

## Newcastle still in limbo over Tonali ban, says Howe



SCOTT HEPPELL/REUTERS

REUTERS – Sandro Tonali could be available for Newcastle United this weekend despite being given a 10-month ban for breaches of Italian betting rules, manager Eddie Howe said on Friday ahead of the Premier League clash at Wolverhampton Wanderers.

The head of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said on Thursday that midfielder Tonali had been sanctioned with an 18-month ban, eight of which will be commuted to alternative treatment.

“It’s difficult because we haven’t had that official confirmation as a football club yet,” Howe told reporters on Friday.

“We’ve heard the news and speculation statement, but we haven’t had anything from the Italian authorities at the moment so we’re in limbo really waiting for that official confirmation. “There’s a high chance he could be available for us. There has to be a few things that have to happen before the ban is imposed so let’s see.”

Tonali’s ban is a huge blow to Newcastle who signed the international from Milan in July for a reported 70 million euros (\$74 million), a record sum for an Italian player.

Howe said Newcastle had no inkling of any potential betting breaches when they signed him.

“You make a decision at the time with the knowledge you have,” Howe said. “We really liked him as a footballer and had no idea that this was even a possibility.”

“Of course, there’s a frustration and a disappointment that we’re not going to have a quality player for a period of time.”

Tonali came on as a substitute in Newcastle’s 1-0 home loss to Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League on Wednesday. The defeat was made worse by injuries to forwards Alexander Isak and Jacob Murphy who will miss the Wolves match.

“Very different injuries, Alex is a groin which we don’t think is serious but it’s a recurrence of the groin injury he suffered playing for Sweden so we need to assess that,” Howe said.

“Jacob’s is totally different it’s dislocation of his shoulder. It’s not clear what we’re going to do and I think he’s going to see a specialist today. You can play with these injuries or the other side is he needs an operation and he’ll be out for some time.”

## Asian Para Games:

# Nemati, sitting volleyball men continue Iranian gold rush in Hangzhou



Iranian archer Zahra Nemati won her second gold at the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China, on Friday after a victory in the women’s individual recurve open final. IRNA

### Sports Desk

Another gold-laden day for Iran at the 4th Asian Para Games saw Zahra Nemati and the men’s sitting volleyball team finish their campaigns on high in Hangzhou, China.

Saman Pakbaz, Erfan Bondori, Alisina Manshazadeh, Gholamreza Rahimi, and Ali-Akbar Gharibshahi were also among the Iranian gold medalists on the penultimate day of the Games as the country remains in a tight race with Japan for the runner-up spot in the medals table.

### Archery

Iranian archery sensation and three-time Paralympic champion Nemati bagged a third medal in Hangzhou when she defeated China’s Wu Yang 6-4 to walk away with the ultimate prize of the women’s individual recurve open.

This was a fifth gold in the history of the Asian Para Games for the Iranian, who had claimed the doubles recurve open silver – alongside Somayeh Rahimi – before teaming up with Mohammadreza Arab for the mixed team gold earlier in Hangzhou. Meanwhile, Manshazadeh

came out on top against Rakesh Kumar in the men’s individual compound open final, while a 6-5 win against Japanese Tomohiro Ueyama secured the men’s individual recurve open gold for Rahimi.

### Sitting volleyball

It was business as usual for the Iranian men, who eased to a straight-set victory (25-14, 25-16, 25-18) over Kazakhstan in the final showpiece as the eight-time Paralympic gold medalist remains unbeaten in the Asian Para Games since the event was first introduced in 2010.



Iranian men’s sitting volleyball team celebrates after defeating Kazakhstan in straight sets to win the gold medal at the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China, on October 27, 2023. MNA

In the women’s competition, held in a round-robin format, Iran defeated Thailand 3-0 (25-11, 25-10, 25-7) but still had to settle for the silver medal – finishing second to China.

### Powerlifting

Reigning world champion Gharibshahi grabbed the men’s -107kg gold, thanks to a successful third lift of 251kg which saw the Iranian set a new record for the Games.

However, Gharibshahi failed with the 255kg attempt in his fourth lift, which would have seen him shatter his own world

record by one kilogram.

A bronze medalist at the Tokyo Paralympics, Iranian Saman Razi finished third in the category with 235kg – 10 kilograms adrift of Mongolian Sodnompiljee Enkhbayar.

### Athletics

Bondori and Pakbaz continued Iran’s glittering run in the athletics competitions as they collected a couple of two more golds for the country.

Bondori registered a 28.28m throw in the men’s javelin throw F54 final for a new record in the Games, while Pakbaz finished atop the men’s shot put F12 con-

test with a final attempt of 16.15m, which also saw the Iranian shatter the Asian Para Games record, with Pakbaz’s fellow-Iranian Ali Shamschiri winning the bronze of the contest.

Elsewhere in the HSC Stadium, Vahid Alinajimi and Omid Zarif-Sanaei respectively took the silver and bronze medals of the men’s 400m T13 event, with Hadi Kaeidi claiming the men’s shot put F34 silver.

Vajihesh Houshmand was the Iranian female medalist in athletics competitions on Friday as a 28.83m attempt handed her the discus throw F64 bronze.

## Yazdani undergoes surgery on injured shoulder

### Sports Desk

Freestyle wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani underwent a surgery on his injured right shoulder in Tehran on Friday. The operation came 10 months before the 28-year-old Iranian begins his quest for a third successive Olympic medal in Paris next summer.

A winner of a national-high nine world and Olympic medals – including the ultimate prize in Rio 2016 Games – Yazdani had to cope with the injury through September’s World Championships in Belgrade, where he settled for the 86kg silver after yet another setback against his familiar foe David Taylor.

The result in the Serbian capital saw the American take a 3-1 lead in the head-to-head battles with Yazdani in the recent four major finals.

However, Yazdani found a bit of consolation when he went on to march to the gold medal at the recently-finished Asian Games in Hangzhou, claiming four technical-fall victories without conceding a single point.



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## Iranian beaten by Australia in the Olympic qualifiers

### Sports Desk

Iranian women’s national team got off to losing start in the second round of the AFC Women’s Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Perth, Australia, suffering a 2-0 defeat against the host.

Australia head coach Tony Gustavsson, who led his team to the World Cup semifinals in August before finishing fourth on home soil, benched a number of his star players – including Chelsea striker Sam Kerr – for the game against Maryam Azmoun’s side, but the Matildas still managed to find the lead through Ellie Carpenter, whose powerful drive went past Iranian keeper Zahra Khajavi with 19 minutes into the Thursday’s contest.

Despite having the lion’s share of possession, Australia had to wait until the 78th minute to double the advantage, when substitute Kerr tapped in from close range to se-



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cure the maximum points for the home side.

Elsewhere in Group A of the qualifiers, the Philippines defeated the Chinese Taipei 4-1 to move atop the table on goal difference.

Iran will face the Chinese Taipei on Sunday before concluding the group fixtures with a game against the Philippines on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, South Korea routed Thailand 10-1 in Group B, with North Ko-

rea defeating host China 2-1.

Japan is the early leader in Group C thanks to a 7-0 thrashing of India in Tashkent, followed by Uzbekistan which edged out Vietnam 1-0 at the Bunyodkor Stadium later on Thursday.

The winners of the three groups will be joined by the best runner-up in the third round of the qualifiers, with two teams securing a berth at next year’s Olympic in Paris.