

Ex-Iran international Hashemian appointed Persepolis manager

Sports Desk

Former Iranian striker Vahid Hashemian has been named the new head coach of Persian Gulf Pro League club Persepolis, ending days of uncertainty surrounding the Tehran Reds' managerial position.

Hashemian, 48, succeeds Turkish coach Ismail Kartal, who parted ways with the club last week in the aftermath of the 12-day war between Iran and Israel.

Kartal joined Persepolis in January, leading the team to eight wins and four draws in 16 matches across all competitions. However, after the Reds finished third in the league – their lowest league position in 10 seasons – he opted to walk out on his 1.5-year contract amid concerns over further regional conflict. Hashemian's appointment

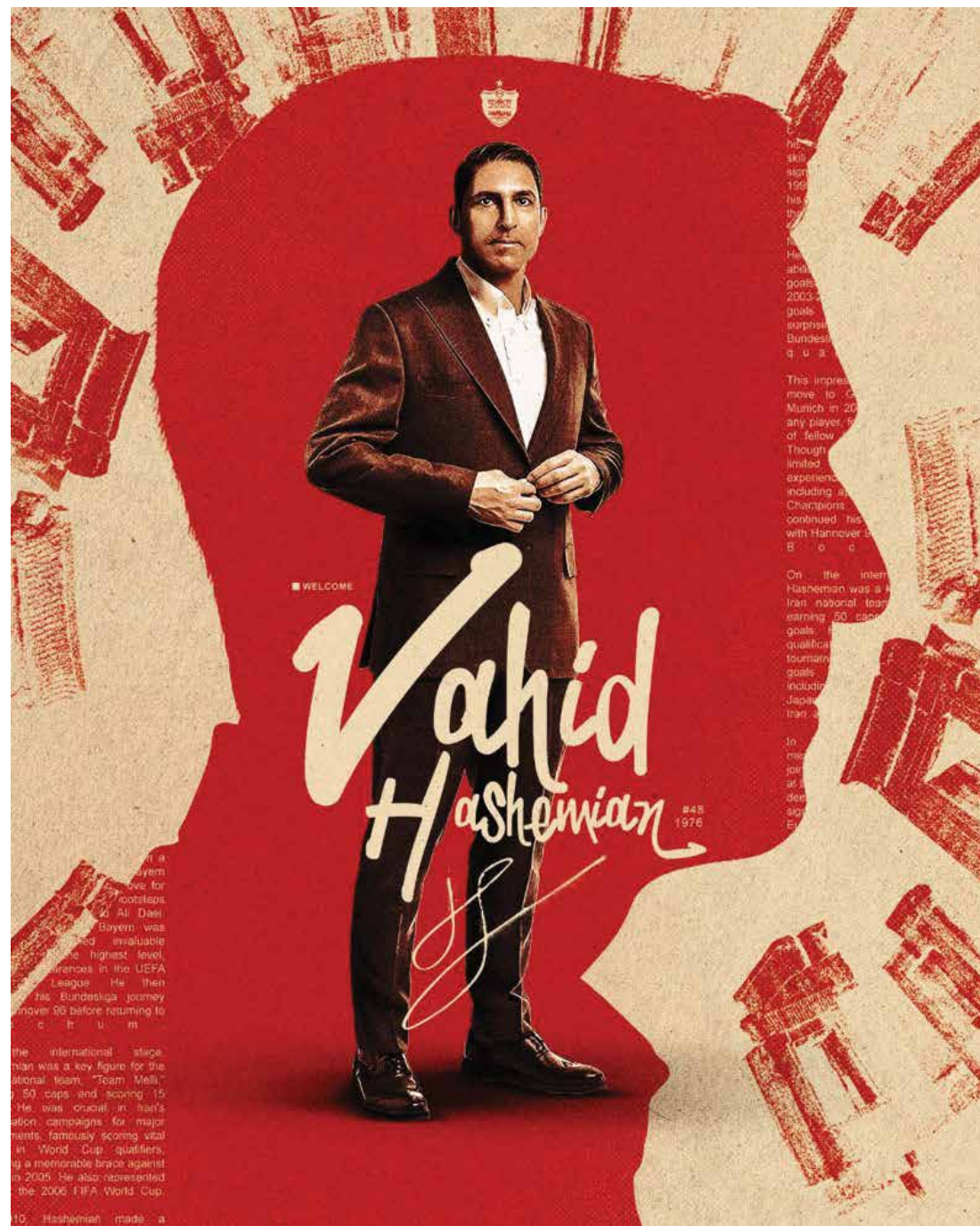
is widely seen as a major gamble for the club, which has won seven league titles since the 2016/17 season, given his significant lack of experience as a head coach in senior club football.

The Iranian will still aim to build on his distinguished career as a player, having scored 53 goals in 254 appearances for Bundesliga clubs VfL Bochum, Hannover 96, Hamburger SV, and Bayern Munich before hanging up his boots at Persepolis in 2012.

Hashemian, who began his coaching career as a at the German fifth-tier league, worked as an assistant coach at the Hamburg U17 side in the 2017/18 season before serving as a number two to former Iran head coaches Marc Wilmots and Dragan Skocic during the 2022

World Cup Asian qualifiers. Hashemian began his coaching career in Germany's fifth tier before taking up an assistant role with Hamburg's U17 side in the 2017/18 campaign. He also served as a number two to former Iran managers Marc Wilmots and Dragan Skocic during the 2022 World Cup Asian qualifiers.

He inherits a star-studded, yet imbalanced squad at Persepolis, after the club signed four established wingers – along with goalkeeper Payam Niazmand and attacking midfielder Reza Shekari – at Kartal's behest during the current transfer window, with a center-back, a right fullback, and a holding midfielder likely to be on the new manager's wishlist ahead of the upcoming season.



● PERSEPOLIS FC

Azarpira beats Bazri to Iranian FS 97kg slot for World Championships



Sports Desk

Freestyle wrestler Amir-Ali Azarpira secured his place in the Iranian 10-man squad for September's World Championships in Zagreb, thanks to a 3-0 victory over Ahmad Bazri in the domestic 97kg decider in Tehran on Friday.

Azarpira, who had been sidelined with a torn ligament injury following an Olympic bronze-winning campaign in Paris last year, was given a shot at a place in the Croatian capital after returning to action at the Matteo Pellicone Memorial in Sassari, Italy, in June. The defeat, meanwhile, came as a major disappointment for Bazri, who had excelled throughout the Iranian team's selection process, grabbing the gold medals in May's

International Takhti Cup in Isfahan, and then the UWW Ranking Series event in Ulaanbaatar last month, before ultimately falling short against the 23-year-old Azarpira.

Azarpira took a 1-0 lead at the break, after Bazri was cautioned for passivity, and then scored a takedown in the second period to clinch the victory.

Azarpira – a two-time world under-23 gold medalist – is the eighth Iranian freestyle wrestler to punch his Zagreb ticket following reigning world champion Amirhossein Zare' (125kg), Olympic silver medalist Rahman Amouzad (65kg), and two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour (86kg), as well as Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan (61kg),

Younes Emami (74kg), and Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg).

The 70kg and 79kg slots remain up for grabs and will be decided after the final Ranking Series event of the season – starting July 17 in Budapest, Hungary – where Abbas Ebrahimzadeh and Sina Khali (70kg) plus Mahdi Yousefi and Fariborz Babaei (79kg) will have to walk away with the ultimate prize in their respective weight classes to stand a chance of a spot at the World Championships.



Freestyle 97kg wrestler Amir-Ali Azarpira (L) has his hand raised as the winner after a 3-0 victory over fellow-Iranian Ahmad Bazri in Tehran, Iran, on July 4, 2025.

● AMIRREZA ALI-ASGARI/IAWFIR

Portuguese Alves eyeing Tractor exit

Sports Desk

Portuguese midfielder Ricardo Alves has informed Tractor SC of his intention to terminate his contract with the Persian Gulf Pro League champion.

The Iranian club, however, said in a statement that it would firmly reject Alves's request and the Portuguese would have to report for the first training session of the preseason in Tabriz today.

Alves, whose contract runs until July 2026, has made

the decision amid 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.

Should Alves's departure go through, it will be a major blow for Tractor and Croatian head coach Dragan Skocic ahead of their domestic league title defense and participation at the AFC Champions League

Elite.

Having joined the north-west Iranian club in 2022, the central midfielder has scored eight goals, while providing his teammates with a remarkable 31 assists, in 95 appearances in all competitions for Tractor.

Deeply adored by Tractor fans, Alves finished atop the league's assists chart in back-to-back seasons before playing a pivotal role in helping the club lift its maiden top-flight trophy in May.



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