

Israeli Bowlers Banned From World Indoor Championships



LONDON (Telegraph) - Israeli players have been banned from competing in next month's World Indoor Bowls Championships amid a campaign by pro-Palestinian groups.

The World Bowls Tour (WBT) said in a statement there had been a "significant escalation in related po-

litical concerns" following the involvement of Israeli bowlers at the Scottish International Open in August.

Three Israelis were expected to compete at the World Indoor Championships - which will take place in Hop-ton-on-Sea, Norfolk - but their invitations have been withdrawn.

Daniel Alomin can no longer compete in the singles, while Amnon Amar and Itai Rigbi have been pulled out of the pairs.

"This decision was not taken lightly and has been made in the best interests of the event's success and integrity," the statement added.

WBT had faced pressure from several pro-Palestinian groups, including Palestine Action and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The Norfolk Palestine Solidarity Campaign had urged its supporters to sign a petition calling for the players' invitations to be rescinded.

In its campaign, the group accused Israel of committing apartheid against Palestinians and called for its athletes to be banned under the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement - originally signed to exclude South Africa. More than 45,000 Palestinians have been killed during war, according to figures from Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry.

Israel was initially banned from last year's Ice Hockey World Championships, but the decision was later reversed.

The Palestine Football Association has called for its Israeli counterpart to be suspended by world governing body FIFA.

Djokovic, Sabalenka Open New Season With Victories



Brisbane (Reuters) - Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka opened their Australian Open campaigns with straight sets victories at the Brisbane International tennis tournament on Tuesday.

Djokovic beat Australian world number 73 Rinky Hijikata 6-3, 6-3 in one hour and 14 minutes on center court.

The Serbian 10-time Australian Open champion lost only 10 points on his serve and never gave Hijikata a break point opportunity.

"I always expect myself to do well on the court," Djokovic said on court after the match. "Obviously, a win is a win. To start off the new season with a win is very important."

Earlier on Tuesday, Sabalenka -- the world number one and two-time reigning Australian Open champion -- beat Mexico's Renata Zarazua 6-4, 6-0 in 65 minutes.

The powerful-hitting Sabalenka won 51 percent of points when returning serve compared

to Zarazua's 28 percent.

It takes her record in Australia since the start of 2023 to 23 wins and one defeat, with the sole defeat coming in the final of the Brisbane International in January 2024.

"It was a tricky start for me but I'm glad that I closed the first set. Then in the second set it felt like whatever I would do would work so I'm really happy with the first win of the season," Sabalenka said.

She will face Kazakhstani 15th seed Yulia Putintseva on Thursday while Djokovic will play against French veteran Gael Monfils.

China's Yuan Yue will play ninth seed Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine on Wednesday afternoon local time.

In the men's draw, second seed and defending champion Grigor Dimitrov will match up against Australian Aleksandar Vukic. Djokovic will again team up with Nick Kyrgios in the men's doubles after winning their first round match on Monday night

Man United End Miserable Month With 2-0 Home Loss to Newcastle

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Newcastle United beat Manchester United 2-0 in the Premier League on Monday thanks to early headed goals from Alexander Isak and Joelinton at Old Trafford, an ugly culmination of one of the most miserable months in the home side's recent memory.

With five losses in their last six league games, Manchester United languish 14th in the standings on 19 points, their worst placing to end a calendar year since they were 15th in 1989. Newcastle are fifth on 32 points.

"One of the more difficult moments in the history of Manchester United," said manager Ruben Amorim, who called the team's position in the table embarrassing.

"It's a very difficult moment, but we have to fight to win the next game."

Isak got the visitors on the scoresheet in the fourth minute when he leapt to head home a pinpoint cross from Lewis Hall with both Harry Maguire and Lisandro Martinez failing to

pick him up.

It was the 11th goal in 11 games for Isak, who has scored more Premier League goals in December than any other player with eight.

Newcastle doubled their lead in the 19th minute in near carbon copy fashion with Anthony Gordon sending in a cross that Joelinton headed in.

The win marked Newcastle's second victory at Old Trafford in 40 league visits, dating back to 1972.

It is also the first time since 1979 that Manchester United have lost three consecutive league games at home. Their 18 goals conceded in all competitions in December is their most in a single month since March 1964 (also 18).

The score could have been more lopsided, with Isak lashing a shot past keeper Andre Onana in what would have made it 3-0 in the first half before the off-side flag went up to the relief of United fans.

Soon after, Sandro Tonali



Joelinton (L) of Newcastle United celebrates after scoring a goal against Manchester United in a Premier League game at Old.

missed an absolute sitter when he ran onto a flick from Gordon but clattered it off the woodwork.

While the home side, who were playing without captain Bruno Fernandes, who was serving a suspension, struggled to get out of their end in the first half, Rasmus Hojlund and Casemiro both squandered chances just before halftime.

Hojlund was played in by Mar-

tinez but sent his shot across the face of goal, inches from the far corner, while Casemiro unleashed a shot that sailed wide, burying his head in his hands.

Amorim's men were better after the break and Maguire's diving header that goalkeeper Martin Dubravka grabbed at least had the Old Trafford crowd - who had booed their squad off the pitch at the break - cheering their effort.

Timberwolves Past Spurs 112-110

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Don-te DiVincenzo scored 26 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves defeated the San Antonio Spurs 112-110 on Sunday night.

Rudy Gobert had 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Timberwolves, won their third straight. Julius Randle had 16 points, while Jaden McDaniels added 12 points and 10 boards for Minnesota.

Anthony Edwards, who earlier in the day was fined \$100,000 for continued use of profanity in postgame media comments, was held to 14 points, 11 below his season average.

After DiVincenzo made one of two free throws with 12.1 seconds left, the Spurs had one more possession down 112-110. San Antonio found a wide-open Jeremy Sochan for 3, but he came up short.

Wembanyama led San Antonio with 34 points and eight rebounds. Harrison Barnes had 24 points, Devin Vassell had 22 and Chris Paul dished out 14 assists.



Trailing by 13 early in the third quarter, Wembanyama keyed a 16-4 run by showcasing his diverse offensive skills. He scored in the low post, hit a 3, made a pair of free throws and drained two midrange jumpers.

Minnesota survived a brutal shooting night from 3-point range, making just 11 of 44 attempts from beyond the arc. DiVincenzo was 5 for 10, but Edwards and Randle combined to go 1 for 16.

Salah Still Far Away From New Liverpool Contract

LONDON (Xinhua) -- Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah says he is focused on helping his team win the Premier League title, but admits he is still "far away" from signing a new contract.

The Egyptian scored his 20th goal of the season and helped set up Cody Gakpo for the second goal in Liverpool's 5-0 win away to West Ham on Sunday to

lift them eight points clear at the top of the table.

However, with his contract due to expire at the end of June, he has not still agreed to a new contract and when asked about his future in a post-game TV interview, he admitted he and the club were still far away from that.

"I don't want to put anything in the media...The only thing on my mind is I want Liverpool to win the league and I want to be part of that."

"I will do my best for the team to win the trophy. There are a few other teams catching up with us and we need to stay focused and humble and go again," commented Salah.

The forward isn't the only Liverpool player who will be able to leave for free at the end of the campaign with defenders Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold also out of contract, with Alexander-Arnold being linked with a possible move to Real Madrid.

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