26-28, 25-23, 15-12) for sixth successive victory in the league.

Iran heads back home for Week 3 where it will be playing Canada, Poland and Russia in Urmia, West Azarbaijan Province, on June 14-16.



Iran's Ali-Asghar Mojarrad (L) goes up for a spike against Japan during a 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League match in Tokyo, Japan, on June 9, 2019.



Sajjad Ganjzadeh (R)

Iranians collect eight Karate 1 PL medals, top men's kumite standings

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Iranians bagged eight medals at the fourth round of Karate 1 Premier League in Shanghai, China.

On Saturday, in an all-Iranian final, Sajjad Ganjzadeh overcame Saleh Abazari to collect the men's +84kg gold.

Mehdi Filami of France and Georgian Gogita Arkania shared the third place of the weight division.

Seyyed Ali Karimi – representing Iran in the men's -67kg contests – stood second in his weight class after he suffered a defeat against Andres Madera Delgado of Venezuela in the

final. Bahman Asgari also finished his campaign with a silver as he was beaten by Dostonbek Otobolaev of Uzbekistan in the men's -75kg final.

Additionally, Majid Hassannia (-60kg) and Mehdi Khodabakhshi (-84kg) added a couple of bronze medals to Iran's tally in the men's kumite contests, having beaten Brazilian Douglas Brose and Zabiollah Poursheikh of Iran, respectively, in the third-place bouts of their weight categories.

In the women's kumite competitions, Taravat Khakhsar (-55kg) and Hamideh Abbas-Ali

– two gold medalists at the Karate 1 Series A in Istanbul in mid-May – had to settle for two bronze medals this time around.

Khakhsar beat Italian Lorena Busa 3-0 in her last fight while Abbas-Ali overcame Clio Ferracuti, also from Italy, 3-2 in their bronze-medal bout.

A total of six medals gave Iran a top-spot finish in the men's kumite table while the country stood fifth in the overall standings, following Japan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and China.

The fifth round of the competitions will be held in Tokyo, Japan, on September 6-8.

End of an NBA era looms as Warriors on brink of defeat



EZRA SHAW/AFP

Injured and weary, the Golden State Warriors are one loss from the end of their five-year NBA dynasty run at the hands of the upstart Toronto Raptors.

The Raptors own a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven NBA Finals entering tonight's game five at Toronto and could become the first team from outside the US to capture the championship, AFP reported.

"It's difficult," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said of the excitement. "Can't let people take you someone you aren't yet."

"We know this is a great team and we know how hard we have to play to beat them. We have to just focus on our own thing to be the hardest working team on the floor."

The Warriors are in their fifth consecutive NBA Finals, seeking their third title in a row and fourth in five years.

Of 34 teams that seized a 3-1 NBA Finals lead, the only one that failed to win was Golden State in 2016, when LeBron James rallied the Cleveland Cavaliers to an historic title.

"We've been on the wrong side of 3-1 before, so why not make our own history?" Warriors forward Draymond Green said.

"We've won three in a row before. You've got to have faith you can get it done. Believe what we believe and give it what we got. And if we fail, you live with the results, but just leave it all out there."

Kawhi Leonard, who won an NBA title with San Antonio in 2014, directs a quick-strike attack and smothering defensive system for the Raptors, who have outlasted the injury-hit Warriors.

Golden State playoff scor-

ing leader Kevin Durant, the 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player, has been out for a month with a right calf injury.

"His body will tell him if he can get out there," Green said. "If he can, great. If not, still got to try to find a way to win the next game."

The Warriors seek a third consecutive title and fourth in five seasons, but the toll of so many deep playoff runs is showing, guard Klay Thompson missing game three with a left hamstring strain and Andre Igoudala slowed by a leg injury.

"It's a long season. You play 100-plus games, you're going to be banged up," Thompson said.

"You just got to dig deep. No one's going to feel sorry for you, so you just got to go out there, man up and play the best of your ability."

DeMarcus Cousins returned from a torn quad in six weeks to play in the finals while Kevon Looney was declared done with a chest injury but returned for game four.

"We can get this done"

Combined with Toronto's solid play, the injuries might be too much for the Warriors to overcome.

"It's not over," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said.

"We still have life and have an opportunity to win. It's just a matter of can we get it done or not, and we're going to leave it all out there starting on Monday."

"The only way we're going to get back in this series is give everything we got for 48 minutes, everybody that sets foot on that floor in game five. In our locker room we're talking about believing. Everybody believes we can get this done."

The Warriors rallied from 3-1 down to beat Oklahoma City in the 2016 Western Conference finals, so they know it can be done.

"You just try to win one game," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

"We're not thinking about winning three. Win one game. That's the task."

"I know we're capable. We got a lot of talent and we got a lot of pride. These guys have been to the finals five straight years for a reason. They're unbelievably competitive. And they're going to fight the whole way."

The Raptors expect nothing less.

"We didn't do nothing yet," Raptors guard Kyle Lowry said.

"They're the defending champs and they're not going to go out easy. They're going to come and fight and that's how we're preparing ourselves."



Australia's Ashleigh Barty kisses the French Open trophy after beating the Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova in the women's singles final in Paris, France, on June 8, 2019.

Googalongs, Court lead the way as Australia lauds battling Barty

Evyonne Googalongs Cawley led the way as Australia hailed its new Grand Slam tennis champion Ash Barty on Sunday after the proudly indigenous 23-year-old ended the country's 46-year wait for a French Open women's singles champion.

Margaret Court and Googalongs Cawley between them won four of the first six titles at Roland Garros after the dawn of the Open era and the lack of Australian success since has reflected a wider decline of the women's game Down Under.

That Barty's victory over Marketa Vondrousova on Saturday was only the second for an Australian in a Grand Slam women's final in the 39 years since Googalongs Cawley won her seventh major at Wimbledon made the outpouring all the more understandable.

Googalongs Cawley,

with no Grand Slam global sports star, was Barty's role model as a child and the 67-year-old said she was delighted not only at the breakthrough but also the style of game the Queenslander displayed in her win.

"What a wonderful result for Australia and how exciting that another Aboriginal has won at the first six titles at Roland Garros after the dawn of the Open era and the lack of Australian success since has reflected a wider decline of the women's game Down Under."

"Now they have developed into a beautiful game full of artistry, movement and power. It was there for all to marvel at in Paris."

The decline in the Australian men's game from the dominant days of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s came more slowly than in the women's but has been no less marked

with no Grand Slam champion since Lleyton Hewitt at Wimbledon in 2002. Most concerning for some in Australia has been the on-and-off-court antics of the two men who at various times have looked most likely to break that drought, Bernard Tomic and Nick Kyrgios.

Court, a Christian minister whose record 24 French Open singles titles spanned the end of the amateur and start of the professional era, said she was particularly delighted at Barty's demeanor.

"She is a very good role model," the 76-year-old told the Western Australian newspaper.

"She is good for our nation. I think she is very refreshing. I was always taught when I was young that I was a role model for the young, a role model for the game and a role model for our nation. I was taught that."

"It was always our nation first and I think it's so sad to see some players in the men's side with such great talent, thinking they are bigger than the game. It's sad."

Sunday was a day of rejoicing rather than re-cremations for most Australians, however, and 11-times major champion Rod Laver, Hewitt and Kyrgios were among a plethora of former Australian number ones to post their congratulations.

There was also a heartfelt congratulatory note from Australia's most recent Grand Slam champion Sam Stosur, the 35-year-old who won the 2011 US Open but was unable to build on that success. "So happy and proud of you," the world number 96 posted on Instagram next to a picture of Barty nursing the Suzanne-Lenglen Cup.

"Always knew you would achieve this incredible success! You have such a gift and determination and now the trophy to show..."