

Names popping up as Persepolis coach quest drags on



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L-R: Marcos Paqueta, Andrea Stramaccioni, Walter Mazzarri, and John van 't Schip have been lined up in the media as the candidates for Persepolis managerial role.



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

Rumors keep swirling around the future of Persepolis bench with numerous foreign names popping up as the candidates for the managerial role over the past couple of weeks. While Esteghlal and Sepahan, which stood behind Persepolis in the newly-finished Persian Gulf

Pro League season, are expected to continue with Javad Nekounam and Jose Morais at the helm respectively, Reds' supporters are growing frustrated as they are yet to find out who will lead their team's title defense for the start of the new campaign season in August. The Tehran-based club announced on Friday that negotiations have been going on with "several candidates" since Brazilian

interim coach Osmar Loss Vieira refused to take the permanent role. Osmar took over from Yahya Golmohammadi – to whom he served as a number two – in January and led the Reds to a seventh top-flight crown in eight years but decided to move back to Brazil to stay close to his family. Dragan Skocic, who steered Iran to a place at the 2022 World Cup before being replaced by Portuguese Car-

los Queiroz for the finals in Qatar, was the first coach to be approached by Persepolis but a deal fell through over what was reported to be the Croatian's wage demand. Serie A coach Walter Mazzarri looked to be set for the Persepolis job in recent days, according to the Italian media and journalists, but the club's sports deputy Hossein Badamaki said on Friday that the Reds and

former Napoli manager are far from reaching full agreement as "his coaching staff are undecided on joining him for the new role." Another high-profile name brought up in the Iranian media is Dutch coach John van 't Schip, who took charge at struggling Ajax in October before a run of 14 wins in 25 outings saw the club finish fifth in the Eredivisie table and secure a spot in the UEFA Europa League qualifiers. However, Badamaki con-

firmed that the Dutchman's "personal reasons" stalled the negotiations between him and Persepolis. Meanwhile, Iranian website Football360 reported on Friday that Andrea Stramaccioni and Marcos Paqueta have also been lined up by Persepolis for the vacant job. Stramaccioni is a familiar face for football fans in Iran as the 48-year-old Italian was appointed to the managerial role in Persepolis's

city rival Esteghlal for the start of 2019/20 campaign but his reign was cut short after seven months as he stepped down over unpaid wages.

Widely adored by the Tehran Blues' fans, Stramaccioni has been without a team since being sacked by Qatari club Al Gharafa in October 2022.

Brazilian Paqueta, 65, is also no stranger to working in the Middle East, having been in charge of numerous clubs across the region over the past two decades – including Saudi giant Al Hilal as well as Al Gharafa and Al Rayyan in the Qatari top flight. The head coach of Saudi Arabia during the 2006 World Cup, Paqueta led CR Belouizdad to a runner-up finish in the Algerian league earlier in the month.

Iran misses out on Olympic beach volleyball berth



● AVC

Sports Desk

The Iranian beach volleyball failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics in July after back-to-back semifinal defeats against the host in the AVC Beach Volleyball Continental Cup in Ningbo, China. Stepping into the eight-team event – serving as the qualifiers for the sole Asian spot in July's Games – as the Central Asian champions, the two Iranian teams headed into Saturday's last-four clashes fresh from a 2-0 win against Japan in the quarterfinals on the

preceding day. However, the Iranian Team 1, comprising Abbas Poursargari and Alireza Aqajani suffered a straight-set defeat (21-18, 21-15) against Ha Likejiang and Wu Jiaxin, while Abolhamed Mirzzali and Sina Shoukati fell short against Wang Yanwei and Li Jie 23-21 and 21-17 as Iran failed to reach the final showpiece. The Asian Olympic berth will be on the line today when China takes on Australia, which defeated Indonesia in Saturday's double-header.

England players not fit enough to press effectively, claims Southgate

THE GUARDIAN – Gareth Southgate has suggested his England team lack the physical levels to execute his gameplan at Euro 2024. The mood in the England camp was heavy on introspection and soul-searching as they came to terms with Thursday's 1-1 draw against Denmark. It was not so much the result, which has kept them in the driving seat to qualify for the last 16 as Group C winners. Rather the collective performance, which was defined by errors on the ball and an absence of aggression without it. Southgate has made no secret about his fears over the fitness of a clutch of starting players, who have not completed many full games in recent weeks and months. The captain, Harry Kane, did not press or run in behind against Denmark and Southgate took him off in the 70th minute for Ollie Watkins, feeling that he needed fresh energy up front. Bukayo Saka and Phil Foden were substituted at the same time. Saka missed Arsenal's final Premier League game with an injury and played only 25 minutes of England's warm-up matches. "We are not pressing well enough, with enough intensity," Southgate said. "We have limitations in how we can do that with the physical condition. We can't press as high up the pitch as we might have done in the



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qualifiers, for example. And we are not keeping the ball well enough. We have to keep the ball better and build with more control." The pressure on the players is intense, the scrutiny unforgiving and it has been possible to wonder whether it has affected them. Southgate admitted after the Denmark game that "if anything they're showing they care too much".

Southgate said: "I am seeing every day that they are loving working together. I don't think it is a lack of spark. At the moment, they ironically care too much and they need firm leadership. We have to guide them through the difficult period that is coming but really stay on track and focused on this challenge ahead. "We are trying to do something

that has never been done before [win the Euros]. So that is going to be a bit of a rollercoaster. It's not going to go smoothly when you are trying to achieve extraordinary things. They are bloody difficult. We have to accept the level of expectations, we have to accept the arena we are in. And we have to find a better way of playing to how we have so far."

