

# Reds boss Golmohammadi hails 'proper attitude' in derby triumph



Persepolis manager Yahya Golmohammadi (l.) celebrates with coaching staff member Afshin Peirovani after the 1-0 victory over Esteghlal in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on April 23, 2023.  
● PAYAM SANI/IRNA

## Sports Desk

Persepolis manager Yahya Golmohammadi was full of praise for his players for showing a "proper attitude" throughout a massive 1-0 victory over archrival Esteghlal in a top-of-the-table battle in the Persian Gulf Pro League. Both sides were in dazzling form prior to the 100th

Tehran derby, with Persepolis - trailing Esteghlal and Sepahan on top of the table by a single point - eyeing a fourth successive win after the Persian new year vacations while Esteghlal was on a run of nine victories in 10 unbeaten games - including a 6-1 hammering of Havadar last time out - since the defeat away to Sepahan in January.

While both sets of supporters were expecting Esteghlal's in-form winger Mehdi Qayedi and his opposite number in the red shirt Mehdi Torabi to decide the fate of the contest, half-time substitute Issa Al-e Kassir, who missed the first half of the campaign through injury, emerged as the hero of the day for Persepolis as he bagged his first league goal

of the season to help his team leapfrog Esteghlal and move atop the table before Sepahan's home game against Malavan on Monday. "It was a tough game. We started on the front foot though the high temperature really affected the performance of both sides in the first half," said Golmohammadi, who is unbeaten in 10 Tehran derbies on the Reds

bench. "But our players had the proper attitude and the winning mentality in the dressing room at half time to leave the pitch with maximum points," added the Iranian, whose team remains in contention to lift a sixth league trophy in seven years. "Thank God we scored early in the second half and then our backline and keeper did

a great job when Esteghlal pushed forward through long balls in our box. My players deserve credit as they were under a lot of pressure to win this game and they got what they deserved."

While both Persepolis full-backs Danial Esmaeilifar and Ali Nemati delivered man-of-the-match performances to keep Qayedi and Mohammad Mohebbi at bay, Sunday's game will surely be one to remember for 33-year-old Al-e Kassir, whose two-year Persepolis career has been dominated by injuries and a six-month suspension for a controversial goal celebration in the AFC Champions League in 2020 but now has two derby winners among 17 goals in the Reds outfit under his belt.

"It took him some time to recover from the latest injury but he rejoined the training with positive energy and deserved the goal and the celebration as he has been through a lot. I can only hope he keeps up the good work in the future," Golmohammadi said of his striker, who was booked for taking his shirt off after getting on the score-sheet.

Meanwhile, Esteghlal head coach Ricardo Sa Pinto said his players "should have done better with the final balls" in a "balanced first half."

"We conceded an unlucky goal early in the second half as the ball hit the back of our defender and then bounced off the post before going in. But that's what a derby is all about. One chance and one goal," added the Portuguese.

## Guardiola issues rallying cry to fans as City host Arsenal in 'final'



● JASON CAIRNDUFF/REUTERS

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has urged fans to turn up the volume in their top-of-the-table clash with Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday as his side look to take control of the Premier League title race.

Arsenal have lost significant ground in recent weeks, with three successive draws leaving them five points clear of City but having played two games more, Reuters reported.

"Wednesday is a final against a team that has been the best team in England so far and is five points ahead of us," Guardiola told reporters.

"I know even though they have drawn the last three games, the way they play in big, big parts of the game, it is difficult to stop... It's a massive, important game for us. We know winning will give us a step to putting it completely in our hands.

"The Premier League is 11 months working, working, working. And we want to take this opportunity. We cannot do it alone. Hopefully all the Etihad will be full three hours before the game."

Guardiola has previously criticised the club's supporters for failing to get behind the team. After a 4-2 comeback victory over Tottenham Hotspur in January, Guardiola said fans had been "silent for 45 minutes".

# Timberwolves hold off Nuggets to stay alive, Warriors edge Kings

Anthony Edwards scored 34 points, including a three-point dagger with 11.5 seconds left, as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Denver Nuggets 114-108 in overtime Sunday to stay alive in the NBA Playoffs.

Western Conference top seeds Denver, led by 43 points from reigning two-time Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic, closed regulation on a 12-0 run to force overtime, AFP reported.

But they were out-scored 18-12 in the extra session at the Target Center in Minneapolis as the Timberwolves pulled within 3-1 in the series.

Minnesota still face a daunting task - no NBA team has come back from 3-0 down to win a best-of-seven series.

Mike Conley added 19 points for Minnesota. Karl-Anthony Towns scored 17 points with 11 rebounds and Rudy Gobert added 14 points and 15 rebounds as the Timberwolves withstood another big night from Jokic.

The Serbian star matched his playoff scoring high and added 11 rebounds and six assists. The teams swapped the lead four times in overtime, but Nuggets coach Michael Malone said too many defensive lapses in the extra session doomed his team.

"You hold them to 16 points in the fourth quarter, then (they have) 18 in five minutes," Malone said. "That's the hardest thing to stomach about this game is that when the game was on the line, we were unwilling and unable to get the necessary stops."

It was the second Western Conference thriller of the day, after the Golden State Warriors held off a ferocious fourth-quarter fightback



Timberwolves' Anthony Edwards drives to the basket during a victory over the Nuggets in NBA Playoffs at Target Center in Minneapolis, MN, US, on April 23, 2023.  
● DAVID SHERMAN/GETTY IMAGES

from the Sacramento Kings to secure a 126-125 victory that leveled their series at two games apiece.

Harrison Barnes almost snatched victory for Sacramento at the buzzer, but his long-range effort bounced off the rim to leave the NBA champions celebrating.

Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 32 points - and breathed a sigh of relief after two uncharacteristic blunders in a frenetic finale at the Chase Center.

Curry missed a wide-open three-pointer with his team leading 126-121 with less than a minute remaining.

He then erroneously called a timeout when the Warriors had none left, earning a technical foul and allowing Sacramento's Malik Monk to make it a four-point game with a free throw.

De'Aaron Fox's three-pointer pulled Sacramento within 126-125 and Curry missed another floater to give the Kings a

final chance.

Klay Thompson added 26 points and Jordan Poole had 22. Draymond Green, back from suspension, scored 12 points with 10 rebounds and seven assists off the bench to help the Warriors withstand a 38-point performance from Fox.

In the Eastern Conference, the New York Knicks and Boston Celtics moved within a victory of advancing, the Knicks beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 102-93 and the Celtics downing Atlanta 129-121 to each take 3-1 series leads.

Jalen Brunson drained five three-pointers on the way to 29 points for the Knicks, who again electrified Madison Square Garden.

With just one win from three more games the Knicks can advance past the first round for the first time since 2013.

Darius Garland led Cleveland with 23 points but Donovan Mitchell scored just 11 - only two in the second half.

The Cavs will try to extend the series when they host game five on Wednesday.

The Celtics can wrap up their series at home tonight after bouncing back from a disappointing game-three defeat with a convincing victory in Atlanta.

Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown scored 31 points apiece for the Celtics, each delivering a dunk in the final minute as the Celtics thwarted the Hawks' final rally bid.

Hawks star Trae Young finished with a game-high 35 points and handed out 14 assists. But Boston stepped up their defensive intensity and had an answer for every Atlanta run, never trailing after the first quarter.

## Farah says Great North Run will be his final race

Britain's four-times Olympic champion Mo Farah said he will end his athletics career at the Great North Run in September.

Farah finished ninth in his final marathon in London on Sunday, clocking 2:10:28 - nine minutes behind winner Kelvin Kiptum, Reuters reported.

The 40-year-old will compete at the 10km Great Manchester Run on May 21 before the Great North Run half-marathon on Sept. 10.

"Part of me was wanting to cry," Farah told BBC on Sunday after the London Marathon. "I will miss that feeling, I am emotional today."

"I want to pass that on. The Great North Run is going to be my last ever run and that will be my goodbye."

"My career has been amazing, my wife and kids have been with me throughout this journey and I want to give time to them now, as well as getting involved in grassroots sport and give back to this sport."

Farah has won the Great North Run six times.