

Seedorf to make final call as Esteghlal coaching debate drags on

Sports Desk

Esteghlal fans appear destined for another frustrating summer of rumors and speculation swirling around the future of the Tehran Blues.

While domestic rivals Persepolis and Sepahan have been quick to bolster their squads with several marquee signings, Esteghlal has yet to appoint a new head coach ahead of the upcoming Persian Gulf Pro League season.

Clarence Seedorf was unveiled as technical director and advisor to Esteghlal chairman Ali Nazari Jouybari last week, and the former Dutch international is expected to have the final say on who will take charge of the newly-crowned Hazfi Cup champion in the coming days. A Rouzbeh Cheshmi's last-gasp winner sealed a 1-0 victory over Malavan FC in the domestic cup showdown in late May, putting a lid on a dreadful campaign for the Capital Blues, who matched an all-time low in the Iranian top-flight table, finishing ninth with seven wins and 10 defeats in 30 games.

Mojtaba Jabbari, the sixth coach on the Esteghlal bench throughout the season, believes he has earned the right to be trusted with the permanent role for next season after a successful six-game stint as the interim



Clarence Seedorf is introduced as technical director and advisor to club CEO at Esteghlal in Tehran, Iran, on June 2, 2025.
● SADEQ NIKGOSTAR/EARS

boss. Jouybari insisted after the cup final that the former Blues midfielder "is on the club's shortlist of candidates for the job", though Seedorf is believed

to be favoring a high-profile foreign tactician. The club hierarchy has been reluctant to disclose details of the selection process, even as

numerous names – including Spanish Quique Sanchez Flores, ex-Esteghlal Portuguese boss Ricardo Sa Pinto, and Dutch coach Henk Fraser – have sur-

faced in recent weeks for the Blues' managerial role.

A couple of Brazilian coaches – Fábio Carille and Osmar Loss Vieira – are the latest names to

be brought up in the Iranian media.

IRNA reported on Saturday that Carille has been approached by the Blues, while club spokesperson Saadeh Sima told Azad News Agency that Osmar is among the Blues' candidates.

Carille, 51, led Corinthians to the Brazilian Série A title in his managerial debut season in 2017 but has achieved little of note at other clubs – including Saudi sides Al Wehda and Al Ittihad, as well as Japan's V-Varen Nagasaki.

A familiar face among the Iranian football fans, Osmar, who served as a number two to Yahya Golmohammadi at Persepolis, was promoted to the head coach position midway through the 2023/24 season before steering the Tehran Reds to a seventh top-flight trophy in eight years.

The 49-year-old Brazilian left Persepolis for Buriram United last summer and won guided the Thai club to four domestic and regional titles as well as an impressive last-eight spot at the revamped AFC Champions League Elite.

Tabiat to face Chinese Lions in BCL Asia debut

Sports Desk

Iranian Basketball Super League heavyweight Tabiat is set to face its biggest test by far when getting its debut campaign at the Basketball Champions League Asia underway in Dubai today.

Mehran Shahintab's men will square off against Chinese champion Zhejiang Lions – also a debutant at the flagship continental club competition – in their opening Group A game at the Sheikh Saeed Bin Maktoum Sports Hall, before facing Ulaanbaatar Xac Broncos of Mongolia on Monday.

One of the nine teams across the three groups will leave the United Arab Emirates after the group phase, with the other eight heading into the quarterfinals – starting

Wednesday at Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena.

Introduced to Iranian club basketball in 2023, Tabiat lifted the domestic top-flight trophy in its maiden campaign, earning a spot at the FIBA West Asia Super League for the following season.

Some impressive results and performances saw Tabiat progress to the WASL Final 8, before suffering a 104-77 loss to Lebanese giant and defending champion in the final showpiece in May, though the runner-up finish was still enough for the Iranian club to punch the Dubai ticket.

Tabiat, is the 11th club to represent the country across 30 editions of the tournament, with Shahrdari Gorgan the most recent Iranian contestant as it was part of the cast in 2024.

The Iranians have won a total of 10 medals in the event, including six golds which is tied for most among nations alongside Lebanon.

Iranian international guard Sina Vahedi will be desperate to lead Tabiat to a maiden Asian medal, having been part of the Shahrdari team which fell just short of a podium finish after bowing to the Hiroshima Dragons in the third-place game last year.

Another player to watch in the Tabiat roster is Croatian center Ivan Buva, who excelled in the WASL event with an average 20.9 points and 10.5 rebounds.

Not to be forgotten are the other key cogs such as fan-favorite American duo Perry Petty and Stedmon Lemon, as well as local talents Arman Zangeneh and Amir Qolizadeh.



● FIBA

Men's Artistic Gymnastics Asian Championships: Iran's Siahhi wins rings bronze

Sports Desk

Iran's Siavash Siahhi finished his campaign at the Men's Artistic Gymnastics Asian Championships with an impressive bronze medal in the rings event in Jecheon, South Korea. The Iranian scored 14.133 points in Saturday's showdown at the Jecheon Gymnasium to stand behind Chinese duo Lan Xingyu and Yang Haonan.

Former world champion Lan scored 14.933 points to walk away with the ultimate prize, taking his personal tally to seven Asian golds, with Yang settling for the runner-up finish with 14.233 points.



Iran will be hoping to add more medals to its senior haul on the final day of the competi-

tion, when Asian Games silver medalist Mahdi Olfati is in action in the vault final.

Djokovic undecided on French Open future after semis defeat

REUTERS – Novak Djokovic has yet to decide whether his French Open semi-final defeat against world number one Jan-nik Sinner was his final appearance at Roland Garros, the 24-time Grand Slam winner said on Friday.

The three-time French Open champion was beaten in straight sets after missing three set points in the third.

"This could have been the last match ever I played here. I don't know," Serbian Djokovic told a press conference after losing 6-4 7-5 7-6(3). "That's why I was a bit more emotional even in the end.

"But if this was the farewell match at the Roland Garros for me in my career, it was a wonderful one in terms of the atmosphere and what I got from the crowd."

The 38-year-old was given a standing ovation by a roaring crowd as he exited Court Philippe Chatrier, bending down to touch the clay and saluting the fans.

He said he was planning to play at Wimbledon later this month as we as the U.S. Open starting in August with his focus firmly on the Grand Slams.

He refused, however, to com-

mit to any tournaments beyond those two at this stage.

"At the moment I will try to stick with the plan what I had, which is play the Grand Slams. Those tournaments are the priorities of my schedule," he said.

"I don't know really what tomorrow brings in a way at this point in my career," said Djokovic, who had been in pursuit of a record 25th Grand Slam singles title in Paris.

He is currently tied at 24 majors with Australian Margaret Court. Djokovic last lifted the Musketiers' Cup at the French Open in 2023.