

AFC Champions League Elite: Tractor coach Skocic rues 'individual errors' in Al Sadd defeat



Al Sadd striker Roberto Firmino (R) is challenged by Tractor's Aleksandar Sedlar during an AFC Champions League Elite game in Doha, Qatar, on February 10, 2026. 

Sports Desk

Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic lamented "individual errors" after his side suffered their first defeat in the AFC Champions League Elite, falling 2-0 to Qatar's Al Sadd in Doha on Tuesday.

Rafa Mújica broke the deadlock on the hour mark after Akram Afif nodded Pedro Miguel's cross into the path of the Spanish striker, who controlled superbly before slotting past Tractor goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Roberto Firmino sealed the victory in the 89th minute, finishing off a well-worked counterattack with a composed close-range effort.

The defeat – Tractor's first in seven matches – leaves the Iranian champions third in the 12-team West Zone standings with 14 points, five behind Saudi heavyweights Al Hilal and level

with second-placed Al Ahli. "Our team played a difficult match, as expected, against a strong opponent with a selection of outstanding players," said Skocic, whose side has already secured a place in the last 16 of Asia's premier club competition.

"We lost due to some individual errors in defensive coverage, and we will work on learning from this match to come back stronger," the Croatian added.

Tractor will look to finish the league phase on a positive note when they travel to face Al Gharafa next week at Thani bin Jassim Stadium in Al Rayyan.

Al Gharafa, who suffered a 7-0 thrashing at Al Ittihad later on Tuesday, sit 10th with six points – two behind eighth-placed Al Sadd – and must beat Tractor to keep alive their slim hopes of reaching the knockout stage.

Meanwhile, Al Sadd head coach Roberto Mancini said his side

could draw inspiration from Tuesday's victory as they push for a place in the round of 16. "The match was difficult, and we delivered a good performance, especially in the second half, where we created many chances, scored two goals, and secured three important points," said Mancini.

"We faced an opponent that had not lost a single match in the competition this season, so it was very important for us to defeat Tractor. We still have hope of qualifying, and we will hold on to it."

"I am happy with the victory and grateful for the support of the Al Sadd fans. I hope they continue supporting the team strongly in the upcoming matches," the Italian added.

Asian champions in 2011, Al Sadd will target another three points in their final league-stage clash against Al Ittihad in Doha on Tuesday.

Sepahan wins historic CAVA Women's League title

Sports Desk

Iran's Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan made history on Tuesday by capturing the CAVA Women's League title in Malé, Maldives, defeating Kazakhstan's Turan VC in straight sets (25-22, 25-20, 25-20) in the final.

The triumph marked the first gold medal for an Iranian club in women's volleyball competitions.

Sepahan's historic success also secured the team a berth at April's AVC Women's Championships in Goyang, South Korea.

The Iranian side opened its

campaign with a 3-1 victory (25-14, 23-25, 25-14, 25-12) over hosts Huraa Community Club, before easing past Nepal Police Club and Uzbekistan's Humo VC in straight sets to advance to the semifinals as the top team in Pool B. Bolstered by several national team players, including setter Shabnam Alikhani and outside hitter Masoumeh Qadami, Sepahan continued its dominant run with a commanding 3-0 win (25-12, 25-9, 25-16) against Sri Lanka's Hirdaramani Sports Club in the semifinals.

The latest success in the CAVA competition – which featured

seven clubs from across Central and South Asia – brings Iranian women's volleyball's medal haul to four in as many months.

Iran defeated Uzbekistan 3-0 to clinch the CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship title last October, securing the national team's first gold medal since its establishment in 1963. The team then claimed bronze at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November.

The country also celebrated gold at the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain in October, where Iran's under-18 side came from behind to defeat Indonesia in a dramatic five-set final.



AVC

AFC Champions League Two:

Wasteful Esteghlal facing knockout exit after Al Hussein setback

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League side Esteghlal suffered a major setback in its quest for AFC Champions League Two glory, falling to a 1-0 defeat against Jordan's Al Hussein in the first leg of their last-16 tie at Dubai's Al Maktoum Stadium on Tuesday.

Jordan international Sisa struck late at the neutral venue to hand Al Hussein – who had been under sustained pressure for much of the contest – a slender advantage ahead of next week's return leg in Amman.

The Tehran Blues dominated the opening half and created a string of chances. Saeid Saharkhizan came close in the eighth minute, ghosting into the box but failing to control Alireza Kooshki's cross. Al Hussein goalkeeper Yazeed Abulaila was kept busy throughout the first

half, tipping away a curling effort from Munir El Haddadi before producing fine saves to deny Kooshki from a free-kick and Abolfazl Zamani from close range. Esteghlal's clearest opportunity arrived just before halftime when Zamani threaded a pass through to Jasir Asani. With only Abulaila to beat, the Albanian international dragged his right-footed effort wide. Asani sought redemption early in the second half, cutting in from the right and firing into the side netting. Minutes later, he thought he had broken the deadlock, only for his strike to be ruled out following a VAR review that detected an offside earlier in the move.

Misfortune struck again in the 63rd minute when Esteghlal had a second goal disallowed. Rustamjon Ashurmatov's glancing header from Kooshki's free-kick was ruled mar-



Esteghlal midfielder Munir El Haddadi (L) is seen in action against Al Hussein in the AFC Champions League Two last-16 in Dubai, UAE, on February 10, 2026. 

ginally offside. Esteghlal's profligacy in front of goal ultimately proved costly. Al Hussein gradually grew into the match, with Mahmoud Kharouba and Aref Haitham forcing Habib Far Abbasi into action for the first time.

The breakthrough came in the 78th minute when Esteghlal failed to deal with a corner. The clearance fell to Sisa some 30 yards from goal, and the Jordanian unleashed a superb swerving strike that beat a stunned Abbasi to secure a vital away victory.

Khatoon crowned

Iran Women's Pro League champion

Sports Desk

Bam Khatoon sealed a record-extending 12th Iran Women's Pro League title with a commanding 3-0 home victory over Sepahan on Tuesday.

The latest triumph proved the toughest for Marziyeh Jafari's side, whose remarkable 1,527-day unbeaten league run was ended by Malavan last week, leaving Khatoon needing at least a point in the final round to secure the crown.

Mona Hamoudi struck twice, while Iranian international Sara Didar also found the net, as Khatoon rose to the occasion to finish top of the standings with 49 points from 16 wins in 18 matches. Out of respect for those who lost their lives during January's unrest in the country, Khatoon players opted against holding a title celebration and promptly left the podium after receiving their medals and the trophy.

Golgohar finished runners-up with 47 points despite a 4-2 away win over Istatis Karan Fars in Shiraz. The defeat left the hosts second from bottom in the 10-team table with seven points, joining Yasam Kurdestan in relegation.

Jafari, the reigning AFC Women's Coach of the Year, will now turn her attention to international duty as Team Melli faces a daunting challenge at the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup, which kicks off on March 1, with Iran drawn in Group

A alongside hosts Australia, 2022 runners-up South Korea, and the Philippines, semifinalists in the previous edition.

Elsewhere on the final day of the domestic top flight, Ava Tehran secured its top-flight status with a 2-1 home win over Malavan to finish eighth on 11 points. Persepolis defeated Yasam 4-0 away to claim seventh place in their debut Kowsar League season, while third-placed Ista Alborz beat Palayesh Gaz Ilam 3-1 at home.



Khatoon captain Atefeh Ramezanizadeh holds the Iran Women's Pro League trophy after a 3-0 victory over Sepahan in Bam, Iran, on February 10, 2026. 