



## Azmoun enters new chapter as European journey ends

### Sports Desk

Iranian international Sardar Azmoun will embark on a new era in his career after signing a three-year contract, worth €5 million, with UAE Pro League club Shabab Al Ahli.

The new deal means the end of an 11-season long journey for the 29-year-old striker, a former Sepahan under-19 player, who began his senior club football with Russian top-flight side Rubin Kazan. Azmoun spent last season at AS Roma on loan from Bayer Leverkusen, bagging three goals and four assists in 29 games across all competitions for the Giallorossi but the Italian capital club, which failed to secure a Champions League spot for upcoming campaign, refused to make a permanent bid for the striker.

The Iranian returned to the Bundesliga champion for the regular performance diagnostics two weeks ago but did not show up for the first training session of the new season, while Spanish club Sevilla was also believed to be interested in making a move for the prolific forward.

Azmoun had joined the German club 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. Also a former player of Russian top-flight side Rostov FC, Azmoun netted 118 goals – including six in the UEFA Champions League – while providing his teammates with 52 assists in 345 games for five clubs in Russia, Germany, and Italy.

The Iranian won seven major trophies with Zenit, including four league titles, and was the Russian top flight's top scorer in the 2019/20 season, claiming the Player of the Season award the following year.

Having a remarkable 53 goals in 83 international caps under his belt, Azmoun is the fourth Iranian to sign for Shabab Al Ahli in three years, following Ahamad Nourollahi, and Mahdi Qayedi, joining international teammate Saeid Ezzatollahi for the start of the new season.

Azmoun's first appearance in the Emirati club's shirt could come in his home country against his boyhood club Sepahan, when the two sides square off in the inaugural AFC Champions League Elite preliminary round in Isfahan next Tuesday.

## Sayyadmanesh off to flying start in new Belgian league season

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Iranian striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh began the new Jupiler Pro League season in style as he bagged a goal and assist to help KVC Westerlo beat Cercle Brugge 3-0 on the opening day of the Belgian top-flight campaign.

The 23-year-old Iranian, who joined Westerlo from Championship club Hull City in January, teed up Lucas Stassin for the club's first goal 18 minutes into

the game before the Belgian teenager found his second with a superb close-range volley 10 minutes after the break.

Sayyadmanesh capped his impressive performance with a composed left-footed chip in the 64th minute – his first club goal since April 2023 – and then was substituted eight minutes later.

The former Esteghlal and Zorya Lugansk forward will be looking to build on the fresh start after a dreadful

2023/24 campaign, during which he failed to find the net across 24 appearances for Hull and Westerlo in all competitions as his contribution was limited to a single assist.



KVC Westerlo striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh (L) is seen in action during a 3-0 victory over Cercle Brugge in the Belgian Jupiler Pro League in Het Kuipje, Westerlo, Belgium, on July 28, 2024. ● PHOTONEWS



China's Lian Junjie and Yang Hao compete in the men's 10-meter synchronized platform diving final at the Paris Olympics in Saint-Denis, France, on July 29, 2024. ● LEE JIN-MAN/AP

## China makes it 2-for-2 in Olympic diving, leaving Britain's Daley with a silver

AP – With Tom Daley out of the way, China is another step closer to an unprecedented sweep at the Olympic diving pool.

Lian Junjie and Yang Hao breezed to gold in the 10-meter synchronized platform Monday to give the Big Red Machine its second straight gold medal of the Paris Games.

The three-time reigning world champions finished with a whopping 490.35 points, receiving several perfect 10s from the judges and no marks lower than 8.0. They nailed their final dive, a forward 4 1/2 somersaults in the tuck position, to clinch the gold.

Before the final marks were even posted – all 9.0s and 9.5s – the Chinese coaches were hugging and celebrating. Fans waved Chinese flags in the stands at the new Olympic Aquatics Centre, next door to the Stade de France in suburban Saint-Denis.

China, which has dominated the sport in the post-Greg Louganis era, is trying to become the first country to claim every diving gold medal since synchro was added in 2000, doubling the program from four to eight events.

Since that expansion, China has won 40 of 50 golds, including seven of

eight at each of the last two Summer Games.

In Tokyo three years ago, China's only setback came in the men's 10-meter synchro, when Daley and Matty Lee pulled off the upset for Great Britain as China took silver.

This time, the roles were reversed. Daley and new partner Noah Williams settled for a silver at 463.44. The bronze went to Canada's Rylan Wiens and Nathan Zsombor-Murray with 422.13, edging out fan favorite Mexico (418.65).

The United States did not qualify for the one of the eight Olympic berths.

## Man Utd to make call on 100,000-capacity new stadium by end of year

BBC – Manchester United's owners hope to make a final decision on whether to spend more than £2bn on a new 100,000-seat stadium by the end of 2024.

United co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe wants to build a 'Wembley of the north' for the side and, together with Trafford Council, has put together a taskforce to assess the feasibility of a new stadium

and redevelopment of Old Trafford. Club sources confirmed the taskforce has already met four times, with discussion largely centred around a new-build rather than renovating the exist-

ing stadium, which would cost around £1.2bn and take longer to complete. It has been stressed no decision has been taken.

Ratcliffe's £1.25bn deal for his 27.7%

stake in the club included £237m for future investment in the club's stadium. His Ineos Group have taken over football operations from majority owners the Glazer family.