

AFC Champions League Elite:

Persepolis, Esteghlal continue woeful run

Sports Desk

Persepolis's winless streak at the AFC Champions League Elite extended to four games, while Esteghlal suffered a third consecutive defeat, as the Iranian top-flight duo's misery continued at the continent's top-tier club competition.

Persepolis shared the spoils with Qatari club Al Gharafa in a 1-1 stalemate in Dubai's Al Maktoum Stadium, before Esteghlal fell to a comprehensive 3-0 loss to Saudi Pro League giant Al Hilal in Riyadh later on Monday.

Fullback Farshad Faraji gave Persepolis a 53rd-minute lead on his return from injury, only to see his strike canceled out three minutes later by Ahmed Al Ganehi, who found the net with a first-time effort from the edge of the box seconds after coming off the bench.

Al Gharafa looked more likely to bag a second goal as Persepolis had Algerian keeper Alexis Guendouz to thank for denying Florinel Coman and Yacine Brahimi in one-on-one situations.

Substitutes Issa Alekassir and Lucas João, meanwhile, missed glorious chances to net a last-gasp winner for the Tehran Reds, with the former heading wide of the near post, while the latter saw his point-blank effort kept out by Spanish shot-stopper Sergio Rico.

"It was a difficult game as both teams played openly with the motivation to win," said Persepolis head coach Juan Carlos Garrido, who has never won in 10 Champions League outings,



Al Gharafa skipper Ferjani Sassi (2nd L) is surrounded by Persepolis players during a 1-1 draw in the AFC Champions League Elite at the Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai, UAE, on Nov. 4, 2024.

● AFC

stretching back to his time on the Al Ain bench in 2019.

"We controlled the game well in the first half. It is very difficult to restrain [Al Gharafa forward] Joselu, but we did it well, and I believe we were doing the right thing in the first half," added the Spaniard.

"When we scored our goal, which is the most important point of the game, we should have stopped the game so that nothing happened in the next 10 minutes, but we didn't do that.

"We lost the ball in front of our

own goal and Al Gharafa scored. We should have calmed down the game. We had many opportunities in the final minutes but we could not score the second goal. I think we were better in those minutes."

With the league phase of the competition at the halfway mark, the draw left Persepolis in the ninth place of the West Zone's 12-team table with two points.

Eight teams will progress to the knockout phase, meaning Garrido's men will have no room for

further slip, when they play away to Al Rayyan in three weeks before tricky tests against Iraqi champion Al Shorta as well as Saudi heavyweights Al Hilal and Al Nassr.

Magnificent Mitro

For all their miserable results and performances of late, the Tehran Blues almost got off to a flying start at the Kingdom Arena, when Ramin Rezaeian's diving header in the fourth minute bounced off the post, with the fullback injuring his shoulder in

the process to be replaced by Alireza Koushki.

The final outcome, however, was nothing beyond expectations, as Aleksandar Mitrovic got a hat-trick to inspire Al Hilal to a fourth Asian win in a row.

The Serbian striker put Al Hilal ahead with a 15th-minute tap-in and doubled the advantage with another straightforward finish in the 33rd minute.

The former Fulham player completed his hat-trick with a 74th-minute header into the bottom corner from Joao Cancelo's

cross from the right.

Esteghlal head coach Pitso Mosimane, who was appointed to the job only a fortnight ago, acknowledged that Al Hilal was by far the better side, though he remains hopeful that improvements will start to come for the Blues.

"Today we saw the big differences between the two teams," said the South African after the game, adding: "We lost the services of three key players but it is not an excuse, we have to accept the result because we faced a great team."

"I am unlucky because a number of players are injured, it is true that it is part of the game, but it makes the job of any coach difficult.

"I only had five training sessions and three matches with Esteghlal, and I feel that we have started to develop. I accepted the job knowing the problems surrounding the team," said Mosimane, whose team left the pitch empty-handed for a fifth successive match across all competitions.

Esteghlal, which remained inside the top eight with three points despite the defeat, will play Pakhtakor next, with games against Al Ahli Saudi, Al Shorta, and Al Rayyan also coming the Tehran Blues' way.

Weightlifting World Championships:
Iran names provisional men's squad
for Manama visit

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Navvab Nasir-Shalal announced a provisional 12-man squad for the upcoming IWF Weightlifting World Championships – starting December 4 in Manama, Bahrain.

Former Olympic silver medalist Ali Davoudi spearheads the list, with two-time world junior champion Alireza Yousefi – a +109kg world C&J record holder in the age class – also in the mix for a shot at superheavyweight glory in the seniors event.

Mirmostafa Javadi is the other high-profile weightlifter in the list,

looking to emulate his results in last year's competition in Riyadh, where he grabbed the clean & jerk and total golds in the 89kg contests. Ali A'alipour is also in contention for an 89kg spot, having won a total gold and double silvers in February's Asian Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The quadruple is joined by Abolfazl Zare' and Alireza Nasiri, who collected nine medals between them in last year's Asian Youth & Junior Championships, as well as 2023 Asian champion Hossein Soltani, Aria Paydar, Alireza Mo'eini, Reza Baghi, Mahdi Karami, and Ayat Sharifi in the squad, before two

weightlifters are omitted for the visit to Manama.

Having won three medals through Javadi and Davoudi's C&J bronze in last year's world event, Iran will be looking for a fresh start after a below-par Olympic campaign in Paris, where the country missed out on a weightlifting medal in the Games for the first time since Beijing 2008.

Iranian Mirmostafa Javadi, pictured in August's Paris Olympics, is in contention for a place in the men's 89kg contests at the IWF Weightlifting World Championships in December.

● IWFIR



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Cavaliers beat Bucks in NBA to match franchise record

BBC – The Cleveland Cavaliers matched a franchise record by winning their first eight games of the season as they edged a 116-114 victory against the Milwaukee Bucks.

The Cavaliers matched a record set in 1976-77 with a win in which Darius Garland scored a game-high 39 points against a Bucks side without the injured Giannis Antetokounmpo. Garland sank a three-pointer with 45 seconds left and then set up Jarrett Allen for a lay-up with 12.2 seconds remaining to secure the win.

"It's hard to get one [win] so eight is crazy," Garland said.

Damian Lillard scored 36 points for the Bucks, who were 106-98 up with just over six minutes left, but could not prevent his

side losing a sixth game in a row.

Cleveland had also beaten the Bucks 114-113 on Saturday when Donovan Mitchell scored with 0.3 seconds left.

The Oklahoma City Thunder are also unbeaten this season as they won a seventh successive game by beating the Orlando Magic 102-86.

Jalen Williams scored 23 points for the Thunder, while team-mate Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 21 points.

Elsewhere, Stephen Curry returned from a three-game absence to help the Golden State Warriors beat the Washington Wizards 125-112.

Curry was back after spraining his left ankle and scored 24 points against the Wizards as

the Warriors improved their record to 4-0 on the road.

The Detroit Pistons ended a seven-game losing run with a 115-103 win against the Los Angeles Lakers.

Jaden Ivey scored 26 points while Pistons team-mate Cade Cunningham registered a triple-double of 17 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists.

The Lakers' Anthony Davis, who continued to play in the fourth quarter after appearing to be troubled by an ankle issue, led all scorers with 37 points.

Kevin Durant scored 35 points to inspire the Phoenix Suns to a 118-116 victory against the Philadelphia 76ers, while the Boston Celtics beat the Atlanta Hawks 123-93.