

United in talks over Sancho loan to Dortmund



● GETTY IMAGES.

THE GUARDIAN – Manchester United and Borussia Dortmund are in negotiations over a deal for Jadon Sancho to return to the Bundesliga club on loan. The winger is keen on the move after more than four months without a game.

Talks centre on a loan fee and salary coverage, with only a temporary transfer fee for Dortmund, who sold Sancho to United for an initial £73m in July 2021. Sancho has not played since he effectively called Erik ten Hag a liar in early September. United's manager has demanded an apology from the 23-year-old and ostracised him from the first-team squad. When Sancho was left out for the 3-1 defeat at Arsenal, Ten Hag said it was because the England international had not met the standards required in training. Soon after, Sancho posted on social media that the explanation was "completely untrue". He claimed he was being made a scapegoat.

Sancho believes Dortmund would be an ideal environment to find his best form again. He thrived there in the three seasons before his transfer to United and left after scoring 50 goals and providing 64 assists in 137 appearances. Dortmund, fifth in the Bundesliga, have made Sancho and a left-back their priority January targets.

Sancho, who has been training with United's under-18s, made three substitute appearances in August before his fallout with Ten Hag.

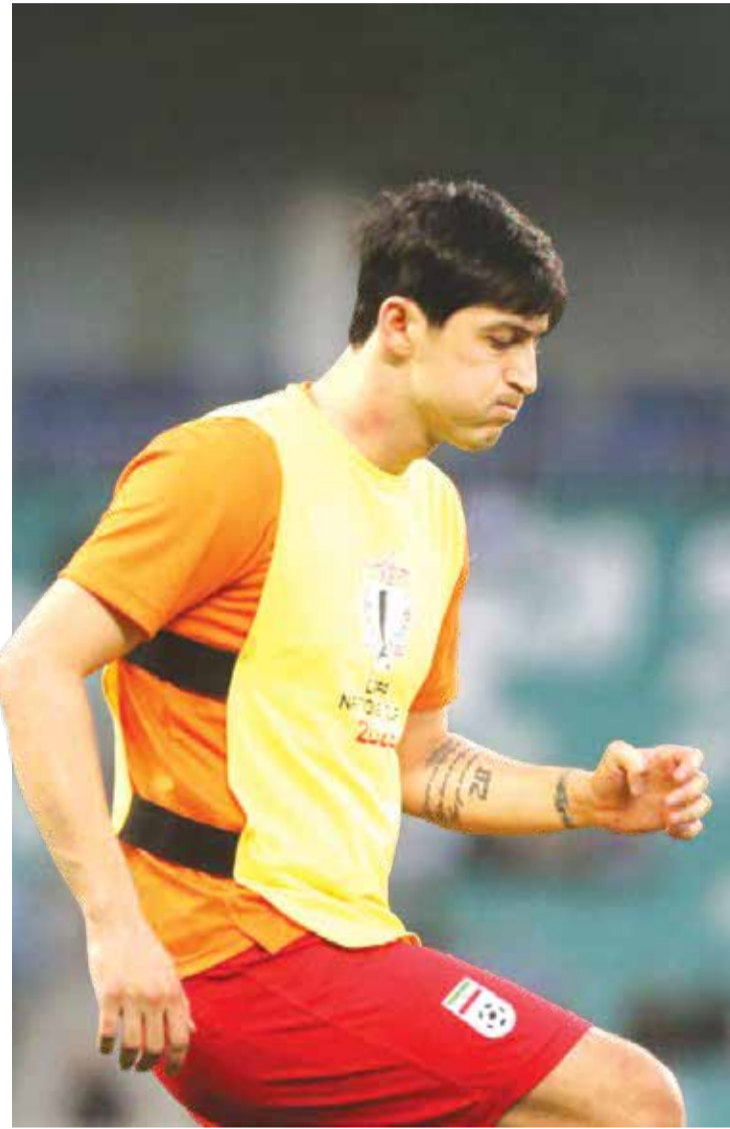
Meanwhile, Sergio Reguilón will return to Tottenham after Manchester United exercised a break clause in his loan deal. The 27-year-old Spanish left-back made 12 appearances for United after joining in September after injuries to Luke Shaw and Tyrell Malacia.

United have chosen to cut short the deal with Shaw having returned to action, although he is out with a slight injury, and Malacia nearing a comeback.

With United eliminated from European competition and the Carabao Cup, it was felt there would be fewer opportunities for Reguilón to feature in the second half of the season. He has only played for United this season, so could play for another club if he left Spurs during the January window.

Tottenham are looking to strengthen their defence and have stepped up their pursuit of a centre-back by opening talks with Genoa over the signing of Radu Dragusin.

Iran pinning hopes on deadly duo to end Asian Cup drought



● FFIRI



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

Having always felt hard done by to see his previous spell on the national team bench come to a premature end in the 2007 AFC Asian Cup, courtesy of a last-eight shootout

setback against South Korea, Iran head coach Amir Qalenoeei will hope to steer his team to glory in the continent's flagship international event this time around.

To that end, the Iranian will be craving to have his strike force of Sardar Azmoun and Mahdi Taremi at

their best over the course of four weeks when the three-time champion begins the quest for a first title since last lifting the trophy on home soil in 1976 on January 14 – against Palestine in Group C.

Both strikers have endured a rather mediocre campaign in their clubs so far

this season, but their contribution on the international level has been second to none during Qalenoeei's 10-month second stint, as has been the case since the two first formed the partnership nine years ago.

Azmoun has found the net only once in 13 cameo appearances for AS Roma

in Serie A after joining the Italian club on a season-long loan deal from Leverkusen in the summer, while bagging eight goals and four assists in seven matches for Iran – starting with a strike and a couple of assists against Afghanistan in June's CAFA Nations Cup.

Azmoun has proved to be an integral part of Qalenoeei's tactical plans, so much so that the Iranian Football Federation had to negotiate with the Giallorossi's sporting director Tiago Pinto to convince him to release the striker for the international duty after next Sunday's top-flight game against Atalanta, despite a clause in his contract keeping him from Asian Cup participation.

Meanwhile, Taremi stepped into the ongoing season on the back of a remarkable 31 goals and 14 assists in the 2022/23 campaign for Porto – including 22 goals that saw him finish as the leading marksman of the Portuguese league.

With his preseason dominated by the Milan transfer saga, the Iranian talisman has only managed six goals and four assists in 23 matches across all competitions for the Dragons since July, though it has been business as usual for him when wearing the national team shirt, as he has netted 12 goals – providing three for his teammates – in 11 outings.

Last time Azmoun and Taremi combined in an international tournament in Qatar the final outcome turned out to be one to forget as a defeat against USA saw Iran exit the 2022 World Cup in the group stage.

Fourteen months on, the two will again lead the line for Iran in Qatar, hoping to inspire the team to walk away with the ultimate prize, come the final showpiece in Doha's Lusail Stadium on February 10.

Curry scores 36 points to lead Warriors past Magic

AP – Stephen Curry scored 36 points and delivered on key plays in the fourth quarter to help the Golden State Warriors snap a three-game losing streak with a 121-115 victory over the Orlando Magic on Tuesday night.

Curry scored or set up 13 straight Warriors points in a four-minute stretch late in the fourth quarter that proved to be the difference.

"Steph was amazing," coach Steve Kerr said. "But Steph is always amazing. Even when he doesn't score 36 points, just the attention he draws defensively, what he does to an opposing defense, the way he opens up the floor, he's a remarkable player. He really got himself going on a night when we needed it."

Jonathan Kuminga added 19 points and Klay Thompson scored 15 for the Warriors, who got their first win in three tries on a season-high, seven-game homestand. Paolo Banchero had 27 points and 12 rebounds



● LOREN ELLIOTT/AP

for Orlando, while Franz Wagner added 25 points. The Magic have lost their first two games on a four-game road trip. Curry hit two 3-pointers

and assisted on two other baskets during a flurry midway through the third quarter that helped the Warriors build a small lead that the Magic were

able to erase when he went bench for his second-half rest. But Curry then took over down the stretch after returning with 8:33 to play.

He scored on a drive to put Golden State up 101-97 and then hit a step-back 3-pointer on the next possession to make 104-97. Curry added assists on

back-to-back baskets by Thompson and Kuminga to make it 110-101 with 2:29 to play and the Warriors held on from there.

"They have an elite shot maker and Hall of Fame player in Steph Curry," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said. "That's what we got."

The first half ended with excitement as Curry converted on a four-point play with 3.5 seconds remaining to put Golden State up 55-52. Gary Harris answered with a 3 at the buzzer to tie the game for Orlando.

The Warriors improved to 9-9 this season without suspended forward Draymond Green, who has missed the last 10 games for an indefinite suspension for hitting Phoenix center Jusuf Nurkic in the face. Kerr said before the game that he has been texting with Green but hasn't seen him in the team facility and has no date of a possible return.

"We've been giving him his space, he's been giving us ours," Kerr said.