

Volleyball Nations League: Iran taking one last shot at quarterfinal spot against Olympic champion



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● IRNA

Sports Desk

Persepolis fans woke up to shocking news on Monday as international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand terminated his contract with the club over a financial dispute with the Iranian league and cup champion. On his return to the Persian Gulf Pro League giant after an unimpressive two-year spell in Europe, the 30-year-old keeper played an integral part to the Reds' glittering campaign last season. Beiranvand kept a remarkable 17 clean sheets – a best tally in the Iranian top flight – in 34 appearances across all competitions as Persepolis lifted the league trophy for a sixth time in seven years – celebrating a second domestic double in four seasons. With the start of the new season less than a month away, Persepolis manager Yahya Golmohammadi will now have a daunting task on his hands to find a top-class number one, while there could be further misery for the Reds' faithful as several reports in recent days suggested that Beiranvand could be on his way to archrival Esteghlal after being offered a lucrative two-year deal by the Blues.

Sports Desk

Iran will make a last-ditch effort to secure a last-eight place when kicking off Week 3 of the Volleyball Nations League against reigning Olympic gold medalist France in Anaheim, California, tonight. Sitting 11th in the 16-team, Behrouz Ataei's men step into the final week of the preliminary round on the back

of only a couple of wins in eight outings and can't afford further slips in the remaining four matches if they are to progress to the VNL Finals for a second year running. Iran will also take on Bulgaria and Argentina before concluding its campaign against Cuba at the Anaheim Convention Center next Sunday. Top seven of the table will join host Poland in the Finals – starting July 19 in Gdansk.

The bad news for the Asian powerhouse is that it will have to do without two key players in the final week after prolific opposite Amin Esmailnejad and starting setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi – as well as Arman Salehi – were denied entry visas by the US Embassy in Ankara. The controversial decision convinced the international governing body of the sport,

the FIVB, to announce that Iran's results in Anaheim will not affect the team's points in World Men's Ranking – a decisive factor in the qualification process for next year's Paris Olympics – regardless of the results in Anaheim. Defending champion France, meanwhile, has also had a below-par run, managing only three wins – against minnow sides China, Cuba, and Canada – so far, and sits

just above Iran in the table. Japan has stolen the show at this year's event, firmly topping the table thanks to a remarkable 8-0 record – including impressive victories against volleyball giants France and Brazil. Having suffered a single defeat against Brazil, USA is second with Brazil, Slovenia, Poland, Argentina, Italy, and the Netherlands following the Americans in the table.

Verstappen's F1 dominance continues with Austrian GP victory

REUTERS – Red Bull's Formula One leader Max Verstappen took his fifth win in a row on Sunday in an extraordinary Austrian Grand Prix that ended up with nearly half the 20-car field punished for failing to stay on track. The Dutch driver won from pole position and with the fastest lap as the reigning champions celebrated a 10th successive victory and

ninth in as many races this season. Verstappen, who also won Saturday's 100km sprint race and leaves Spielberg's Red Bull Ring with a maximum haul, stretched his lead over third-placed Mexican team mate Sergio Perez to 81 points. It was also the Dutch driver's seventh win of a dominant campaign, accelerating him ever closer to a third

Formula One crown. Charles Leclerc was second, 5.155 adrift, for Ferrari's milestone 800th podium while Perez battled back from 15th at the start. "Amazing race, the car was on fire today," said Verstappen after his 42nd career win took him above the tally of late Brazilian great Ayrton Senna. Behind the top three, the outcome was thrown into

confusion after stewards upheld a protest by Aston Martin and reviewed more than 1,200 potential track limits breaches before applying retrospective penalties. The final results saw Ferrari's Carlos Sainz drop from fourth to sixth with McLaren's Lando Norris and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso moving in the other direction to fourth and fifth respectively. Mercedes seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton slid from seventh to eighth, behind team mate George Russell, while Aston Martin's Lance Stroll moved up to ninth and Alpine's Pierre Gasly fell to 10th. Sainz, Hamilton, Gasly, Williams' Alex Albon and Logan Sargeant, Alpine's Esteban Ocon, AlphaTauri's Nyck de Vries and Yuki Tsunoda and Haas's Kevin Magnussen were all handed penalties, some twice. The drivers had made sure stewards were kept busy by pointing out over the radio during the race whenever they saw a rival exceeding the limits.

Bayern to make second bid for Tottenham striker Kane

GOAL – Bayern Munich are reportedly planning a second bid for Tottenham striker Harry Kane after seeing an initial €70 million (£60m/\$76m) offer rejected. The Spurs frontman has seen a move speculated on for some time, with major silverware still proving elusive for the England captain. Having been heavily linked with Manchester giants City and United in the recent past, a move to mainland Europe is now being discussed. Bundesliga champions Bayern remain in the market for a proven No.9 after seeing Robert Lewandowski leave for Barcelona in 2022. Kane has emerged as their top target, with one approach for Tottenham and England's all-time leading scorer being knocked back. According to Fabrizio Romano, an improved offer is in the pipeline. He has told his YouTube channel: "During the week



● AFP

Bayern for the very first time submitted a bid for Harry Kane, €70m plus add-ons, absolutely not enough to convince Tottenham. It was not even a negotiation. Tottenham immediately said no to that kind of possibility, and they didn't consider that bid as something concrete or serious. Now they want to try again for Harry Kane, so they will take some time, then they will submit a new proposal, let's see if it is going to be verbal or official, but Bayern will try again for Harry

Kane. It's not going to be easy because Tottenham want to fight to keep the player and Levy will make it more than complicated, but Bayern want to try again." Kane is approaching the final year of his contract in north London, with there no indication that an extension will be signed, so Spurs are being forced to consider a sale while they can still demand a fee – with the Premier League outfit said to be holding out for a nine-figure asking price.



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates with the trophy after winning the Austrian Grand Prix in Spielberg, Austria, on July 2, 2023. ● AP