

# Taremi in the spotlight as Milan move saga drags on



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## Sports Desk

Rumors and speculations continue to swirl over the future of Mehdi Taremi for yet another summer transfer window as the Porto striker is again tipped for a move to a European heavyweight club.

While Manchester United and Inter as well as Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal have been brought up in the media as potential suitors, a switch to Serie A giant Milan looks to be imminent for Taremi, with several reports suggesting in recent days that it would be just a matter of time

before the Iranian international joins the Rossoneri outfit. With the 36-year-old Frenchman Olivier Giroud the only established number nine in the squad, Milan manager Stefano Pioli and the club hierarchy are believed to be considering the Porto talisman as a perfect fit to fill the void left behind by Zlatan Ibrahimovic's retirement. According to SportMediaset and Calciomercato.com, Milan has reached a verbal agreement with the prolific forward over personal terms, though an initial €13 million offer for the Iranian, who turned 31 on Tuesday, has

been swiftly rejected by Porto. The Portuguese giant has reportedly tagged Taremi with a €25m asking price but Milan, for its part, is not willing to go beyond a second €20m bid for the striker, whose Porto contract expires in 2024. Still, a deal seems to be impending as Porto prefers to cash out on the Iranian in the current transfer window rather than letting him leave as a free agent next summer. Taremi scored 31 goals, while providing his teammates with 14 assists, in 51 appearances across all competitions for Porto

last season – including 22 strikes in the league which saw him finish as the campaign's leading marksman. He also netted five to help Porto win the group in the UEFA Champions League before being knocked out by Inter in the first knockout round. Should the Milan deal eventually go through, it will be a massive step forward for a player who was only introduced to the European club football in 2019, when he left Qatari side Al Gharafa for Rio Ave in the Portuguese top flight. Having joined Porto in August

2020, Taremi has bagged 80 goals and 49 assists for Sergio Conceicao's side, lifting the league trophy in 2022, while winning back-to-back Portuguese cup titles during his time at the club. Whether we have already seen the last of Taremi in a Dragons' shirt or not, his Porto career will be best remembered by his wonder goal against Chelsea in the 2020/21 Champions League season – a stunning bicycle-kick strike which was voted the UEFA Goal of the Season and brought him a FIFA Puskas Award nomination.

## Women's World Cup will win over the sceptics: Infantino



● FIFA

REUTERS – FIFA President Gianni Infantino said women's football has experienced incredible growth over the last 10 years and is confident that the World Cup will win over anyone who remains sceptical about the merits of the women's game. The sport's governing body expects 2 billion people to tune in for the 64-game tournament being co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, with the event set to kick off in Auckland today.

"Many people who believe that women's football is still not a great game, or it's not so entertaining or it's kind of a bad copy of men's football or some stuff like that – well when they watch a game for the first time they will actually see that it's a fantastic game," said Infantino.

"The level has grown incredibly in the last 10 years and the best are coming here." Infantino said if there was one sport where the women's game could compete with the men's it would be football.

"I mean, it's 50% of the population, women around the world, more or less, right?" he said.

"It's really inconceivable, intellectually, that there is not one sport that can compete with some of the men's sports."

Auckland, which is smaller than most of its host city counterparts in Australia, will stage the opening ceremony and the first match between New Zealand and Norway.

But while overall ticket sales surpassed 1 million more than a month ago, the slow pace of sales in New Zealand has prompted concern. FIFA said last week it was giving away 20,000 free tickets in New Zealand.

"New Zealand: We want you. We need you," said Infantino. "It's never too late to do the right thing."

FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura said a total of 1.375 million tickets had been sold across the tournament so far.

Meanwhile, Infantino said he only wants to talk about positive things during the event when asked about issues such as gender pay disparity.

"Until the 20 August [date of the final] you will only hear positive things from me about everything and everyone and if somebody is still not happy about something then I am so sorry."

"As of 21 August we focus on some other issues around the world. We will deal with all the problems coming up. But seriously we have made important steps and made a path."

## Key to Russian decision for Paris Olympics is athletes' respectful conduct, Bach says

The key factor in weighing the IOC's ultimate decision on letting Russians participate at the 2024 Paris Games is how well athletes behave in international competitions, the Olympic body's president Thomas Bach said Tuesday.

"It's too soon to draw final conclusions," Bach said, adding "we have the responsibility not to punish athletes for the acts of their government."

The International Olympic Committee has pushed sports governing bodies this year to approve some athletes from Russia and its military ally Belarus competing as neutrals for international competitions including Paris qualifying events.

Bach has previously said the IOC can take its own final decision "at the appropriate time, at its full discretion" which could include barring Russians and Belarusians as their countries' war on Ukraine continues.

On Tuesday, Bach clarified the IOC's interest is mainly in ensuring athletes behave well in competitions, not how the war progresses.

"Right now it is more to monitor

the situation on the field of play, whether the rules are respected, the conditions are respected, by everybody," Bach told reporters in an online briefing ahead of next week's one-year countdown to the Paris opening ceremony.

Soccer and track and field have taken the toughest positions against Russia, excluding teams and athletes within days of the invasion of Ukraine starting in February 2022. Russia was removed from trying to qualify for the men's and women's World Cup in soccer.

The IOC shared that view when war started days after the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Games, citing Russia's breach of the traditional Olympic Truce pledge agreed at the United Nations and security concerns for athletes.

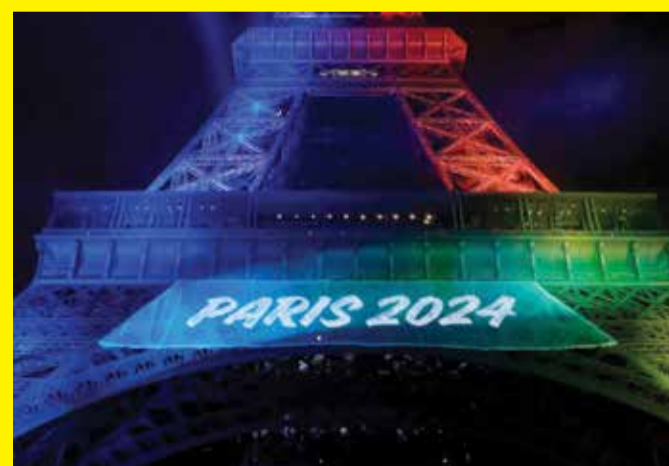
Tennis and cycling continued to let Russians and Belarusians compete as neutrals – but not in team events – without their national identity, and the IOC and Bach have pointed to their success.

Ukrainian tennis players, including Wimbledon semifinalist

Elina Svitolina, have refused to shake hands with opponents from Russia and Belarus leading to crowds at Roland Garros and Wimbledon booing what they saw – not seemingly always accurately – as a breach of protocol. "We can see that this is working pretty well," Bach said Tuesday. "They are respectful and they make it clear they went to compete against the best athletes of the world."

Governing bodies of individual Olympic sports have the final say which athletes compete and their umbrella group, known as ASOIF, said in May that finding a common position has been difficult in trying to define neutrality and what exactly is a team sport. The Court of Arbitration for Sport was involved in helping to define neutrality, which the IOC has advised should include no active support for the war and no contacts since February 2022 with military or state security agencies.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky and past Olympic champions have urged the IOC to exclude Russia entirely. Zelensky invited Bach in January to



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visit the destroyed city Bakhmut "to see with his own eyes that neutrality does not exist."

Another Olympic Truce text – the ancient tradition in Greece that paused wars and ensured safe passage to the games – is being prepared ahead of Paris. It should apply for several days ahead of the July 26-Aug. 11 Summer Games and for a few days beyond the Aug. 28-Sept. 8 Paralympic Games.

Bach said the host French government "is initiating this Truce

resolution. We are waiting for this to happen and then are looking forward to having a result on which again all member states of the United Nations can agree." Russia has also faced investigations and calls to be excluded from each of the past four Olympics since 2016 because of scandals tied to a state-backed doping program that tainted the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. Russia eventually sent teams to each Olympics though under a neutral identity starting in 2018.