

# Struggling Taremi eager to prove the right fit in Nerazzurri colors



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When Mahdi Taremi sealed his long-awaited move to Internazionale from Porto in July, his deal was widely regarded as a true bargain for the Serie A champion.

In signing the Iranian international as a free agent, Inter secured the services of a prolific striker with proven credentials and impressive numbers.

The 32-year-old came to Inter on the back of four glorious seasons with Porto, during which he bagged 91 strikes in 182 outings to become the Dragons' third all-time top scorer, while providing his teammates with 56 assists, as he helped the Portuguese giant lift seven domestic trophies – including a league and couple double in the 2021/22 campaign.

Preparing his team for a congested campaign – featuring the expanded UEFA Champions League and the new 32-team FIFA Club World Cup next summer – Inter head coach Simone Inzaghi hailed the Iranian as an “important player” with “a lot of experience and many goals under his belt” in the European elite clubs' competition. Taremi himself described the



move as “the best moment in my life” and went on to impress in the preseason friendlies, capitalizing on the absence of Argentine skipper Lautaro Martínez

and France international Marcus Thuram, who were given extended vacations due to their international commitments, to make a case for of place in the

starting XI when the season gets underway.

Five months into the marquee chapter of his career, however, Taremi has been struggling to

make a significant impact in Nerazzurri colors.

The Iranian's contribution has been limited to a single goal from the spot – in a 4-0 home

beating of Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League – and three assists in 15 games across all competitions.

He has been named just once in the starting lineup in a Serie A game – a home fixture against Lecce on matchday two – making nine cameo appearances off the bench, while he was an unused substitute in the last two matches in the Italian top flight against Hellas Verona and Parma.

Rumors have already begun to swirl around Taremi's future in the Italian media, with several reports suggesting his time at Inter could come to an end in the upcoming January transfer window if any club comes up with the right offer for the Iranian.

In the Champions League, however, the circumstances have been much more favorable of Taremi, who has started all five of Inter's games, starting with a dedicated performance in the goalless draw against Manchester City at the Etihad in September, followed by a man-of-the-match display against Red Star at San Siro.

Inter will be back in European action tonight when visiting Xabi Alonso's in-form Bayer Leverkusen, and the occasion at BayArena can provide the Iranian with the perfect opportunity to prove the Italian giant made no mistake by going after him.

## Asian Women's Handball Championship: Iran aiming for history against Kazakhstan



### Sports Desk

A historic bronze medal will be on the line for the Iranian girls when they take on Kazakhstan at the Asian Women's Handball Championship in New Delhi, India, today.

Nashmin Shafeian's made it to a third successive semifinal in the competition to secure a place in next year's World Championship in Germany and the Netherlands, before suffering a 33-20 defeat against 16-time champion South Korea at the Indira

Gandhi Arena on Sunday. Iranian captain Mina Vatanparast still claimed the Player-of-the-Match prize by the end of the contest, while Zahra Faqihi topped the scoring chart for the country with five goals. South Korean left-wing Seo Aru chipped in a game-high eight goals, with Lee Yeong-yeong and Jung Ji-in adding four apiece. Two-time Asian champion Kazakhstan, meanwhile, fell to a 30-23 loss to Japan later on Sunday. Today's encounter will be a repeat of the third-place matchup in 2021 in Amman, where Kazakhstan defeated Iran 38-33. Beaten by China for the bronze in the previous edition, Iran got off to a losing start in this year's event – a 34-14 defeat against Japan – but bounced back to beat the host 32-30 and then walked away with a 26-17 victory over Hong Kong to finish runner-up to the Japanese in Group B.

## Jokic stars again as Nuggets dominate Hawks

BBC – Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic continued his big-scoring form by hitting 48 points as the Denver Nuggets eased past the Atlanta Hawks 141-111 on Sunday.

Jokic, who recorded a career-high 56 points in his side's loss to Washington on Saturday, dominated against the Hawks with 14 rebounds, eight assists and three steals. The Hawks had come into the game on a six-game winning streak but were blown away with Michael Porter Jr adding 26 points for the Nuggets and Christian Braun 17. And it was Serbian star Jokic's performance that earned extra praise from coach Michael Malone. “I can't say I'm surprised because

I've been spoiled by having the best seat in the house to watch this guy for 10 years, to watch him do it night-in, night-out,” Malone said. “I feel privileged to have the chance to coach him. I never take it for granted.” Elsewhere, the Golden State Warriors fought back from a 12-point deficit early in the third quarter to defeat the Minnesota Timberwolves 114-106. Stephen Curry had 30 points and eight assists for the Warriors, including a three-point buzzer-beater from near the halfway line at the end of the third that put them 93-90 ahead. The Los Angeles Lakers, without LeBron James, who has a foot injury, got the better of the Portland Trail



Blazers 107-98. Anthony Davis led the Lakers scoring with 30 points, with D'Angelo Russell adding 28 and Rui Hachimura 23. And Joel Embiid marked his return to action with 31 points and 12 rebounds to help the Philadelphia 76ers to a 108-100 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

## Mbappe says he remains committed to France

BBC – Kylian Mbappe has promised he remains committed to playing for France despite being left out of their last two squads.

The 25-year-old Real Madrid forward has 86 caps for France, helped them win the World Cup in 2018 and scored a hat-trick in the 2022 final defeat by Argentina.

He is also their captain, yet Mbappe was omitted from the France squad in October as a precaution after returning from injury – and then again the following month for no clear reason.

“The French team has always been the highest rank in football, it's the national team. I've always said there's nothing more important. My love for the French team hasn't changed,” Mbappe told Canal+.

“You serve your country and that's it.” Mbappe has scored 48

goals for his country, but he managed only one competitive goal in 2024. He endured a difficult Euro 2024 as he played much of the tournament with a broken nose.

France head coach Didier Deschamps said the decision to omit Mbappe for November's Nations League games was a “one-off”.

Mbappe said: “I can't talk about November because it was a decision from the coach and I'll get behind what he said.”

“I fully respect his decision because he is the boss. I wanted to go but I can't say why.”

Mbappe has yet to find his best form for Real Madrid following his free transfer summer move from Paris St-Germain. However, he has still netted 11 goals in 21 games for the Spanish giants.

The lack of down time for top footballers will again be in the spotlight when

Fifa stages an expanded 32-team Club World Cup in the United States next summer.

Mbappe will be involved in that, and the regular World Cup follows in the summer of 2026.

Leagues, national associations and player unions have voiced major misgivings about the busy calendar, and Mbappe suggested it is inevitable that players will become weary.

“In the NBA [National Basketball Association], they get four months off,” said Mbappe.

“We get two weeks. And in the second week, we're already back to running. It's not a vacation.”

“I was tired [at Euro 2024]. I wanted to stay because you give everything for the French team but it was exhausting.”



LEON KUEGLER/REUTERS