

Will Taremi turn his fortune around in Italian Super Cup final?

Sports Desk

Mahdi Taremi will be looking to lift a first trophy with Inter when his team takes on archrival AC Milan in the Italian Super Cup final in Riyadh's Al Awwal Park tonight.

On top of that, however, the Iranian international striker will have personal reasons to seize the occasion in Derby della Madonnina: Ending a frustrating goal drought with the Nerazzurri colors.

Taremi, who became Porto's third all-time leading marksman with 91 strikes in 182 outings before embarking on a new chapter of his career in July, is yet to find his scoring boots for the Serie A champion. His contribution has been limited to a single goal in 20 games across all competitions – a penalty kick during a 4-0 win against Red Star Belgrade in the UEFA Champions League in October.

The bad news for the 32-year-old Iranian has been the dazzling form of French teammate Marcus Thuram, who is the joint top scorer – alongside Atalanta's Mateo Retegui – in the Italian top flight with 12 goals.

Barely given a chance in the starting XI for the domestic



Inter striker Mahdi Taremi is seen in a training session, ahead of the Italian Super Cup final against AC Milan, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on January 4, 2025.

● INTER.IT

games, Taremi came off the bench at halftime to replace injured Thuram before a second-half brace from Dutch wing-

back Denzel Dumfries secured a 2-0 win against Atalanta in Thursday's Super Cup semifinal. The Frenchman remains a major

doubt for the final with a thigh injury and Taremi will be hoping to be trusted with a place in the front duo alongside skipper

Lautaro Martinez, who has been dealing with his own slump in form of late as his strike against Cagliari on December 28 has

been the Argentine's only goal in 10 games in all competitions. Stats have been against the Lautaro-Taremi partnership as the two have found the net once apiece in 366 minutes together on the pitch – the game against Red Star – which could see head coach Simone Inzaghi pick Joaquin Correa or Marko Arnautović, who have three goals between them this season, over the Iranian.

However, Taremi has proven to be the man for the finals.

During his illustrious four years with Porto, the prolific Iranian won two Super Cups, scoring twice in the 2022 triumph, while contributing with three final strikes to inspire the Dragons to three successive Taça de Portugal titles.

The Iranian will be eager to play yet another decisive part in a final showdown, if only given a chance against his Porto coach Sergio Conceicao, who is now in charge of the Rossoneri bench.

Iranian wrestler Rezaei aiming high after dominating National Ch'ships

Sports Desk

Yassin Rezaei will be keen to build on an emphatic run at the Free-style Wrestling National Championships in pursuing a place in the Iranian squad in September's World Championships in Zagreb. An Asian 61kg bronze medalist in 2023, Rezaei stole the show in a higher weight class at the domestic event in Gorgan, which served as the opening phase of the Iranian trials for the UWW Worlds. Rezaei began his 65kg campaign on Wednesday in style, making a quick work of Fardin Heidari by technical superiority in 58 seconds, before hammering Omran Hosseini 10-0 to march into the quarterfinals.

Dominant triumphs over

Amirhossein Sabzali (14-2) and Amirreza Taymourizad (14-3) sent Rezaei into the final showdown, where he eased to a 13-1 victory over Dariush Hazratqolizadeh in the first period to walk away with the ultimate prize.

"I was truly pleased with my performance in the competitions as I won all of my five bouts by technical superiority," Rezaei told the official website of the Iranian Wrestling Federation.

The Iranian was full of praise for his coach, Ali Khodaei, as well as his father, who "helped me out with learning different techniques when I was a kid."

"All the years of watching videos and reviewing techniques helped me take advantage of different wrestling moves, especially

throwing ones, in the national championships," added the Iranian.

"The competition gave me the opportunity to introduce myself as a top 65kg contender in the country and I will be looking to go all the way in the selection process to win the Iranian spot for the world event."

Rezaei will still face stern competition to secure the national team spot, as former world champion and Olympic silver medalist Rahman Amouzad remains the favorite to represent the country in the Croatian capital.

"My ultimate goal is to win the world and Olympic gold medals and I am ready to battle any wrestler to achieve that," Rezaei insisted.



● IAWF

Arteta rages at penalty award in Brighton draw



Arsenal's William Saliba (2) concedes a second-half penalty after fouling João Pedro in a 1-1 draw against Brighton & Hove Albion in the Premier League in Brighton, Britain, on Jan. 4, 2025.

● REUTERS

THE GUARDIAN – Mikel Arteta hit out at Anthony Taylor for awarding the penalty that pegged back Arsenal at Brighton but admitted his side lacked enough "freshness" to hold on for victory. Ethan Nwaneri's second Premier League goal had given the visitors the lead in the first half but the Arsenal manager was left raging when William Saliba was penalised by Taylor for catching João Pedro in the face as he attempted to head the ball away.

"I have never seen a decision like this in my career. I asked the boys if they have and nobody has seen it before," said Arteta. "When you look at the incident, the distance, the player, João touching the ball, then Saliba touching the ball, you can see contact there. I checked [with the

officials]. After three seconds they said they had already checked. It seems quick."

The 1-1 draw leaves Arsenal five points behind Liverpool but having played two matches more than the leaders. There was more bad news for Arteta, with the 17-year-old Nwaneri forced off at half-time with injury and Martin Ødegaard, the captain, able to come on only as a second-half substitute because of illness, while Kai Havertz was again not involved.

Arsenal host Newcastle in the first leg of their Carabao Cup semi-final on Tuesday before Manchester United visit in the FA Cup next Sunday. Arteta admitted they have so far struggled to cope with the hectic schedule of nine matches in January and acknowledged that his players

ran out of steam in the second half against Brighton.

"The run that we are on especially with all the situations, injuries and players that we are missing – I think the team deserves a lot of credit," he said. "It's disappointing because it's not about how much effort we put in today but it was more about the freshness and the quality that we have to deliver in the second half to dominate the game much better."

Asked whether his plans for the transfer window had changed, he added: "We cannot make a decision based on one performance for one day with a lot of circumstances, not only the players that we lost but the fact that we had to take Ethan out. Hopefully on Tuesday we will be in a better position."