

Taremi hits four past Famalicão to close in on Bola de Prata award



Porto striker Mehdi Taremi celebrates after scoring one of his four goals in a 4-2 victory over Famalicão in the Portuguese Primeira Liga in Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal, on May 20, 2023.

● AFP

Sports Desk

Porto striker Mehdi Taremi bagged four goals – including three from the spot – to lead his side to a 4-2 away victory over Famalicão in the Primeira Liga.

The ruthless performance saw the Iranian international edge closer to the Bola de Prata award – granted to the top scorer of the Portuguese league.

Former Persepolis striker has now 21 top-flight goals under his belt with one round of fixtures to spare – three more than Benfica's Portuguese international Gonçalo Ramos before the league leader's Sunday visit to Sporting CP in Derby de Lisboa.

Taremi was on the scoresheet seven minutes into the game, sending Luiz Júnior the wrong way from the spot.

The Iranian scored his second of the night three minutes later when he dribbled past the Brazilian keeper and found the net from a cute angle with his left foot.

Iván Jaime pulled one back for the home side in the 33rd minute before Argentine Santiago Colombatto drew his team level with a spot-kick right before the interval.

Taremi completed his hat-trick midway through the second half after a VAR review showed Zaydou Youssef had handled the ball, convincing the referee to point to the spot for a third time in the game.

The Iranian then restored the two-goal cushion for the Dragons with 15 minutes left on the clock as his right-footed effort from the spot found the bottom left corner.

A remarkable season in the Porto outfit has seen Taremi score 30 goals in 49 games across all competitions, while providing his teammates with 13 assists.

Taremi was also the leading marksman for Porto with five strikes in their UEFA Champions League campaign, which finished with an aggregate 1-0 defeat against Inter in the round of 16.

Iran given tricky path in Olympic handball qualifiers



● IRIHF

Sports Desk

Iran will be facing a formidable challenge to secure a place in next year's Paris Olympics handball competition.

The draw for the Asian Men's Handball Qualification for 2024 Olympic Games took place in Doha on Saturday, where Iran was drawn in Group B of the event alongside Bahrain, Kuwait, Japan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

The Asian qualifiers will take place in Qatar from October 18-28.

The host, and the reigning Asian champion, was pitted against Saudi Arabia, South Korea, the UAE, India, and China in Group A.

The winner of the tournament will seal direct qualification for the Games in French capital, while the runner-up will be given a second chance in an inter-continental playoff.

Iran claimed a dramatic 27-26 victory over four-time champion Kuwait at the Asian Championships last year before suffering a 36-26 defeat against Bahrain en route to a fourth-spot finish in Saudi Arabia.

Enayati named Iran U23 head coach

Sports Desk

Former Esteghlal striker Reza Enayati was named as the head coach of the Iranian under-23 national team.

The appointment comes after "national team manager Amir Qalenoee proposed Enayati for the job, which was approved by the Iranian Football Federation and the National Olympic Committee," Mohammad-Mehdi Nabi, the vice-president of the sport's governing body in the country, said on Sunday.

The decision ends months of speculations surrounding the vacant under-23 role since Mehdi Mahdavi parted ways with the federation following a group exit at the AFC U23 Asian Cup in Uzbekistan last summer. Enayati, 46, led Havadar to promotion to the Persian Gulf Pro League for the start of the 2021/22 season but left his job at the end of the campaign after finishing 11th in the Iranian top-flight.

Enayati will be tasked with leading his team in September's qualifiers for the 2024 U23 Asian Cup – set to kick off in Qatar in April next year, which will also serve as the qualifying event for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Nuggets on brink of NBA Finals with 119-108 win over Lakers in Game 3

AP – Jamal Murray scored 37 points, Nikola Jokic added 24 points and eight assists and the Denver Nuggets rolled to a 3-0 lead in the NBA Western Conference finals with a 119-108 victory over Los Angeles Lakers on Saturday night.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 12 of his 17 points in the second half against his former team for the top-seeded Nuggets, who have never been this close to the NBA Finals in 47 years in the league. Denver is making its fifth straight playoff appearance, and the ultimate stage is now just one win away.

Denver blew a 14-point lead in Game 3, but made a decisive 13-0 run in the fourth quarter to snap the Lakers' nine-game home winning streak since March 26, including seven straight victories since the regular season ended. The Nuggets excelled down the stretch with Murray and Jokic repeatedly running a two-man pick-and-roll game suggested by "Coach Jokic," according to coach Michael Malone.

No team has rallied from a 3-0 playoff series deficit in NBA history. Game 4 is tonight in Los Angeles. "I can't speak for the guys right now because I don't know what's going through all their minds, but I still (believe)," said LeBron James, who had 23 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds. "So it's time to go right back home and start to refuel and start the treatment process and recovery process and get ready for Monday. My mindset is always locked in."

Anthony Davis had 28 points and 18 rebounds for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who hadn't lost three straight



Jamal Murray (C) of the Nuggets drives to the basket against the Lakers during Game 3 of the NBA Western Conference finals at Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles, CA, US, on May 20, 2023.

● ADAM PANTOZZI/GETTY IMAGES

games since early February. Los Angeles' prolonged, desperate surge ever since the trade deadline has finally run out of steam against the powerhouse Nuggets, who have won five consecutive playoff games.

"They've been at the top of the food chain for a reason, and have a plethora of guys that can hurt you, as was on full display tonight," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "But you know, circumstances are what they are. Difficult, but not impossible."

James hit three 3-pointers after starting the series 0 for 13 from distance, and Austin Reaves added 23 points and seven rebounds. But Rui Hachimura was the only other Lakers scorer to crack double figures with 13 points, and they couldn't counter the

Nuggets' balanced effort down the stretch.

"Our backs have been against the wall (for) probably about the last two months, maybe more than that since the trade deadline," Reaves said. "Swinging, throwing punches to fight to get to this opportunity... We can either come out Monday and go home, or we can fight for another day. And with the group of guys that we've got, I know what that answer will be."

Jokic's streak of four consecutive triple-doubles ended in a fairly quiet game for the two-time MVP, who got his fourth foul in the third quarter. But Murray scored 17 points in a dynamic first quarter following his 23-point fourth quarter two nights ago, and he had 30 points by halftime of Game 3.