

# Persepolis parts ways with Turkish coach Kartal

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League side Persepolis and Ismail Kartal agreed to the mutual termination of the Turkish head coach's contract, club CEO Reza Darvish confirmed on Tuesday.

Kartal had informed the club last week of his intention not to see out his contract, which would have run until June 2026, citing family reasons, though the decision is widely believed to stem from concerns over further conflict between Iran and Israel.

Israel launched an aerial aggression on Iranian territory in the early hours of June 13, which led to a 12-day war, before a ceasefire went into effect between the two countries.

The former Fenerbahce manager was appointed to the Reds' job in January, leading the club to eight wins and four draws in 16 games across all competitions.

Persepolis finished third to Tractor and Sepahan

in the Iranian league last season – a lowest finish for the club in nine seasons – while crashing out of the AFC Champions League Elite and the Iranian Hazfi Cup.

Following the below-par campaign, Kartal had promised a shakeup of his aging squad ahead of the new season, with the club making seven summer signings at the behest of the Turkish coach.

There could be further foreign departees from the Reds' squad, as Turkish striker Serdar Dursun, who joined the club in January, and Algerian goalkeeper Alexis Guendouz – signed last summer – are also expected to leave the club in the coming days.

Kartal is the second foreign coach to leave the Iranian top flight in the aftermath of the 12-day war – following Frenchman Patrice Carteron, who stepped down from his role at Sepahan.

Sepahan was quick to replace Carteron by club

legend Moharram Navidkia, who steered the Isfahan-based outfit to a runner-up finish in the league in the 2020/21 season during his first spell at the club.

Rumors are already swirling around Persepolis' vacant managerial position, with some familiar faces being linked to the job in the Iranian media reports in recent days.

Former Persepolis managers Branko Ivankovic and Osmar Loss Viera have reportedly been approached by the club, though both are unlikely to return to the role, while Football360 website wrote on Tuesday that the Reds have also made contact with ex-Iran international Vahid Hashemian.

Karim Baqeri, who served as the interim coach for three games before Kartal's appointment, is expected to take charge of the Reds' preseason training in the coming weeks until a permanent coach is unveiled by the club.



● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

## FIVB U19 World Championship:

# Iranian boys eyeing glory on return to Tashkent



● volleyball.ir

## Sports Desk

Iran will be looking to improve on a runner-up finish in 2023 when the new edition of the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship gets underway in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on July 21.

Iran will begin its bid for a third world under-19 title against Spain in Pool C of the 24-team tournament on July 24, before taking on Poland – champion in 2021 – the following day.

Adel Gholami's boys will then face double African

tests in Tunisia and Egypt, followed by an encounter against Italy – also a two-time champion – on the final of the pool phase on July 29.

The top four of each of the four groups will progress to the round of 16.

Despite a disrupted preparation process in recent weeks, Gholami will still hope to see his talented squad deliver when they chase glory on return to the Uzbek capital.

The Iranian boys had been stranded in Tashkent for over two weeks following a CAVA U19 title-winning

campaign – due to the closure of Iranian airspace during the 12-day war with Israel – before finally returning home late on Tuesday.

Outside-hitter Mohammad-Amin Rahimi, middle-blocker Mohammad-nima Bateni, and libero Mohammad-Amin Arab-yarmohammadi will be the players to watch in the Iranian team after being named in the dream team of the Asian U18 Championship last year, while Mahdi Sakhavi, Arshia Sa'adat, Parsa Galehdar, and Amirmohammad Ra-

fieirad among the best in the CAVA under-19 event, with the latter claiming the MVP award of the tournament.

Elsewhere in Tashkent, the host country is joined by Belgium, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Pakistan, and Turkey in Pool A.

Defending champion France headlines Pool B – also featuring Bulgaria, Japan, China, Algeria, and Canada – with six-time champion Brazil, the United States, South Korea, Colombia, Finland, and Cuba completing the lineup in Pool D.

## Iran names squad for FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B

## Sports Desk

Greek head coach named Iran's 12-woman squad for the upcoming FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B

– starting July 13 in Shenzhen, China.

Negin Rasoulipour, Faezeh Shahriari, Kimia Yazdan Tehrani, Sheida Shojaei, Delaram Vakili, Farnaz

Khodamardi, Mahla Abedi, Mahsa Karani, Ghazal Zamani, Aida Golmohammadi, Nahideh Asadi, and Roxy Barahman will represent the country at the eight-day

tournament. Iranian girls will kick off their campaign in the Cook Islands in Group B on the first day of the competition, before facing Mongolia on July 15.

The final day of the group stage will see Iran take on Thailand on July 16. The Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan, India, and Tahiti are in Group A. The two group winners will progress to semifinals, while the second- and third-placed teams in each group will play in a playoff round for a last-four spot.

The Division B champion will qualify for next edition's Division A event. Iran secured a place in the Division B finals after beating Syria (65-55) and Jordan (88-70) in April's West Asian qualification tournament in Amman.



● MNA

## FIFA Club World Cup:

# Mbappe edging closer to full fitness as Real reach last eight

**REUTERS** – Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso said Kylian Mbappe was edging closer to full fitness ahead of the Club World Cup quarter-finals after his side eliminated Juventus 1-0 in the last 16 on Tuesday. Mbappe made his long-awaited debut in the tournament as a second-half substitute following a bout of gastroenteritis that sidelined him during the group stage.

Alonso expressed optimism that the France striker would be sharper in time for Saturday's quarter-final clash against Borussia Dortmund.

"I think day by day he will get better, and by the time of the quarters he should be in



● HANNAH MCKAY/REUTERS

much better shape," Alonso told a press conference.

"We'll keep checking in with him every day."

In Mbappe's absence, Gonzalo Garcia deputised brilliantly, scoring the only goal on Tuesday for his third of the tournament.

Midfielder Federico Valverde was instrumental in Madrid's hard-fought win, creating countless chances and earning praise from Alonso, who hailed the Uruguayan as a "complete player" with leadership qualities that lift the entire team.