

## Persian Gulf Pro League: Alekasir double sends Persepolis top



Persepolis striker Issa Alekasir (red) scores the first of his two goals in a 2-0 victory over Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Shahid Dastgerdi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on May 11, 2024.

● MOHAMMADREZA ALIMADADI/IRNA

### Sports Desk

Issa Alekasir scored in each half as Persepolis defeated Havadar 2-0 to go top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table with 59 points.

The Tehran Reds – two points clear of Esteghlal – could still fall back to second when their city rivals welcome relegation-threatened Foolad Khuzestan to the capital's Azadi Stadium today.

Persepolis skipper Omid Alishah, who became the first player to make 200 Pro League appearances in the Reds shirt, celebrated the milestone by adding yet another assist to his

name as he found Alekasir with an inch-perfect pass in the box before his strike went into an empty net in the 14th minute.

The striker could have added a couple of goals in the first period, only to send his efforts wide in one-on-one with goalkeeper Alireza Haqiqi, while Persepolis's in-form winger Oston Urunov was denied by Iranian under-17 international Arsha Shakouri, who replaced injured Haqiqi, in similar position.

Chasing a seventh top-flight crown in eight seasons, Persepolis had to ride its luck to avoid an equalizer in the second half before Alekasir bagged

the all-important second goal with 15 minutes left on the clock, tapping Daniel Esmailifar's low cross into the roof of the net as Masoud Shojaei's Havadar suffered a first league defeat in seven games since the home loss to Esteghlal in mid-March.

"We were not good in tactical terms but should have still put the game to bed before the break, while Havadar and its coach deserve credit for the way they played today," Persepolis head coach Osmar Loss said after the match.

When asked about his future, the Brazilian caretaker – who is yet to have his contract extended beyond

the end of the campaign – said: "All I'm thinking of is the remaining three games in the next 20 days and then we'll see what happens for the next season."

Persepolis will play Esteghlal Khuzestan and Mes Rafsanjan at home either side of a visit to Shams Azar. Elsewhere on Saturday, Mohammad Papi's fifth-minute header saw Shams Azar defeat Malavan FC 1-0 at home. In Tabriz, first-half goals by Gustavo Vagenin and Rahman Ja'fari – the second coming from the spot – helped Tractor beat Golgozar Sirjan 2-0 to close the gap on third-placed Sepahan to a single point and remain on

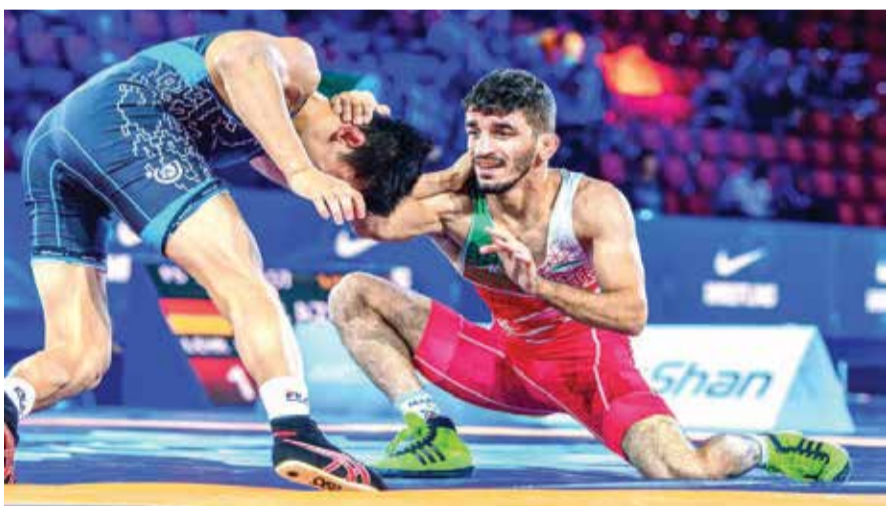
course for an AFC Champions League spot.

Sepahan, facing club legend Moharram Navidkia as the opposition coach, shared the spoils with Mes Rafsanjan in a 1-1 draw, which meant the Isfahan-based club is now officially out of the title race and the five-time champion's top-flight drought will extend beyond nine seasons.

Kaveh Rezaei gave Sepahan a ninth-minute lead, only to see his goal canceled out by Jaleddin Alimohammadi's header on the hour mark.

Iralco and San'at Naft Abadanb – rock bottom in the table – played to a 1-1 stalemate in Arak.

## Wrestling World OG Qualifier: Sarлак undone as Iran fails to seal full freestyle squad for Paris



● UJWW

### Sports Desk

Iran's hopes of sending a full six-man squad to the freestyle wrestling competitions in September's Paris Olympics were dashed on Saturday after Alireza Sarlak fell short in the world qualification event in Istanbul.

Representing the country in the 57kg contests, the 2021 world silver medalist came out on top against Italy's Simone Vincenzo Piroddu (4-2) and Georgian Roberti Dingashvili (9-3) but suffered a 7-2 loss to Rakhat Kalzhan in the quarterfinals and saw his campaign come to an end following the Kazakhstani wrestler's last-four defeat. The top three across the six weight classes secured their place in the

French capital.

Iran will have five freestyle wrestlers in Paris, courtesy of top-five finishes for Rahman Amouzad (65kg), Hassan Yazdani (86kg), and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) in last year's World Championships, as well as successful campaigns by Younes Emami (74kg) and Amir-Ali Azarpira (97kg) in April's Asian qualifiers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Amouzad, reigning world champion Zare', and Emami have been handed the Paris ticket by the Iranian coaching staff, while young prodigy Azarpira is all but guaranteed a place in the Games thanks to impressive performances in recent months – including a final victory over American great Kyle Snyder in the Zagreb Open

in January.

However, the Iranian 86kg slot remains hanging in the balance as Yazdani, sidelined since last October with a shoulder surgery, only made his long-awaited return to training two weeks ago and will have his fitness assessed by the coaching staff when he competes in the Polyák Imre & Varga János Memorial tournament – starting June 6 in Budapest.

Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, said this week that two-time world 92kg champion Kamran Qassempour – also considered for the country's 97kg berth – remains "a plan B", should Yazdani fail to fully recover from the shoulder problem.

## Celtics restore lead over Cavs in NBA play-off tie

**BBC** – The Boston Celtics regained the lead in their NBA Eastern Conference semi-final against the Cleveland Cavaliers with a 106-93 victory on the road.

Top-seeded Boston, who were stunned by the Cavaliers at home in game two, edged the first quarter by two points and never relinquished their lead.

The Celtics now take a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series into game four in Cleveland tonight.

Jayson Tatum hit 33 points for the Celtics, while Jaylen Brown added 28.

"We just wanted to bounce back," said Tatum. "Our back was against the wall, so it was a good test for us to see how we respond - we were up for the challenge."

Donovan Mitchell top scored for Cleveland, with 33 points. Elsewhere, the Dallas Mavericks took a 2-1 lead in their Western Conference semi-final with a 105-101 win at home over the Oklahoma City Thunder.

PJ Washington led the Mavs with 27 points, while star guard Luka Doncic added 22.

## Historic medals for Iranian duo in Asian trampoline event

### Sports Desk

Iranian duo Arya Mam Abdollah and Sajjad Kargar made history by winning maiden medals for the country at the 6th Trampoline Asian Championships in Hong Kong.

Representing the country in the age group competition, Abdollah tallied

54.860 points to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 17-21 age class, with Kargar taking the silver with 52.690 points.

Kazakhstan's Ruslan Izmailov had to settle for a third-place finish behind the Iranian pair with 52.300 points in the routine 1 final.

Individual trampoline, Age group competition Final, Routine 1			
1.		MAM ABDOLLAH A.	54.860
2.		KARGAR MAZRAEHMOLA S.	52.690
3.		IZMAILOV R.	52.300
4.		SATYGA R.	51.720
5.		MUMINOV A.	49.910
6.		ILANO J.	48.750
7.		LEUNG H.	41.870
8.		CHAN L.	9.580

● IRNA