

Azmoun wins Golden Ball in UAE Pro League Awards

Sports Desk

Shabab Al Ahli striker Sardar Azmoun won the Golden Ball for Best Player of the Emirati ADNOC Pro League 2024/25 season, beating fellow Iranian Mahdi Qayedi and Sharjah's Brazilian winger Caio Lucas to the prestigious prize. In his debut season in Asian club football, Azmoun scored 11 goals and contributed six assists in 21 league appearances to lead nine-time champion Shabab Al Ahli to a second top-flight trophy in three seasons and secure a place in the league phase of the upcoming AFC Champions Elite season. "I'm so thrilled and feel incredible – maybe even too excited to sleep tonight!" Azmoun said after receiving the award, adding, "I want to thank everyone who made this possible: my teammates, the club president, the fans, the coach, my wife, and all those who supported me.

They played a huge role in my success and always encouraged me. I hope this journey continues and that I keep shining."

"My main goal is to shine again next season and win trophies with the team. I believe in this squad and these players. The challenges ahead are tough, but with this group, we can excel and keep winning titles. I love scoring goals, especially in the finals as it makes it all the more exciting."

When Azmoun left Bayer Leverkusen last summer to join Shabab Al Ahli, his move was widely regarded as the beginning of the end for the 30-year-old striker. However, a prolific campaign saw him bag 26 goals and 10 assists in 39 outings across all competitions as Shabab Al Ahli also won the UAE Super Cup and Qatar-UAE Challenge Shield. Azmoun was the joint leading marksman – alongside Caio Lucas – in the AFC Champions League Two with

nine strikes, though Shabab Al Ahli crashed out in the quarterfinals, courtesy of a shootout defeat against eventual champion Sharjah.

Azmoun's international teammate Qayedi, meanwhile, enjoyed an impressive loan season with Ittihad Kalba, registering 16 goals and seven assists in 23 league games – second-highest goal contribution in the Emirati top flight behind Al Ain's Togolese forward Kodjo Laba.

The Iranian international winger was also the third-top scorer and fourth-best assist provider in the league last season before securing a permanent move to Al Nasr from parent club Shabab Al Ahli in July.



Shabab Al Ahli striker Sardar Azmoun (R) poses for a photo with the Golden Ball for Best Player of the season during the UAE Pro League Awards in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on August 9, 2025. uaeproleague.ae



Chengdu 2025 World Games:

Abazari bags bronze as Iran finishes with double karate medals

Sports Desk

Saleh Abazari settled for a kumite bronze as Iran finished with double karate medals at The World Games in Chengdu, China. Representing the country in the men's +84kg category, Abazari began his campaign with a 4-3 victory over American Eddie Sagilyan but fell to a 3-2 defeat against the host's Zhai Ang before sharing the spoils with Taha Mahmoud (2-2) to stand second to the Egyptian in the Pool B table and progress to the semifinals. Former Asian champion Abazari suffered a 4-0 setback against Ukraine's Ryzvan Talibov in the last four but still bounced back to come out victorious (6-4) in a rematch against Mahmoud in the third-place bout and win a consolation bronze. "Thank God I had a decent

performance in the third-place bout. I had beaten the Egyptian opponent several times before. He is the number one of the class in the world rankings, and I had to work hard to overcome a three-point deficit and beat him. I just want to dedicate this medal to my fellow Iranians," Abazari said after his victory over Mahmoud. "Saleh had a major finger injury before the Games but refused to undergo surgery," Iran head coach Shahram Heravi said, adding, "He truly deserved to win the gold here and I am sure he will shine again in the future tournaments." Elsewhere on Saturday, reigning Asian champion Atousa Golshadnejad was left empty-handed in the women's -61kg class following a 5-0 loss to Nour-sin Ali of Egypt. Golshadnejad had beaten the Egyptian fighter 2-1

earlier in the day, before victories over Laura Sivert (3-0) of France and Kazakhstan's Assel Kanay (3-2) saw the Iranian girl finish atop the Pool B standings. However, Golshadnejad was undone (2-1) by Japanese Sarara Shimada in the semifinals before the third-place defeat against Ali. Sara Bahmanyar had won a first medal for Iran in the kumite contests on the preceding night in Chengdu, defeating some high-profile karatekas – including reigning world champion Moldir Zhangbyrbay of Kazakhstan in the final – to walk away with the ultimate prize in the women's -50kg event. Former world bronze medalist Bahmanyar opened her account with a 4-0 victory over back-to-back European champion Ema Sgardelli of Croatia and then edged past against



Iranian karateka Saleh Abazari (L) poses with his kumite bronze medal alongside head coach Shahram Heravi at The World Games in Chengdu, China, on August 9, 2025. [IKF](https://ikf.org)

Zhangbyrbay by hantei (judges' decision) after it finished scoreless.



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Iranian boxer Chehreqani scoops Asian U19 gold

Sports Desk

Iran's Ali Chehreqani finished his campaign at the U22 & U19 Asian Boxing Championships on a high note by claiming the 60kg gold medal in the men's under-19 age category in Bangkok, Thailand. Having beaten opponents from Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, and the host country en route to the final, the Iranian prodigy defeated Kazakhstan's Adil Tortbik in Sunday's showdown to walk away with the ultimate prize. Chehreqani's triumph added a fifth medal to Iranian

boys' haul in Bangkok, after Mahdi Rouzbehani (50kg), Ashkan Hashemi (65kg), Mohammad-Saleh Mesbahi (70kg), and Abbas Garshasbi (+90kg) had suffered last-four setbacks to settle for a consolation bronze. Amirreza Soltani (-55kg) and Arvin Shahbabaei (90kg), meanwhile, left Bangkok empty-handed following first-round defeats in their respective weight classes. Further glory is on the cards for Iran in the under-22 event today, as Sam Estaki takes on the Uzbek boxer in the final showpiece of the 85kg contests.



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Haitian striker Nazon joins Esteghlal

Sports Desk

Esteghlal signed Haitian international striker Duckens Nazon on a three-year contract – reportedly worth €850,000 – the Persian Gulf Pro League club announced on Sunday. Nazon, 31, bagged eight goals and four assists in 33 Süper Lig appearances for Kayserispor last season, taking his tally to 10 goals and five assists across two seasons with the Turkish top-flight side. The former Coventry City and CSKA Sofia player, who has an impressive 40 goals in 68 international caps, is the 10th sum-

mer signing for the Tehran Blues, who have Portuguese Ricardo Sa Pinto back on the bench as the head coach and are desperate to improve on last season's ninth-place finish in the domestic league. Esteghlal's activity in the market gathered pace in recent days as the club secured the signing of Albanian international winger Jasir Asani last week, before former Real Madrid and Sporting CP goalkeeper Antonio Adán came in as a free agent, while young Iranian striker Saied Saharkhizan joined from Russian club FC Orenburg on a three-year contract.