

# Taremi racing against time to save Inter future

## Sports Desk

When Iranian striker Mahdi Taremi left Porto as a free agent to join Inter Milan last July, his signing was widely regarded as a bargain for the Serie A giant.

Taremi had spent four glorious seasons with the Portuguese heavyweight, helping the Dragons lift seven domestic trophies – including a league and cup double in the 2021/22 campaign – while he bagged 91 strikes in 182 appearances to become the club's third all-time top scorer.

With Marcus Thuram granted an extended vacation ahead of the campaign – due to involvement in Euro 2024 – the Iranian talisman capitalized on the Frenchman's absence by delivering impressive performances during preseason friendlies, which led to many tipping him for a No. 9 role alongside Lautaro Martinez in the starting XI.

Nine months on, however, Taremi already appears to be fighting for his future in the Nerazzurri colors.

Taremi's contribution for Inter has been limited to just three goals – including two penalties – in 37 games across all competitions, with his last strike coming from the spot against Lecce in Serie A on January 26.

The Iranian had an evening to forget during the 3-0 defeat against city rival Milan in the Coppa Italia semifinal last



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week and was taken off early in the second half, while he was an unused sub in the 1-0 loss to AS Roma in the league on Sunday.

Italian pundits and media have been quick to cast doubt on whether Taremi is the right fit for Inter, and the club's recent dip in form has only fueled the

somewhat harsh criticism.

"The expectations were high of Taremi for what he had done in the Portuguese league, but he is yet to make

an impact [for Inter]," Alessandro Matri, former Milan and Juventus striker and now a commentator for SportMedia-set, said of the Iranian after the Milan derby.

"I think he is clumsy in his movements. I'm sorry to say that, but you can really see that he hasn't fit in," added Matri. Italian journalist Davide Stoppini, writing for La Gazzetta dello Sport last Thursday, slammed Inter boss Simone Inzaghi's decision to give Taremi a starting role against Milan.

"If they still had a chance to change the ending of the story, Taremi and [Albanian midfielder Kristjan] Asllani definitely blew it last night," Stoppini wrote.

"Inzaghi can only hope that from here until the end of the season, for an inexplicable reason, Taremi changes face. But in reality, his fate is sealed: It will be goodbye in the summer, provided he finds admirers around Europe, who will take on a salary of €3 million net per season (until 2027).

"Taremi is the latest example of a certain type of business that Inter will no longer do in the market: 33 years old in July, a player who is not there in the present but who cannot be relied upon in the future either."

The writing is already on the wall for Taremi, who has at most seven games – should Inter reach the European final – to save his Nerazzurri career, starting with the Champions League last-four clash at Barcelona tonight.

## Western Asia Youth Chess Championship:

# Iran bags double golds in standard event

## Sports Desk

Iran's Niousha Mohammadi and Kiasha Mahboubi walked away with a couple of gold medals in the standard competitions of the Western Asia Youth Chess Championship in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on Monday.

Aihan Rahbar, meanwhile, stood runner-up to

Kazakhstan's Alimzhan Zhaunbay in the boys' under-12 contests – the Iranian's second silver medal in Dushanbe after his second-place finish behind compatriot Ramtin Kakavand in the blitz event. Mohammadi collected 6.5 points to beat FIDE master Veronika Shubenkova to the top spot in the girls' under-18 category on a

superior tiebreak 2 (number of wins) after nine rounds of play. Mahboubi notched up his second medal in the competitions – following his blitz silver – when he finished atop the boys' under-eight standings with 7.5 points.

Earlier in Dushanbe, Mohammad-Hossein Darvishi had added a blitz gold

to Iran's haul, thanks to a 7.5-point tally in the boys' under-16 category, while Saina Kowsari (under-12) and Taraneh Taqizadeh (under-14) had settled for a couple of blitz bronzes in their respective girls' divisions.

Taqizadeh had also won a silver in the rapid contests, while Kakavand picked up a bronze medal.

## Iran confirms squad for Women's Futsal Asia Cup

## Sports Desk

Iran head coach Forouzan Soleimani unveiled the 14-woman squad for the upcoming AFC Futsal Asia Cup, which will resume after a seven-year hiatus in China next Tuesday.

Prolific Fereshteh Karimi, who was named the Most Valuable Player of the tournament in the previous two editions in 2015 and 2018, and goalkeeper Farzaneh Tavassoli will headline the Iranian squad, also featuring Tahereh Mahdipour, Mahdieh Mahmoudinia, Fatiemeh Rahmati, Sara Shirbeigi, Fereshteh Khosravi, Elham Anafcheh, Zahra Kiani, Nasimeh Sadat Gholami, Nastaran Moqimi, Mahtab Banaei, Fatiemeh Hosseini, and Maral Torkaman – the MVP and top scorer in February's CAFA championship.

Bidding for a third successive crown in the flagship continental event, Iran will get its campaign underway against the Philip-

piners in Group B on Tuesday. Team Melli will then take on Hong Kong on May 9, before squaring off against Vietnam at the Hohhot Sports Center two days later.

Iran defeated Japan 1-0 for the title in the inaugural edition in Malaysia in 2015 and repeated the success three years later in Thailand, thanks to a 5-2 victory over the same opponent in the final.

The 2020 edition in Kuwait was canceled by the continental governing body of the sport due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elsewhere in the 12-team event, the host country is drawn against Uzbekistan, the Chinese Taipei, and Australia in Group A, with Japan, two-time bronze winner Thailand, Indonesia, and Bahrain completing the lineup of Group C.



● FFIRI

## Cavaliers thrash Miami to win play-off series 4-0

**BBC** – The Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Miami Heat 138-83 to secure a 4-0 first-round play-off series win and book their place in the NBA Eastern Conference semi-finals. Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points for the visiting Cavaliers, who were also helped by DeAndre Hunter adding 19 points, Ty Jerome scoring 18 points and Evan Mobley contributing 17 points as they won by the fourth-largest winning margin in an NBA play-off game.

"We came out here with a goal in mind, to keep our foot on their throat and on their neck and continue to play 48 minutes of basketball," Mitchell told TNT television. The 55-point margin was Miami's biggest play-off defeat and overtook the previous record of 37 points which had been set in the third game of the best-of-seven series.

In San Francisco, the Golden State Warriors took a 3-1 lead in the Western Conference



● SAM NAVARRO/IMAGN IMAGES

first-round play-off series against the Houston Rockets with a 109-106 home win. Jimmy Butler was back for the Warriors after missing game three with a pelvic injury and scored 14 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter, while team-mate Brandin Podziemski made six three-pointers in his 26 points. The Warriors had trailed by

seven points at half-time before going on an 18-1 run at the start of the third quarter, but the score was tied at 104 with one minute 20 seconds left of the contest.

Fred VanVleet scored 24 of his 25 points from three-point distance for the Rockets but missed a long-range shot in the final second that would have tied the game.