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Revisiting an Interview with
Futsal Legend Mohammad Reza Heidarian:

Bread, Love, and a Honda Motorcycle

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Safir Gofteman Bolsters Ranks with Key Signings After Promising Youth Movement

Safir Gofteman, a Tehran-based futsal club, has made significant moves in the mid-season transfer window, adding veteran experience to their squad after a first half of the season that showcased their championship-level youth development. The club, which already saw two of their young stars,

Mohammad Hashem Abarghooi and Amirhossein Taghavi called up to the national team by head coach Vahid Shamsaei, has capitalized on the mid-season break to add crucial experience for the second half of the league campaign. With Ghodrat Bahadori and Saeed

Sarvari obtaining releases from their respective Mashhad clubs, Safir Gofteman moved swiftly to secure their signatures. Negotiations concluded quickly, resulting in both of these impactful first-half players for Farsh Ara joining the Tehran side for the remainder of the season.



Revisiting an Interview with Futsal Legend Mohammad Reza Heidarian:

Bread, Love, and a Honda Motorcycle

Mohammad Reza Heidarian is, without a doubt, a unique figure in Iranian futsal. Many believe that this unassuming and humble man didn't receive all the recognition he deserved. After a stint as part of the national team coaching staff, he stepped away from coaching entirely. Even today, when fans see him showcasing his skills on the futsal court, they're captivated by his performance, often remarking how greatly a player like him is missing in today's futsal scene, both in Iran and perhaps the world. From the archives of Iranian futsal, we've unearthed a captivating interview with Mohammad Reza Heidarian, and with some minor edits and updates, we're revisiting highlights from his conversation back in November 2008.

At first glance, you wouldn't think you were meeting a highly decorated player and captain of the national futsal team. His demeanor is so simple and friendly that it's easy to believe that fame hasn't changed him. Beyond being a phenomenal futsal player, Mohammad Reza Heidarian is also a talented artist. His absence from the national team at the 2008 World Cup in Brazil was keenly felt, and the regret remains that he retired so early. However, he wants to dedicate more time to his art, as Heidarian is also a skilled painter.

- You're a bit harder to reach than most, why don't you have a mobile phone?

(Pauses) I have a really hard time saying "no" to people. I fear that someone might call with a request, asking me to come play somewhere, and I won't have the time. I really can't say "no."

- Is that really why you don't have a cell phone?

I don't like anyone being upset with me. That's just my personality. Cell phones have their own set of headaches. Sometimes my friends say, 'take this line and just answer us,' but I think that's not right. If others find out I'm only answering some, it'll look bad.

- So, you're not really into the joy of "SMS" texting?!

Only when I was playing in Qatar and Italy, I texted more often to keep in touch with my family.

- You seem like a unique individual overall. No cell phone, commuting by Honda motorcycle...

That's just me. If you see me getting around by motorcycle, it's because I like to be comfortable. In a busy city like Tehran, I have to use a motorcycle to get things done. It's not beneath me at all.

- You haven't changed much in appearance either. You've looked this way since we first knew you, whether you were playing in Italy or now...

Honestly, when I was about to go to Italy, some of my friends told me to shave my beard and mustache, but I refused. I said that if they appreciate my football, then they shouldn't care about my appearance. They liked my football the way

MOHAMMAD REZA

HEIDARIAN



I am, so there's no need to change.

- But many players change their look drastically as soon as they become famous!

Unfortunately, some are swayed by the attention, even though many of them are role models for young people. I believe an athlete should act in a way that parents are proud to say that so-and-so is a good athlete and a positive role model.

- Tell us about your experience in Italy.

Well, the people of Italy were very welcoming and didn't care which country you came from. However, as an Iranian, I had to act in a way that reflected my country's culture. At that time, there was negative propaganda against Iran, and I had to act in a way that

countered those negative perceptions. Thank God, I played well for them, and I was very well-received by the club's fans.

- Is it possible that you would ever go back to Italy?

Yes, it's possible. They wanted me to start a futsal academy there and be responsible for training young players. Overall, my time in Italy was a good experience, and maybe I will go there again after I have retired completely from playing.

- We've heard you're also into art?!

Yes, I've had a special interest in art since I was a child, and I was mainly drawn to painting and drawing on glass and mirrors. I went to many classes and was so passionate about art that I didn't care about football or futsal. Later, I got into futsal.

- What similarities are there between art and sports?

Both have intricacies that, if you learn them, you can be successful. I like to go and discover the finer details. The peace that exists in art helps my mood to play better.

- Did you also paint on glass in Italy?

Actually, when I went to Italy, I heard that there was an art school that focused on drawing and painting. I wanted to go there, but in one of the matches, my finger broke, and I couldn't hold a pen properly for about eight months.

- When did you start playing futsal?

I started playing futsal seriously in 1995, when I

was 22 years old.

- Why so late?

Because I saw it more as a hobby. I wasn't very serious about futsal. Art was my priority.

- How did an artist suddenly become a futsal player?

In 1995, there was a tournament coming up. One of my friends, Mr. Sadeghi, put my name down for one of the teams. Honestly, I didn't want to go, but they insisted so much that I had to participate in the competition. After those matches, I received an offer from Esteghlal (a prominent Iranian club) and joined the team. Persepolis (another prominent club) offered me a contract in 1989, and Esteghlal did so two years later. However, I didn't seriously consider either offer. That year, if my friend hadn't insisted, I would never have accepted either.

- So, he deserves a lot of credit for the fame you've achieved.

Yes, he does. I remember the day he wanted to take me to Esteghlal, he waited two hours outside my house for me to come out so we could go to the club. Everywhere I go, I mention Mr. Sadeghi's name because I'm indebted to him. He told me that I could succeed in this sport.

- By the way, did you play "goal-koochik" (street futsal) as a kid?

Amazingly, I played a lot of "goal-koochik". We were constantly out in the street, and later, we went to the gym with the kids. That's why I became a professional indoor player. I had dribbled past so many gutters, trees, and cars in the street while playing football that I became a professional.

- Considering your retirement from the national team, it seems like you have more time to pursue art.

I've also decided to pursue art more seriously. Now that I'm playing for Elm-o-Adab in Mashhad, I want to go to Mr. Nematollah Ghasemi and study under him.

- Don't you want to have an exhibition?

Some of my friends have suggested this, but I intend to do this when I have more works. I have done a few pieces, but I don't think it's enough for an exhibition yet.

- It is said that you did not have a good relationship with (former national team coach) Shamsaei, is that correct?

I'm not saying that there wasn't an issue between us, but it wasn't as big as people made it out to be. Vahid has always treated me kindly and is truly an excellent player. We disagreed on small matters, but on the day of the final game, we forgave each other and moved past the problems.

- And final words?

Reza Heidarian is at the service of the Iranian people, and God willing, I will one day repay their kindness.



Safir Gofteman's National Summit: Cultivating Entrepreneurial Growth and Strategic Vision

Recognizing the vital role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic dynamism and societal advancement, the Safir Gofteman Institute convened its third annual national summit for franchise entrepreneurs on Thursday, January 26, 2025, at the Simorgh Hotel in Tehran. This gathering highlighted the critical role of entrepreneurs in driving innovation, economic progress, and elevating living standards. The summit further emphasized that investing in entrepreneurship and business development not only empowers a substantial portion of society but also accelerates economic growth. The summit served as a platform for identifying key challenges, opportunities, and strategies for fostering sustained success within the entrepreneurial landscape. By facilitating this discourse, the event aimed to empower

individuals to succeed in the business world, whether as newcomers or seasoned entrepreneurs. The core objectives underpinning this initiative included enhancing productivity, fostering innovation, especially as applied to foreign language education, and promoting overall economic expansion. This year's summit brought together 32 entrepreneurs from the 70 branches of the Safir Gofteman Institute across various cities, along with senior executives and central office representatives. Held at the start of winter, the conference focused on promoting best practices, cultivating role models, and strengthening organizational coherence in line with Safir Gofteman's strategic policies. The institute leveraged the event to share its strategic vision for the year ahead and to address potential challenges in the following key areas:



- **2024 Expansion Initiatives:** The conference unveiled plans for the launch of new branches and provided updates on existing branches in signaling a period of significant growth.
- **Latest Advances in Educational Practices:** Attendees were briefed on the latest innovative approaches and methodologies employed by Safir to enhance the learning experience.
- **Customer Relationship Management:** A key focus was placed on effective strategies for managing customer behavior to ensure satisfaction and loyalty.
- **The Power of Learning Environments:** Discussions explored the importance of creating optimal, supportive learning environments.
- **Data-Driven Performance Insights:** Safir presented a detailed statistical overview of the institute's performance and growth trajectory, offering a comprehensive analysis to guide future planning.
- **National Digital Marketing Strategies:** The conference examined effective digital marketing strategies for reaching a wider audience and establishing a national brand presence.
- **Open Platform for Dialogue:** A dedicated open forum segment encouraged transparent communication and collaborative problem-solving among participants.

By bringing together its entrepreneurial network, Safir Gofteman has affirmed its commitment to cultivating a robust ecosystem that fosters innovation, drives economic growth while benefiting communities nationwide. The conference serves as a testament to the power of strategic vision, collaboration, and the relentless pursuit of excellence within the dynamic world of entrepreneurship.



Iranian Futsal League Heats Up as National Team Debates Continue

The Iranian Futsal Premier League has become increasingly competitive this season, with traditional powerhouses and emerging contenders battling for supremacy. However, this growth is overshadowed by ongoing debates about the national team.

League Competition Intensifies

The current league campaign has seen a notable increase in the level of play, with established clubs like Mes Sungun and Giti Pasand of Isfahan dominating the league and solidifying their status as championship favorites. Teams such as Gohar Zamin and Palayesh Naft Bandar Abbas are also vying for top spots, creating a compelling title race.

The overall standard of matches has improved, boosted by the arrival of talented foreign players at various clubs, further enhancing the league's competitiveness. Despite this progress, the league faces significant challenges. Several clubs,

including Iranian Clinic of Qom and Iralko of Arak, are struggling financially. This situation has resulted in both clubs falling to the bottom of the table, which contrasts with earlier expectations for stronger performances.

National Team in the Spotlight

After a period of uncertainty following the World Cup, the Iranian national futsal team will continue under coach Vahid Shamsaei's leadership. Despite retaining Shamsaei, the national team faces multiple challenges, most notably the urgent need for youth development and fostering the next generation of players.

Some experts argue that Shamsaei has only paid lip service to youth inclusion, a point they believe was a contributing factor to Iran's disappointing World Cup performance. While Shamsaei utilized experienced players at the World Cup, he also called up numerous young players to training camps prior to the tournament.

Expert Analysis and Concerns

Futsal expert Hossein Shams noted that the first half of the Premier League season was of high quality, with five teams genuinely competing for the title – a scenario unprecedented in Iranian futsal, where traditionally only two clubs contended for the championship. Shams believes the second half of the season will be exciting for fans. Shams also highlighted the financial issues plaguing some clubs, stating, "You get what you pay for. If teams don't have enough budget, they will face problems." He believes that rooted clubs like Iralko and Iranian Clinic of Qom have the potential to improve during the second half of the season. However, regarding the national team, Shams voiced his opposition to Shamsaei's continued leadership, expressing that changes were promised, but things appear to remain unchanged. Shams noted that Shamsaei's World Cup results were unsatisfactory. Despite an agreement to implement changes to the coaching staff



and focus on youth development, neither has occurred. He highlighted that the national team's average age remains high and that this lack of youth integration has left him feeling pessimistic about the team's future.

Youth Integration Debate

Shams criticized Shamsaei's perceived lack of faith in youth potential, pointing out that the national team's average age is above 30, which he believes should be closer to 25. He believes the current age profile is detrimental and that Shamsaei is not prioritizing youth development. He added that insufficient time and focus have been allocated to the national team, as Shamsaei's priorities seemingly lie elsewhere. He stated that Shamsaei appears to prioritize TV and film over the national team.

Looking Ahead

The Iranian futsal scene remains complex, with the excitement of the domestic league contrasted by significant concerns about the national team's future. The upcoming months will be critical in shaping the future of both the domestic league and the national team.

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A Look at the Contenders

The Iranian Women's National Futsal Team, a prominent force in Asian futsal, is undergoing a period of potential change as the search for a new head coach gains momentum. Recent results and mounting pressure on current coach Forouzan Soleimani have led to the exploration of several coaching candidates. Although the

Football Federation of Iran (FFIRI) has yet to make an official decision, the possibility of a coaching change remains high.

Soleimani Under Scrutiny

Current coach Forouzan Soleimani is under immense pressure following recent performances, including a disappointing

showing at a tournament in China. The FFIRI Technical Committee has indicated that changes are imminent, though the process may be delayed until after the upcoming FFIRI elections. Despite the uncertainty, several prominent names have emerged as potential replacements for Soleimani.

The Coaching Candidates:

Shahzad Mozaffar

A strong contender, Mozaffar has previously led the national team with great success, implementing a strategic vision that led to notable achievements. She also holds international experience, having coached the Kuwaiti national team. Despite her experience and skill, Mozaffar recently stated she has no intention of returning to the role, possibly due to the pressures associated with it. However, she remains a key option, with many experts believing she could have a transformative effect on the team if she were to reconsider.

Fatemeh Sharif

The current head coach of Saipa, a team competing for the league title, Sharif has demonstrated her tactical prowess and ability to get the best out of her players. If chosen to lead the national team, Sharif would face the difficult decision of leaving Saipa, but the chance to influence the game at a national level could significantly advance her career.

Niloofar Ardalan

A well-known figure in Iranian women's football and futsal, Ardalan is being touted as a serious option by the FFIRI. A former national team player and multiple league title winner, Ardalan briefly managed a women's football team last season. Currently unattached, she is a strong candidate for the position. Her deep knowledge of the players and the game, combined with her leadership qualities, make her an attractive option for the national team. Ardalan holds both AFC 'A' football and level 2 futsal coaching certifications, as well as level 1 fitness qualifications. She also has experience coaching the Iranian U-16 and U-14 football teams and playing for the national team during the London Olympics qualifiers.

Narges Alvani

A young, up-and-coming coach with experience in the Iranian Premier League, Alvani is known for her modern style of play and ability to manage young talent. Her past success in leading Palayesh Naft Abadan to a league championship has already placed her on the radar. Now with more experience, Alvani is hopeful the FFIRI will give her a chance to lead the national team. The current head coach of Mes Rafsanjan's futsal team is keen to demonstrate her abilities on a national platform.

Shahnaz Yari

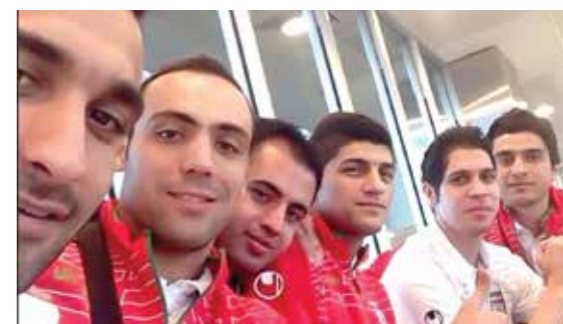
Former head coach of the Iranian national team with experience managing the Iraqi national side, Yari has been away from the coaching scene for some time, but has been seen attending recent matches in the league and is considered to be a strong option to return. Her experience with two national teams could prove beneficial, even though she has been out of coaching for some time.

Forouzan Soleimani

Despite the criticism and pressure she has faced, the possibility remains that Soleimani will remain as head coach. Except for the poor performance at the tournament in China, the team has not been truly tested. Some suggest it would be best to give her further opportunities, and that she is more familiar with the team than any of the other options. She has been in charge of the national team for a few years, though she has been close to being replaced several times. The current president of the FFIRI may want her to stay but this might change if there is new leadership within the organization.

Key Events from January 2015

Ten years ago this month, the Iranian futsal scene was a hotbed of activity, with national team preparations, league transfers, and compelling matches dominating the headlines. Let's take a look back at the key events of January 2015.



10 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

National Team Prepares for Croatia Trip (January 3rd, 2015)

The Iranian national futsal team, under the guidance of head coach Jesús Candelas and his staff, convened immediately after the conclusion of the 16th week of the Premier League. The team was scheduled to depart for Croatia on January 5th to play two friendly matches. However, due to travel restrictions imposed by their Russian club, Norilsk Nickel, key players Asghar Hassanzadeh and Hossein Tayebi were cut from the initial 16-man squad. Mohammad Taheri (Giti Pasand) and Bagher Mohammadi (goalkeeper, Gharchak) were ultimately unable to join the squad due to injuries.

Shapa Returns to Iranian League (January 10th, 2015)

Brazilian futsal star Shapa officially joined Shahr-dari Saveh FC. He explained that his decision to return to Iran was driven by a good offer and the challenge of helping the team improve. Shapa, having played in both the Iranian and Thai leagues, stated that while the Thai league is growing, the Iranian league is stronger with players who have greater physical strength and are more tactically advanced.

Nazemolsharieh Praises Naft Melli Hafari Performance (January 19th, 2015)

Following a comprehensive victory over Mes Sungun, Naft Melli Hafari coach Seyed Mohammad Nazemolsharieh praised his team's performance, stating that his players were better than their rivals. The match, played in Ahvaz without spectators, was highly anticipated due to Mes Sungun being higher in the league standings. Nazemolsharieh noted that Mes Sungun played defensively in the first half and while his team tried hard, they showed some anxiety, and therefore avoided reckless attacks, which resulted in a goalless first half. Nazemolsharieh stressed the value of Mes Sungun as a strong team and that the result did not detract from their quality and that they would get positive results in the future. He stated that his team was simply the better team on the day.

Giti Pasand's Focus on Entertainment over Title (January 19th, 2015)

Mohammad Hossein Araghi Zadeh, a Giti Pasand club official, stated that the club was not prioritizing winning the championship this season. Instead, their goal was to showcase high-quality, entertaining Iranian futsal. He praised the team's performance in their match against Dabiri Tabriz and thanked the Dabiri club for their excellent hospitality. Araghi Zadeh expressed satisfaction with the quality of futsal displayed by Mohammad Keshavarz and his teammates.

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A man in a dark suit stands in the center of a large, curved wall covered in logos. The logos are arranged in a grid and include:

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