Azmoun shines as Leverkusen fails to win

Sports Desk

Iranian star footballer Sardar Azmoun gave a riveting performance on Sunday, despite his team losing 3-2 to FSV Mainz.

Bayer Leverkusen which benefitted from Azmoun as a target man started the game dominantly, winning a penalty on the Iranian striker in the 20th minute, confirmed by the VAR (Video Assistant Referee).

Yet, Edmond Tapsoba failed to capitalize on this great opportunity, and his right footed shot was saved by the Mainz keeper in the bottom left corner.

Leverkusen was punished a few minutes later when in the 26th minute of the match, Mainz's Anthony Caci fired a right footed shot from the center of the box to the bull's eye.

But, the exciting game was far from over. Azmoun came to the rescue for Leverkusen with a beautiful dribble and a perfectly timed assist for Nadiem Amiri, who fired a right footed shot from the center of the box to the top right corner.

FSV Mainz took the lead in the 49th minute when Jae-Sung Lee assisted Leandro Barreiro with a headed pass and Barreiro's left footed shot from the center of the box landed on the bottom left corner.

The two teams headed to the dressing rooms while Xabi Alonso and his players at Bayer Leverkusen were looking gloomy, but it was Azmoun who hit the post in the 58th minute of the game and Patrik Schick scored from the rebound, bringing with himself joy to Leverkusen's bench.

Yet, Amine Adli conceded a penalty in Leverkusen's penalty area, and the referee did not hesitate to show him the red card.

Marcus Ingvartsen converted the penalty with a left footed shot to the bottom right corner for Mainz, giving his team a 3-2 lead in the 82nd minute of the game.

The match ended with Mainz winning the crucial battle for the 9th and 10th place in the Bundesliga table over Leverkusen. However, Azmoun's performance in the game assured Xabi Alonso of a target man in whom he can trust.

There were rumors about the possibility of Sardar Azmoun leaving Leverkusen during the winter transfer season and he was, according to Fabrizio Romano, on the verge of moving to Olympique de Marseille and play in France's Ligue 1, but no agreement was reached so that Azmoun would not go through an early departure from Leverkusen.

Azmoun's statistics and an in-depth analysis of his performance shows that he had a great night on Sunday, where had 35 touches, recorded an 83% pass accuracy, created a great scoring chance, had one successful tackle and six ball recoveries and ended up being one of Leverkusen's best players in the game.

NBA All-Star Game 2023: Team Giannis beats Team LeBron as Jayson Tatum sets record

'Winner, winner, chicken dinner!'

Jayson Tatum put on a record-setting show, and made Giannis Antetokounmpo look like a genius. Tatum scored an All-Star Game-record 55 points on his way to winning MVP honours, and Team Giannis ended LeBron James' hold on All-Star captain supremacy by beating Team LeBron 184-175 in the NBA's annual showcase exhibition on Sunday night, the Associated Press reported.

Tatum had 27 points in the third quarter, another All-Star Game record for any period. He was the first pick by Antetokounmpo in the starters' portion of the All-Star draft, and in the end, that pick proved to be the right one.

"It means the world," Tatum said. "You think of all the legends and great players that have played this game, and in all honesty, records are made to be broken. I'll hold it for as long as I can, but I'm certain someone will come along in a couple years and try to break it."

Tatum broke Anthony Davis' All-Star record of 52 points. He was 22 of 31 from the floor, plus had 10 rebounds and six assists.

It was James' first loss in six times as captain. Antetokounmpo improved to 1-2 in his All-Star captaincies, and became the first captain to hoist a new trophy presented to the winners of the All-Star Game.

"Winner, winner, chicken dinner," Antetokounmpo said.

Donovan Mitchell added 40 for Team Giannis, which got 26 points from Damian Lillard — including the game-winner to push his team past the target score.

Jaylen Brown scored 35 points and had 14 rebounds for Team LeBron, while Kyrie Irving had 32 points and 15 assists and Joel Embiid finished with 32 points.

Lillard, the winner of the 3-point contest on All-Star Saturday Night, made eight 3s — including a halfcourt pullup in the third quarter.

"That was the worst basketball game I've ever seen," Team LeBron coach Michael Malone said, clearly poking fun at the defense-optional event.

The league had a ceremony before the second half to pay tribute to the three leading scorers in NBA history: No. 3 Karl Malone, No. 2 Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and James, now the game's career leader after he passed Abdul-Jabbar earlier this month.

Malone and Abdul-Jabbar were brought to the stage, and then Dwyane Wade — James' former teammate in Miami and now a part-owner of the Jazz — introduced James to bring him onto the platform.

"We've all been witnesses," Wade said. "No matter the challenge, no matter the noise, he was relentless."

Antetokoumpo drafted his team before the game, went through warmups (such as they were) and started the game as planned.

But his right wrist was wrapped, and that was an ominous sign. The injury kept him out of All-Star Saturday's skills event, limited him to 20 seconds in this one. He got an uncontested dunk to open the game, then took a foul and headed to the bench.

"Whatever I have, I'm going to give," Antetokounmpo said. "That's who I am. That's never going to change."

As in past years, the teams played for charity, with Team LeBron raising money for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Utah and Team Giannis for Raise the Future, which connects youth waiting in foster care with stable adults. Each team started with $150,000, with the first three quarters worth another $100,000 apiece and the All-Star Game winner getting another $150,000.

Tottenham call for action after racist abuse of Son

Tottenham Hotspur called for social media companies and authorities to "take action" after online racist abuse was directed at Son Heung-min following his goal against West Ham United on Sunday.

South Korea forward Son scored within minutes of his introduction as a second-half substitute in the 2-0 London derby win at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, The National reported.

"We have been made aware of the utterly reprehensible online racist abuse directed at Son Heung-min during today's match, which has been reported by the club," Tottenham said on the club's official Twitter feed on Sunday night.

"We stand with Sonny and once again call on the social media companies and authorities to take action."

The English Football Association echoed the club's call for action.

"We strongly condemn the racist abuse aimed at Son Heung-min this evening," an FA spokesperson replied to Tottenham's tweet.

"This has no place in our game and we fully support the authorities and social media companies to take the strongest possible action to tackle it."

In June 2022, a group of 12 men who had been arrested for racially abusing Son on Twitter were given community service punishments and wrote apologies to the Tottenham forward.

Tottenham club officials had complained of "abhorrent racist abuse" on social media after the 3-1 home defeat to Manchester United on April 11, 2021.

In August 2022, Chelsea banned a season ticket holder indefinitely for aiming racist abuse at Son during a 2-2 Premier League draw at Stamford Bridge.

Meanwhile, Tottenham assistant Cristian Stellini laughed off his 100 per cent record while deputising for Antonio Conte and revealed a potential return date for his manager following Sunday's home win over West Ham.

Stellini again guided Spurs to a crucial victory – like against Marseille and Manchester City earlier this season – after second-half goals from Emerson Royal and Son sent Spurs above Newcastle United into fourth place in the Premier League.