

# Esteghlal Held by Saipa, Sepahan Beat Gol Gohar: IPL



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Esteghlal football team was held to a 1-1 draw by Saipa in Matchweek 22 of the Iran Professional League on Monday.

Esteghlal midfielder Masoud Rigi was on target with a long-range shot in the 15th minute but the team's defender Farshid Bagheri scored an own goal in the last seconds of the first half.

Esteghlal dropped to fifth place with 37 points, 13 points behind IPL leader Persepolis with eight weeks remaining.

In Ahvaz, Foolad came from

behind to snatch all three points against Machine Sazi.

Babak Moradi gave Machine Sazi the lead in the 4th minute but Farshad Ahmadzadeh (16) and Luciano (63) scored for Foolad.

Foolad moved up to third place, 12 points adrift of Persepolis.

Sepahan also retained their place in the second place after defeating Gol Gohar Sirjan 2-0. Mohammad Reza Hosseini scored in the 9th minute and Mohammad Karimi made it 2-0 in the 35th minute from the penalty spot.

## Liverpool Can Stay on Top Without Major Signings, Says Klopp



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp

LONDON (AFP) - Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp does not believe he has to spend "millions" in the transfer market, saying it is a tricky task to improve his Premier League winners.

Klopp's side were last week crowned English champions for the first time in 30 years with a record seven games to go.

The coronavirus outbreak, which put the Premier League on hold for three months, is likely to have a significant impact on the football transfer market.

But Klopp said even if he had a significant war chest, spending it would not necessarily be easy or the right thing to do.

The club decided not to compete with Chelsea for RB Leipzig striker Timo Werner even though he had been heavily linked with a move to Anfield.

Fringe players Xherdan Shaqiri and Adam Lallana look likely to be among those who will be leaving the club.

"COVID has of course influenced both sides with ins and outs, that is completely normal, and it's just not likely that it will be the most busy summer in the world," Klopp told reporters.

"But maybe at a later point in the year, if the transfer window is still open, we will know more. But this squad... look at it.

The Liverpool boss said he had a "first 16 or 17" who could all play at the same level.

"We cannot spend millions and millions and millions because we want to or we think it is nice to do," he added. "We never wanted that."

Klopp's last big buy was the purchase of Alisson Becker for £65 million (\$80 million) in 2018.

Since then the outlay has been relatively small. Teenagers Harvey Elliott and Sepp van den Berg have joined the club along with Adrian and Takumi Minamoto, who arrived from RB Salzburg for £7.25 million in January.

## F1 Drivers Discussing Taking a Knee in Austria

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Amid the ongoing activism against racism in recent weeks, F1 has launched the We Race as One campaign targeted at improving inclusion and diversity within the sport, while Mercedes has switched to a black livery for the full 2020 season as part of its anti-racism message.

Prior to the start of the opening round of Premier League football matches this month, players took a knee at kick off in a show of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

McLaren's Lando Norris has



revealed a similar move is under discussion between the F1 drivers ahead of the race in Austria on Sunday.

"Some of the drivers have already been speaking [about taking a knee]," Norris told PA Sport.

"If we are going to do it, we should all do it as a grid. It will be discussed following the drivers' briefing with the Grand Prix Drivers' Association on Friday.

"We will do whatever we can to show that we care and respect everyone. We will do what is right when the time comes."

## Pirlo to Take Charge of Juventus U-23 Team



Former Juventus player Andrea Pirlo

ROME (Xinhua) - Former Juventus player Andrea Pirlo will return to the club as coach of their U-23 side in the third-tier Serie C league, multiple Italian media outlets reported.

Following a hugely successful ten-year spell with AC Milan, Pirlo joined Juventus in 2011 and won four consecutive Serie A

titles with the Old Lady. Pirlo retired from playing in November 2017 after a stint at New York City FC, and began his coaching qualifications shortly afterwards.

Sky Sports Italia journalist Gianluca Di Marzio said the former midfielder has accepted an offer from Juventus to replace current in-

cumbent Fabio Pecchia, and will be joined by former teammate Roberto Baronio as his assistant manager.

At the weekend, Juventus U-23 won the Coppa Italia Serie C, their first piece of silverware. But despite the victory, Juventus have elected to replace Pecchia with managerial novice Pirlo ahead of the new season.

## Players Can Stay in Locker Rooms During Anthem: U.S. Women's Soccer League

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) has said players can choose to remain in the locker room or express their individual views on the pitch while the national anthem is being played at the Challenge Cup.

The NWSL said the decision to provide additional flexibility by revising pre-game ceremonies followed discussions with players, club officials and other stakeholders.

Every player from the North Carolina Courage and Portland Thorns took a knee during the anthem and wore t-shirts with the slogan



'Black Lives Matter' before their game on Saturday.

Athletes from around the world have been joining the protest cam-

paign sparked by the death last month of George Floyd, a Black man, while in Minneapolis police custody.

"Kneel on the field. Stand with your hand over your heart. Honor your feelings in the privacy of the locker room or at midfield. The NWSL is a league that was built on diversity and courage and those principles will continue to drive us forward."

The month-long Challenge Cup in Utah, which kicked off on Saturday, will be played in empty stadiums amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Valencia Sack Coach Celades After Villarreal Loss

MADRID (AFP) - Valencia have fired coach Albert Celades after a run of bad results culminated with a defeat by the La Liga club's bitter local rivals Villarreal at the weekend.

Valencia have picked up a meager four points from a possible

15 since the restart following the coronavirus lockdown, dropping to eighth in the league, eight points off the Champions League qualifying spots.

"Valencia have informed Albert Celades of his immediate release,"

a club statement said.

Former caretaker coach Voro has been called in again as a temporary replacement for the sixth time.

Celades took over at the Mestalla last September after the surprise sacking of previous boss Marceli-

no, who had led the club to back-to-back fourth-placed finishes.

But Celades has failed to last the season after Sunday's 2-0 loss at Villarreal left Valencia with just two wins in 13 matches in all competitions.

## UEFA Insists 'No Plan B' for Champions League



UEFA is hopeful the Champions League final eight will go ahead in Lisbon as planned despite new lockdown measures being introduced in the Portuguese capital

LAUSANNE (AFP) - UEFA insists there is "no reason to prepare a Plan B" for the final eight of the Champions League in Lisbon despite Portuguese authorities reintroducing restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus.

"We hope everything will be fine and that it will be possible to organize the tournament in Portugal. For the moment there is no reason to prepare a Plan B," a UEFA spokesperson told AFP.

The spokesperson added that European football's governing body is in "constant contact with the Portuguese Football Federation

and the local authorities".

UEFA announced earlier this month that the latter stages of the Champions League would be staged exceptionally as a straight knockout competition from the quarter-finals onwards with all matches in Lisbon.

Earlier this month, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said: "For now things look well, and we hope everything will be fine until we organize the final eight."

He added: "We are assessing the situation, not week by week but day by day, and we will adapt when the time comes, if necessary."