Persian Gulf Pro League:

Esteghlal boss Bozovic bemoans 'psychological issue' after Havadar draw

Sports Desk

Esteghlal head coach Miodrag Bozovic lamented the "psychological issue" among his players after the Tehran Blues were held to 2-2 draw at home by bottom-side Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Monday.

Prolific fullback Ramin Rezaeian put the Blues in front with four minutes into the game at the Azadi Stadium, only to see his goal canceled out by former Esteghlal midfielder Dariush Shojaeian two minutes later.

Mohammad-Hossein Sadeqi gave Havadar a surprise lead with a sensational strike just before the half-hour mark, winning the ball deep in his own half before charging forward all the way and slotting home a low drive from the edge of the box.

Esteghlal still managed to restore parity through Kasra Rahmati's own goal six minutes after the break, though the final result extended the Blues' winless run to nine games across all competitions since Bozovic took charge in February.

A four-time champion since the introduction of the Iranian Pro League in 2001, Esteghlal has collected only four points in seven top-flight outings under the Montenegrin coach, sitting 11th in the 16-team table with 30 points.

"It's clearly a psychological issue. That's the only reason I can think of," Bozovic said of his side's poor run of results.

"We dominated the game and created numerous chances. Today's performance was by far the best from my players since I took the job, and I don't think they have lost their motivation," added the Montenegrin, who also believed some refereeing decisions, as well as time wasting by Havadar players denied his side a first league victory since February 22.

Esteghlal had two late winners – from Mohammad-Hossein Eslami and Rouzbeh Cheshmi – chalked off by VAR, which also overturned the referee's decision to award the Blues a 64th-minute spot-kick after Mohammad Sattari's challenge on Eslami in the box.

"Havadar's first goal was offside, while I saw no problem with Eslami's strike. VAR interruptions disrupted our rhythm and tempo in the second half, giving Havadar players the opportunity to recover their energy. That's ultimately why we dropped points today.

"We barely had 20-25 minutes of effective play in the second half, as their goalkeeper and other players wasted so much time by laying down on the pitch. I don't think that sort of behavior has any place in football," added Bozovic, who can still steer his side to Hazfi Cup silverware at the end of a dreadful campaign.

Esteghlal will resume domestic cup action with a last-eight home game against second-tier club Paykan on Saturday.

Havadar, meanwhile, is on the verge of relegation after Monday's result left it struggling at the bottom of the table with 20 points – seven adrift of safety – with three games remaining.

Esteghlal head coach Miodrag Bozovic reacts on the touchline during a 2-2 draw against Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on April 21, 2025.
ALI HADDADI ASL/MNA

Iranians collect two medals in Western Asian youth chess meet

IRCF

Sports Desk

The first day of the Western Asia Youth Chess Championship saw Iranians collect a couple of medals in the rapid contests in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Taraneh Taqizadeh settled for a silver medal in the girls' under-14 age class on Monday, while Ramtin Kakavand took the bronze in the boys' under-12 event.

Iranians will vie for further success across different age groups in rapid, blitz, and standard competitions in Dushanbe until Tuesday.

The event features players from 14 countries in the region.

Iranian shooter Rostamian shatters national record

Sports Desk

Iranian shooter Hanieh Rostamian set a new national record in the women's 25m pistol category on Tuesday.

The milestone came during the Iranian trials for the 55th CISM World Military Shooting Championship – starting June 23 in Elverum, Norway.

A three-time world bronze winner, Rostamian registered 590 points in Tuesday's event to better the previous record, possessed by herself, by two points.

The 26-year-old Iranian girl – also a World Cup air pistol gold medalist in 2022 – stood third in the qualification round to make it to the final showdown in last year's Paris Olympics, but eventually settled for a sixth-place finish.

IRNA

Iranian Basketball Super League:

Tabiat beats Naft to take 2-0 series lead in semifinals

Sports Desk

Tabiat defeated Palayesh Naft Abadan 80-78 in Tehran on Monday to edge closer to a place in the Iranian Basketball Super League Finals.

The victory saw Mehran Shahintab's men take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series ahead of Thursday's Game 3 in Abadan.

American point-guard stole the show for Tabiat with 20 points, six rebounds, and double assists.

Tabiat had come out victorious by a 79-73 scoreline in Game 1 on Saturday.

The winner of the series will take on Shahrdari Gorgan or Kaleh Mazandaran in the Finals.

FATEMEH AMUZAD/MNA

Shahrdari and Kaleh will square off in Game 3 today in Gorgan, with the series evenly-poised at 1-1.

Kaleh won the first game 82-76 before Shahrdari bounced back with a 122-68 rout of its host in the second game.

United plan £62.5m Cunha move

THE GUARDIAN – Manchester United are pushing to sign the Wolves forward Matheus Cunha but may have to raise the money to trigger his £62.5m release clause by selling Marcus Rashford or other players.

Ruben Amorim has identified the 25-year-old as his prime target for the No 10 berth, one of the head coach's two priority positions, along with a centre-forward.

Rashford is on loan at Aston Villa, who have an option to buy the forward for £40m. United could get a higher fee if Rashford were sold to another club.

Rashford earns about £365,000 a week and will have three years on his contract in the close season. His transfer would release about another £56m in saved salary, giving United close to £100m to finance the deal for Cunha. The Brazilian is thought to earn about £90,000 a week, so if he agreed terms for five years with a considerable salary increase, offloading Rashford should allow United to finance most of his purchase.

Rashford is minded that he will not play again competitively for United while Amorim and this executive are there owing to a breakdown in the relationship.

Jadon Sancho, Antony, Casemiro and Rasmus Højlund are other players whose departure would boost United's transfer budget. Amorim's first-choice signing at centre-forward is Liam Delap, who has a £30m release if Ipswich are relegated, which is all but guaranteed.

DAVID DAVIES/PA