

Azmoun in limbo after skipping Leverkusen training



● PRESSE SPORTS

Sports Desk

Sardar Azmoun faces an uncertain future as the Iranian striker is yet to decide on his next move after spending a season on loan at AS Roma from Bayer Leverkusen.

The 29-year-old completed the regular performance diagnostics on Sunday for his parent club, though he did not show up for the German domestic double winner's first training session ahead of the new campaign on Monday – much to the surprise of club's managing director.

"You don't just have to do the performance diagnostics, you also have to train," said Simon Rolfes, adding: "He was there yesterday, but not today, so we have to clarify what's going on."

The Iranian international bagged three goals and four assists in 29 games across all competitions for the Giallorossi last term but the Italian capital club, which failed to secure a Champions League spot for next season, refused to make a permanent bid for

the striker.

Rumors keep swirling around Azmoun's future with German newspaper Kicker reporting the Bundesliga side is keen on cashing out on the Iranian asset, who joined from Zenit St. Petersburg for €2.5 million in January 2022 and went on to register five goals and assists apiece in 44 appearances during a difficult season-and-a-half spell marked by injury setbacks.

Spanish club Sevilla is believed to be interested in signing the striker as "a potential successor to departing candidate Youssef En-Nesyri," according to Kicker.

A couple of clubs in the Emirati and Qatari top flights have also made inquiries about Azmoun, who is tied to the Leverkusen contract until summer 2027, with the German side waiting for a concrete offer from a club willing to pay €10 million for the Iranian.

Azmoun's future might be far from decided but one thing is for sure: The Bayer partnership is set to end in the coming weeks in any case.

Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship:

Iran looking to continue continental dominance

Sports Desk

Iranian boys will be chasing a record-extending seventh title – third in succession – for the country at the Asian U20 Volleyball Championship, starting next Tuesday in Surabaya, Indonesia.

Head coach Gholamreza Mo'meni-Moqaddam's side could be facing some tricky tests when taking on China, the Chinese Taipei, and Qatar in Pool B of the competition.

The 16-team event will serve as qualification for the 2025 World U21 Championship, with the top four teams of the tournament punching their tickets for the global showpiece next summer.

Emran Kook-Jili, Pouya Aryakhah, Abolfazl Mahdian, Seyyed Matin Hosseini, Morteza Narimani, Matin Seqli, Arian Mahmoudinejad, Taha Behboudnia, Armin Qelichniazi, Shayan Mehrabi, Ali Eshqinour, and Morteza Tabatabaei will be the Iranian players in Surabaya – seven of whom were part of the squad

that reached the final showdown of the world under-19 event in Argentina last year, only to suffer a four-set defeat against France.

On his team selection approach, Mo'meni-Moqaddam: "Our top priority was to pick players with the professional mindset and those who could provide backup to the senior team in the near future. The national team is set for a rejuvenation process and we have to inject fresh blood to the squad within the next two or three years."

Several players were also in the team when Iran fell short against Japan in the Asian under-18 final in 2022 and the head coach says they "are eager to make amends for that defeat."

"Japan, China and South Korea have been our traditional rivals in the continent and we will have to make sure we will deliver our best performance against them in the tournament," added the Iranian coach, who steered the country to world under-21 crown last year.



● SEPIDE ABDOLHAY/volleyball.ir

Southgate resigns as England manager after Euro 2024 final defeat



● CHRIS BRUNSKILL/GETTY IMAGES

THE GUARDIAN – Gareth Southgate has announced he has stepped down as England's manager after eight years. The Football Association had hoped he would extend his contract after he led the team to the final of Euro 2024 but Southgate has decided to seek a new challenge.

"As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England," Southgate said. "It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all. But it's time for change, and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager."

The 53-year-old is England's most successful manager in terms of consistent major tournament performance. England also reached the European Championship final

in 2021, losing to Italy, and a World Cup semi-final in 2018, when they were beaten by Croatia. In his other World Cup, the team were eliminated by France in the quarter-finals. Newcastle's Eddie Howe, the former Brighton and Chelsea manager Graham Potter and the former Bayern Munich and Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel are near the top of the FA's shortlist to succeed Southgate. England's next fixtures are against the Republic of Ireland and Finland in the Nations League in September.

"The squad we took to Germany is full of exciting young talent and they can win the trophy we all dream of," Southgate said.

Southgate spent much of the Euros under huge pressure after poor England performances in the group stage and in the last 16 against

Slovakia. He had empty beer cups thrown at him and boos directed at him after England drew 0-0 with Slovenia in their final group match. After the Slovenia game Southgate said he understood "the narrative towards me" but that it was "creating an unusual environment to operate in".

Southgate took charge of England, initially on a caretaker basis, in September 2016 after Sam Allardyce's sudden departure. He had indicated he thought his time would be up if England did not win in Germany.

Other candidates in the FA's thinking are likely to include the former Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino, Lee Carsley, the England Under-21 manager, and the former England internationals Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard.