



Bale will spend at least two more years at Real Madrid

Goal - The Wales international forward continues to see his future called into question, but Jonathan Barnett says there will be no movement before 2022

Gareth Bale will spend "at least another two years" at Real Madrid, according to his agent, with transfer talk around the Welshman played down once again.

Speculation regarding a potential move away from Santiago Bernabeu for the 30-year-old forward refuses to go away.

Another window has passed with no agreement put in place, but January was dominated by rumours regarding Bale once again.

A return to the Premier League for the former Tottenham star continues to be mooted, while various alternative landing spots have been offered up around the world.

Barnett has always maintained that his client has no desire to leave Spain and, despite facing criticism for his form and fitness at regular intervals, Bale has enjoyed considerable success with the Blancos.

He is still tied to a contract through to 2022 and the intention is for that deal to be honoured.

Barnett has told Cuatro: "He'll be there for at least another two years so there's nothing to worry about."

He added that Bale is "fine, he's very happy with life and everything's very good."

There has been renewed talk of Zinedine Zidane trying to freeze Bale out of his plans after overlooking the attacker for recent outings.

The Frenchman had, however, talked up a four-time Champions League winner on a regular basis in January and Barnett says there is no substance to a debate which has dragged on for some time.

He said: "I think it's other people worrying."

"I think Mr Zidane and Mr Bale have a very good relationship now. It's fine."

Barnett has sought to bring the Bale exit talk in Spain to a close whenever asked about it.

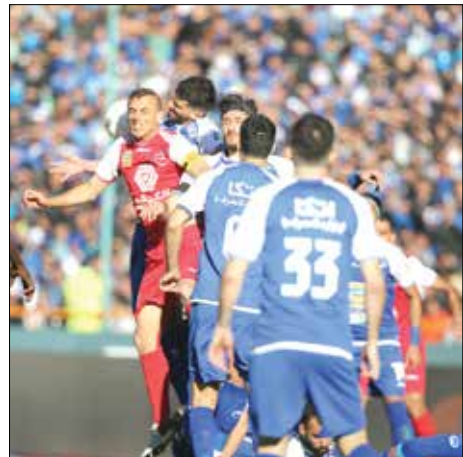
He recently told talkSPORT when quizzed on whether a return to Spurs is a realistic option: "Gareth is very happy over there."

"And let's be realistic: for most clubs he is out of their league, financially."

"It is all well and good to say, 'give up that money and go and play somewhere else', but it is not all about money. It is about his lifestyle and his children, who have grown up in Madrid."

"He's in a very fortunate position."

"When his contract is up, hopefully, he will sit down with me and his family and decide what he wants to do."



Persepolis, Esteghlal share the points in Tehran derby

Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams settled for a breathtaking 2-2 draw here in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Thursday.

In the match held in front of 56,000 spectators at the Azadi Stadium, Arsalan Motahari's deflected strike gave Esteghlal the lead in the 24th minute. However, the lead lasted just five minutes.

Ali Alipour put the ball into the net after receiving a superb pass from Christian Osaguona.

Motahari made a brace in the 52nd minute. Mehdi Ghaedi picked up the ball on the left flank, setting Esteghlal's second goal and Motahari sent the ball into the roof of the net.

Shortly after, Persepolis put the Blues under pressure and finally leveled the match in the 89th minute.

Anthony Stokes's strike from inside the area was only parried by Esteghlal goalie Hossein Hosseini into the path of substitute Bashar Resan and he equalized the match.

Sepahan also drew 0-0 with Naft Masjed Soleyman in another match.

Persepolis lead the table with 41 points, five points ahead of Sepahan.

Esteghlal are third with 33 points and one game in hand.

Tehran derby also known as Red-Blue derby between two famous Iranian clubs Persepolis and Esteghlal.



Klopp wins Manager of the Month award to break PL record

The German tactician saw his team open a new year with a run of five successive wins through January, landing him a fifth Manager of the Month prize

Jurgen Klopp has seen his Liverpool side break plenty of records this season, and he now has one of his own after being named Premier League Manager of the Month for a fifth time.

The German has monopolised the market when it comes to individual prizes in 2019-20 and that comes as no surprise given how dominant those at Anfield have been.

Liverpool burst out of the blocks and have shown no sign of slowing down.

They enjoyed the best start to a campaign that the elite divisions in Europe have ever seen and have continued to kick on from there.

He edged out competition from Pep Guardiola, Ralph Hasenhuttl and Nigel Pearson to land the prize, with Klopp previously having collected the award for the months of August, September, November and December.

In January, he oversaw wins over Sheffield United, Tottenham, Manchester United, Wolves and West Ham.

Liverpool are now taking in their winter break, with Klopp eager to see his senior stars get a well-earned rest.



Dragan Skocic Named Iran National Football Team Coach

Iran announced on Thursday that Dragan Skocic of Croatia has been chosen as the new head coach for the country's national football team.

Amir Mehdi Alavi, the spokesperson for the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), announced the news today.

He added that the future programs and schedule for Team Melli will be soon announced by the Football Federation.

The Croatian Dragan Skocic had been serving as the head coach of Iranian football club Sanat Naft since July 2019.

He had replaced Portuguese coach Paulo Sergio, who left Sanat Naft in mid-May to take charge of the Saudi Arabian football club Al-Taawoun, in the Abadan-based football team.

Skocic, 51, started his coaching career in Rijeka in 2005 and has also worked at Iranian football clubs Malavan, Foolad, and Khooneh Be Khooneh.

Team Melli will host Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and face off Cambodia five days later in an away match in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

Yesterday Skocic has introduced his assistant coaches in Iran national football team.

Goalkeeping coach Mladen Zganjer has already worked as Croatia U-21 national team coach. Toni Usnik, 46, has also worked in Slovenian national team.



Ghaedi among Eight Stars Set to Shine at ACL 2020

With the group stage of the 2020 AFC Champions League kicking off on Monday, the-AFC.com has selected eight young stars to look out for in the coming weeks and months.

From Continental champions to scorers of great goals and title-winning starlets – all of whom are 21 or under – there's plenty to get excited about with the talent that will be on display during Asia's biggest club competition.

Mehdi Ghaedi has been in superb form for Esteghlal this season and the diminutive forward is his club's top scorer as the Iranian team aims to close the gap on Iranian Pro League leaders and city rivals Persepolis.

Having returned from representing his country at the AFC U-23 Championship, Ghaedi netted twice in Doha as Esteghlal eased past Al Rayyan to qualify for the AFC Champions League once more.

Game time was limited for Ghaedi in the 2018-19 campaign but his rise to prominence in recent months has really caught the eye as the 21-year-old has formed a lethal partnership with Malian international Cheick Diabate.

At just 5'5", Ghaedi will be among the smallest players on display in the 2020 AFC Champions League, but should his form continue then he may also be among the biggest stars of the group stage.