

## Iranian goalie Abedzadeh on Sevilla radar: Report



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### Sports Desk

**L**a Liga giant Sevilla is seeking to sign Ponferradina's Iranian goalkeeper Amir Abedzadeh in the January transfer window, according to local sources in Spain.

Abedzadeh, 28, the son of legendary Iranian keeper Ahmadreza Abedzadeh, has made 19 appearances for the Spanish second-tier side this season, conceding 14 goals while keeping eight clean sheets.

Spanish website Info Bierzo wrote Sevilla is willing to pay €3.5 million for the Iranian international as first-choice keeper Yassine Bounou is in Cameroon to represent Morocco at the Africa Cup of Nations, while Serbian goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic has been infected with COVID-19.

Spanish sports journalist Alfonso Fernandez wrote on Twitter that the Sevilla director of football, Ramon Rodriguez Verdejo, commonly known as Monchi, has attended Ponferradina's training in re-

cent days to watch Abedzadeh.

Should the deal go through, it will be a second move for the Iranian in nine months, after he joined Ponferradina from Portuguese club Maritimo in July.

Sevilla is currently second in La Liga table, trailing Real Madrid by five points with a game in hand.

Julen Lopetegui's men failed to progress beyond the group stage of the UEFA Champions League and will face Dinamo Zagreb in the Europa League playoffs in February.



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola (R) reacts on the touchline during his team's 1-0 victory over Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Britain, on January 15, 2022.

## Guardiola: City players' dedication to winning more valuable than title

Pep Guardiola watched his Manchester City team take a firm stride towards the Premier League title with a 1-0 home win over Chelsea but said they had already given him something more priceless – a remorseless dedication to succeed in every game.

Kevin De Bruyne scored the winning goal with a curler from distance and it meant that City moved 13 points clear of their second-placed opponents.

Guardiola was at pains to stress that a fourth title in five seasons was not yet secure but he was delighted at how his team were able to clear the latest obstacle in front of them.

"I don't know what is going to happen this season," he said. "I don't care. What I care about is that after winning what we have won in the last years, still these guys in

every single game give everything for this club. This is so difficult to find in modern life, in modern football.

"We are humble enough to run without the ball, to try to do our best in every single game. This is my – and our – biggest achievement as a club and as a team by far. To win and win and win for years and still being there all the time, in this country and in this league. This is the biggest title I have and will have when I leave Manchester."

Guardiola denied that complacency could become a problem for City. "I know my players, we are together for six seasons – [I know] how they celebrate the good moments and suffer in the bad ones, so they are going to listen that it is not true when the people say it is over. In January it is impossible it is over."

The Chelsea manager, Thomas Tuchel, was unhappy at the performance of his attacking players, including the club's record signing, Romelu Lukaku, who missed a one-on-one chance early in the second half. Chelsea were wasteful with their final pass, particularly in the first quarter of the game.

"Sometimes he needs to do the service," Tuchel said. "He had many ball losses without any pressure, many ball losses in very promising circumstances, without any pressure. He had a huge chance so he is included in this."

"We want to serve him but he is part of the team and the performance up front. Especially in the first half we can do much, much better and we need to do much, much better. We had a lot of transition chances in the first half."

## Iran's ex-volleyball boss Yazdani-Khorram dies at 75

### Sports Desk

Mohammadreza Yazdani-Khorram, the former president of Iran Volleyball Federation, passed away at the age of 75 after a cardiac arrest on Sunday.

He had been hospitalized in Tehran for weeks due to a vascular disease.

Yazdani-Khorram was appointed as the head of the Iranian federation in 1989 and remained in charge until 2006, before taking over as the chief of Iran Wrestling Federation for a five-year spell.

Many experts consider Yazdani-Khorram as the pivotal figure in the progress of volleyball in Iran, leading the country from lower ranks in Asia to joining the world-class sides.

During his terms, he caused fundamental changes to Iran's volleyball by hiring high-profile foreign coaches for the national youth teams and reforming domestic club competitions.

His federation was named the Sport Federation of the Year in Iran in 1999, 2000, and 2002.



TASNIM

## Australian Federal Court upholds cancellation of Djokovic's visa

Novak Djokovic will be deported from Australia ahead of the Australian Open after the full Federal Court dismissed the world No 1's bid to restore his visa.

Melbourne airport and he was taken to a detention hotel.

On Monday a federal circuit court judge restored Djokovic's visa, concluding it was unrea-



LOREN ELLIOTT/REUTERS

Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic departs the Park Hotel, while under immigration detention, to convene with his legal team after his visa to play in the Australian Open was cancelled a second time in Melbourne, Australia, on January 16, 2022.

On Sunday the court rejected a challenge to the decision of Australian Immigration Minister Alex Hawke to cancel the visa on the basis Djokovic's presence in Australia might risk "civil unrest" as he is a "talisman of anti-vaccination sentiment," the Guardian reported.

Chief Justice James Allsop announced the court unanimously dismissed Djokovic's application, with costs to be paid by the tennis star.

Allsop explained the decision of the court did not reflect on "the merits or wisdom of the decision" but rather whether it was so irrational as to be unlawful. Full reasons will follow at a later date.

The decision is a major setback for Djokovic's quest to win a 10th Australian Open crown and a record 21st Grand Slam title.

Djokovic's lawyers had argued Hawke's decision was "illogical, irrational or unreasonable" and the minister based it on Djokovic's public statements about vaccination without actually seeking his views.

In fresh submissions overnight, Djokovic's lawyers added that Hawke had failed to consider the impact on anti-vaccination sentiment if his visa were cancelled.

In court on Sunday, the minister's counsel, Stephen Lloyd, argued Australia "must not be bound to suffer the presence of an alien for fear of what might happen if they were removed".

Use of the ministerial power to cancel a visa comes with a three-year ban on re-entering Australia, except in compelling circumstances, such as compassionate or Australian national interest grounds.

Djokovic arrived in Australia on the evening of 5 January. He believed that a visa granted on 18 November and a medical exemption approved by Tennis Australia and a Victorian government independent expert panel would be sufficient to enter Australia.

Djokovic's visa was first cancelled by Australian Border Force (ABF) hours after he arrived at

sonable for the ABF to renege on a deal to give him more time at the airport to address the exemption issue.

After a week's deliberation, Hawke cancelled Djokovic's visa again on Friday on the new ground that his presence might be a risk to "health and good order".

The Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, backed the cancellation decision, arguing that Australians had "made many sacrifices during this pandemic, and they rightly expect the result of those sacrifices to be protected".

"This is what the minister is doing in taking this action," Morrison said in a statement on Friday.

### 'Extremely disappointed'

Djokovic reacted to the verdict, saying he is "extremely disappointed" with the judges' decision, but will not appeal the ruling.

"I will now be taking some time to rest and to recuperate, before making any further comments beyond this," BBC quoted the Serbian as saying in a statement.

"I am extremely disappointed with the court ruling to dismiss my application for judicial review of the minister's decision to cancel my visa, which means I cannot stay in Australia and participate in the Australian Open.

"I respect the court's ruling and I will cooperate with the relevant authorities in relation to my departure from the country.

"I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me and I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love.

"I would like to wish the players, tournament officials, staff, volunteers and fans all the best for the tournament.

"Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, team, supporters, fans and my fellow Serbians for your continued support. You have all been a great source of strength to me."