

Olympic champion Simone Biles will be one of American gymnasts who will testify before a U.S. Senate panel this week, as it explores FBI's missteps in investigating disgraced former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, Reuters reported.

Iran beats Pakistan, eases into Asian volleyball quarters

Sports Desk

Iran made a clean sweep of straight-set victories in Pool B of the 2021 Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, beating Pakistan 25-20, 25-19, 25-15 in Chiba, Japan.

Saber Kazemi made the biggest contribution to the defending champion's triumph on Tuesday with 18 points, followed by skipper Milad Ebadipour, who chipped in 13.

that failed to progress beyond the group stage at the Tokyo Olympics in July.

"Pakistan was a better opponent, compared to Hong Kong and Thailand, and put more pressure on us, but we managed to control the game. We played with different tactics throughout the match today, which will help us in the next stages."

Speaking of the two opponents in the quarterfinals, Ataie said, "Chinese Taipei and South Korea play with



Iranian players celebrate a point during a 3-0 victory over Pakistan at the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship in Chiba, Japan, on September 14, 2021.

The result saw Iran and Pakistan join Chinese Taipei and South Korea in Pool F of the quarterfinals, where Behrouz Ataie's men will only square off against the two East Asian sides, with the top two of the group heading into the semifinals.

Iran had routed Hong Kong and Thailand earlier in the competition.

"Today's victory was an important one for us as the top spot of the group was at stake. We now have a full assessment of our players after three games," said new coach Ataie, who has picked a new-look side for the competition, selecting only five players from the side

high tempo and are good in reception, so we will have to deal with those qualities.

"The first three games served as preparatory matches for us, and I hope we deliver even better performances further in the tournament," added the Iranian, who led the country to a memorable world under-21 title in 2019.

Replacing Russian Vladimir Alekno after the Olympics, Ataie is the first Iranian in charge of the national team in 11 years – and only the second in two decades.

Iran is seeking a fourth Asian trophy, having won back-to-back titles in 2011 and 2013, before beating Australia on home soil in the 2019 final.



Esteghlal coach Majdi rues missed chances in ACL exit against Al Hilal

Esteghlal manager Farhad Majdi reacts on the touchline during a 2-0 defeat against Al Hilal at the AFC Champions League in Dubai, UAE, on September 13, 2021.

Sports Desk

Esteghlal manager Farhad Majdi rued his team's missed chances during a 2-0 defeat against Al Hilal at the AFC Champions League (ACL) round of 16 on Monday.

French striker Bafetimbi Gomis gave the Saudi giant the lead in the 39th minute in Dubai's Zabeel Stadium before Salem al-Dawsari added a second with 11 minutes into the second half to end the Tehran-based Blues' bid for a third Asian trophy, and a first since 1991.

However, Esteghlal players might blame themselves for another ACL setback as they were not clinical in front of Al Hilal goal.

Blues' center-back Siavash Yazdani headed Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's free-kick just wide in the 16th minute, while a rasping volley from Amir-Arsalan Motehary forced Abdullah al-Mayouf into a fine save shortly after.

The Saudi keeper again had to produce a heroic save to deny Arman Ramezani's header after substitute Babak Moradi's effort from the edge of the box went above the crossbar.

"Our players gave their best and despite creating chances, we failed to convert them," Majidi said in the post-match

press conference.

"Al Hilal are a strong team and they have influential foreign players.

"I want to thank the players for what they did today. It was a difficult match as our preparations were not perfect while our opponents changed their style of play specifically for this match," added the former Esteghlal skipper.

Meanwhile, Al Hilal head coach Leonardo Jardim said his team had to work hard for the victory.

"We won an important match against a team who had won their group," said the Portuguese.

"Despite the win, the match was not easy and we faced strong opponents.

"I told the players that our opponents would push hard in the early periods of the match. We, however, controlled the match afterwards and played with a balanced performance.

"The players showed great determination to win tonight. Our aim is to win all our matches in the knockout stage and we must show great concentration."

Al Hilal will now set its sights on Friday's knockout stage draw with the Saudi Pro League side on course to adding to the 2019 crown.

AFC, CONCACAF back FIFA's biennial World Cup feasibility study



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The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said it welcomed world governing body FIFA's plan to conduct a feasibility study into staging the World Cup every two years instead of every four.

The region is guaranteed four automatic spots and an intercontinental play-off slot for the men's 2022 World Cup, alongside tournament hosts Qatar, Reuters reported.

FIFA's proposal of staging a biennial World Cup has been met with opposition, with Europe's governing body UEFA rejecting the idea while the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) said the proposal was "highly unviable".

Meanwhile, the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) said it was also open to the idea.

CONCACAF said it recognised the merits of creating a new soccer calendar if it meant fewer international windows, less travel for players and more competitive games instead of friendlies.

"We will continue to look at these proposals constructively, with an open mind, and in the spirit of positive engagement," CONCACAF said in a statement.

"While CONCACAF's immediate focus is on its own region, we also believe in the importance of being part of the global football family and we will listen to the views of football stakeholders in all parts of the world.

"We encourage not only our fellow confederations but also all members of the global football family to come together and work collaboratively to create FIFA calendars and competitions that have benefits for the development of the game in all regions across

the world."

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin warned last week of a potential European boycott of the World Cup if FIFA's plans go ahead. "We can decide not to play in it," Ceferin told The Times newspaper.

"As far as I know, the South Americans are on the same page. So good luck with a World Cup like that.

"I think it will never happen as it is so much against the basic principles of football.

"To play every summer a one-month tournament, for the players it's a killer. If it's every two years it clashes with the women's World Cup, with the Olympic football tournament," added Slovenian Ceferin.

"The value is precisely because it is every four years, you wait for it, it's like the Olympic Games, it's a huge event. I don't see our federations supporting that.

"I hope they (FIFA) will come to their senses, because I don't see the right approach to go everywhere except the confederations, not to speak to us.

"They didn't come, they didn't call, I didn't get a letter or anything. I just read in the media."

Ceferin said he also had no interest in UEFA's Euros being held every two years instead of every four years.

"It might be good for UEFA financially but the problem is we would be killing football like that. We are killing the players. I don't see the clubs allowing the players to go and that would divide us completely," he added.

New York crowd was not booing me: US Open champion Medvedev

US Open champion Daniil Medvedev says he did not feel there was any hostility towards him personally from the crowd during his victory over Novak Djokovic.

The chair umpire had to tell fans inside Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York to settle down on several occasions when the Russian was at championship point, BBC Sport reported.

"I don't think they were booing me," he told BBC Radio 5 Live.

Medvedev convincingly beat Djokovic 6-4 6-4 6-4 to claim his first Grand Slam honour.

The crowd at Flushing Meadows are known to create a raucous atmosphere during the major tournament and Medvedev produced three double faults as he tried to serve out for the title.

"There were a lot of Serbian fans," said the 25-year-old. "I didn't hear booing from my side, I heard screaming for Novak."

"Of course in those moments when I was doing second serves and double faults, it's not easy because that doesn't happen often, so you are not used to it.

"And it was the end of the match so I didn't feed off it. I didn't even think 'what should I do with it?'. I just knew I had to focus on myself, try to win the match, no matter if it's loud or if it's quiet, for or against me.

"My goal was to win the match and I'm happy that I managed to put everything aside and managed to do it."

World number two Medvedev has experienced an uneven relationship with US Open supporters, telling the crowd during his run to the final in 2019 that their boos had given him "so

much energy".

"I'm willing to play any tournament in any part of the world," he said. "Some they like me and in other places, like the US Open, they were booing me two years ago and then they were cheering for me in the final.



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Daniil Medvedev is in action during a US Open final victory over Novak Djokovic in Flushing, NY, US, on September 12, 2021.

"Sometimes I do mistakes, like everybody, but I'm doing mistakes because I'm being myself.

"I just take it easy [with the crowds] and just be myself. Not only with the crowds, but in life. I'm not trying to fake anything.

"If I would've thanked everyone from the start, when I was just a top 100 player, then maybe I would be more liked – but that's not my style. I just want to be myself and let people decide if they like me or not."

All eyes were on Djokovic, 34, in New York as the world number one was bidding to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four tennis majors in the same year.

He was also aiming to surpass the Grand Slam title tallies of tennis greats Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, with the trio all locked on 20 trophies each.

"I told him straight away at the net that I was sorry because I knew what he was going for," Medvedev added.

"And really, tennis is a brutal sport because there are two persons starting from the first round and only one can win – that's brutal, so, after the match I said sorry.

"He's a great champion and he congratulated me and for him, it was such a tough moment but to be honest, I never saw Novak not gracious after a defeat. That's why he is a true champion."