

Bagheri given interim role as Persepolis begins hunt for permanent coach

Sports Desk

Former Iran international midfielder Karim Bagheri was appointed as the interim coach of Persepolis for the club's remaining two fixtures until the mid-season break of the Persian Gulf Pro League.

An assistant to ex-head coach Juan Carlos Garrido, Bagheri, 50, takes the caretaker role after the Spaniard parted ways with the Tehran Reds by mutual consent on Sunday in the aftermath of a 3-1 home loss to Mes Rafsanjan in the Iranian top flight.

A fourth defeat in six league outings left the defending champion in the fourth place of the table with 23 points – five points adrift of top two Tractor and Sepahan and one behind Foolad Khuzestan.

Having joined Persepolis in June, Garrido is the third head coach to leave the club over the past 12 months – following Yahya Golmohammadi and Brazilian Osmar Vieira – after leading his team to nine wins and six defeats in 20 games across all competitions.

Persepolis will take on Khaybar at home on Friday and then plays away to bottom side Havadar on January 1.

The club hierarchy will be looking to name a permanent replacement for Garrido before Persepolis visits Zob Ahan on return to league action on January 21.



● fc-perspolis.com

Few would have anticipated

Change of fortunes

a short-lived tenure for Garrido, given his impressive start on Persepolis bench. The Reds began their title defense with back-to-back draws against Zob Ahan and Tractor

but went on a five-game winning streak without conceding a goal, including a 1-0 victory over archrival Esteghlal in the Capital Derby in September.

Even the 1-0 away defeats against Al Ahli Saudi and Al Sadd in their first three AFC Champions League Elite fixtures did little to raise doubts over the Spaniard's tactical acumen.

His team dominated the best part of the games against the two star-studded oppositions and was unlucky to leave the pitch empty-handed after missing numerous scoring opportunities.

However, a significant slump in the Reds' form and performance – starting with a first domestic defeat of the campaign against Esteghlal Khuzestan on Oct. 30 – coupled with constant rotations to the starting XI and set-piece vulnerability, brought Garrido's coaching methods under massive scrutiny from the fans and pundits.

Expectations were always high at Persepolis, the dominant force in the Iranian league with seven titles in eight seasons, and the latest setback against Mes was the final nail in the coffin for Garrido's six-month stint.

Whoever the next head coach is, he will have to make an instant impact to keep up with in-form Tractor and Sepahan, as well as Golmohammadi's Foolad, in the league title race, while also facing a daunting task to secure a spot in the last 16 of the Asian top-tier club competition.

With the top eight of the league phase table going through, six-place Persepolis is well in contention for a knockout spot, but the stern tests against Saudi heavyweights Al Hilal and Al Nassr in February could still leave the Reds' campaign in jeopardy.

Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships: Girls shine, Iran wins more medals

Sports Desk

Iranian girls impressed on the third day of the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships, collecting eight more medals for the country in Doha, Qatar.

In the men's draw, meanwhile, Mehrab Davasari registered 123-160-283 to win the clean & jerk gold and total silver in the youth 67kg contests, shattering five national youth and junior records in the process. Hanieh Sharifi enjoyed a remarkable run in the women's youth competitions on Sunday, bagging double golds and a silver in the 71kg weight class. Sharifi lifted 88kg to settle for the runner-up spot in the snatch discipline, but went on to raise 112kg above her head for the ultimate prize in the C&J event, before claiming a second gold with 200kg in total. Reihaneh Karimi also had a decent finish in the women's junior 71kg contests, grabbing triple bronze medals with a 91-120-211 record.

There was also a couple of medals for Iran in the women's youth 64kg category, where Alma Hosseini's bronze-winning 101kg effort in the clean & jerk event, was followed by a third-place finish in total with 183kg.

Iranian girl Hanieh Sharifi is seen in action at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Doha, Qatar, on December 22, 2024. ● IWFIR



Slot warns Liverpool against complacency after thrashing of Spurs



● GETTY IMAGES

REUTERS – Liverpool head coach Arne Slot was full of praise for his side's devastating attacking performance at Tottenham Hotspur, but warned the Premier League leaders against complacency after Spurs briefly threatened an unlikely comeback. The Reds were 5-1 up and cruising thanks to a quickfire second-half double from Mohamed Salah with just over an hour played, before Dejan Kulusevski and former Liverpool striker Dominic Solanke pulled it back to 5-3. Luis Diaz scored his second five minutes from time to make it 6-3 and finally end a crazy contest, which Slot said was Liverpool's best away per-

formance of his tenure. "Until 60-65 minutes (in), I really, really enjoyed what I saw," Slot told reporters. "But then you also saw that, no matter how much quality players have, they think they don't have to run anymore. "In this league, especially against Tottenham because they are so good with the ball as well, they immediately start to create. And that's what they did, and they scored two goals. I was happy that the sixth one went in, to be fair." The Liverpool boss, who has enjoyed a near-flawless start to life at Anfield, accepted that "maybe it is human that

if you are 5-1 up, you think 'OK'". But Slot said his players needed to be more ruthless, telling reporters: "You have to be on top of your game every second of the game. And if you're not 100%, then it immediately hurts you." Slot, who won the Dutch league with Feyenoord before joining Liverpool, was happy to be top of the league at Christmas but said there was a long way to go. "Of course it means something, because you always prefer to be where we are at the moment ... but you know just as well as I know, because I've won the [Dutch] league once, how hard it is to win it," he said.