

UEFA Champions League: Taremi strikes as Olympiacos finds playoff hopes



Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates his goal during a 2-0 win against Leverkusen in the UEFA Champions League at the Karaiskakis Stadium, Piraeus, Greece, on January 20, 2026.
● olympiacos.org

Sports Desk

Iranian striker Mahdi Taremi was on target as Olympiacos was given fresh hopes of securing a playoff spot at the UEFA Champions League with a 2-0 victory over Bayer Leverkusen in Piraeus, Greece. Backed by the roaring home supporters, the Greek champion got off to a dream start at the Karaiskakis Stadium, when Rodinei whipped a corner into the box and Costinha powered his header in for a second-minute lead. Leverkusen, missing several key players including keeper Mark Flekken, Edmond Tapsoba and Nathan Tella, gradually dominated, with Olympiacos keeper Kostas Tzolakis producing a string of heroic saves. However, it was the home side that scored again, hitting the Bundesliga club with a two-pass counter-attack and Taremi drilling in from another Rodinei assist in first-

half stoppage time. The goal took the Iranian's tally to an impressive 14 goals and three assists in 23 appearances across all competitions since he joined The Legend from Internazionale in the summer. Leverkusen tried to bounce back after the break but despite having possession was unable to beat Tzolakis, who made another fine save in the 80th minute in a one-on-one with substitute Patrik Schick. The second straight win in the competition lifted Olympiacos to 22nd in the 36-team table on eight points, one behind Leverkusen, which is 19th. The top eight teams win automatic qualification for the round of 16 while the next 16 teams go into a playoff. The final round of the league-phase fixtures will see Olympiacos visit Ajax Amsterdam next Wednesday, while Bayer Leverkusen will host Villarreal. Elsewhere in the penultimate

round in the league stage, Arsenal maintained its perfect record with a 3-1 victory over Inter in Milan, while Manchester City was stunned by the same scoreline at Norwegian minnow club Bodø/Glimt. In Lisbon, Luis Suárez scored twice, including a 90th-minute winner as Sporting CP beat defending champion PSG 2-1 to move into the top eight. French striker Kylian Mbappé netted two early strikes to inspire Real Madrid to a 6-1 rout of Monaco at home, with Club Brugge hammering bottom-club Kairat 4-1 in Astana. FC Copenhagen shared the spoils with Serie A champion Napoli in a 1-1 draw at home, and Tottenham Hotspurs defeated 10-man Dortmund 2-0 in London to jump to fourth and find a bit of relief after a run of poor results in domestic action. Ajax came from behind to walk away with a 2-1 win at Villarreal.

Iranian wrestlers doubtful for Zagreb Open over visa issue

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers may be ruled out of the upcoming Zagreb Open due to visa issues, Abdolmahdi Nasirzadeh, the vice president of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, has said. The opening Ranking Series event of the international season kicks off in the Croatian capital on February 4. However,

the visa process for members of the Iranian freestyle and Greco-Roman squads has been hampered by an ongoing internet shutdown in the country, casting doubt on their participation. The Iranian government cut off internet services on 8 January for security reasons amid recent domestic unrest. "The Wrestling Federation has made all neces-

sary arrangements for sending the wrestlers and submitted the documents for 22 wrestlers to the Croatian embassy earlier this month," Nasirzadeh told Mehr News Agency. "The federation was informed that due to the internet shutdown, the Iranian teams may not be able to be dispatched to the Ranking Series event," added Nasirzadeh, though he remained optimistic that ongoing follow-ups with the Iranian Foreign Ministry would resolve the problem in the coming days. Absence from the tournament would be a massive blow for Iranian head coaches Hassan Rangraz and Pejman Dorostkar, as the event serves as a significant part of the Iranian trials for April's Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as well as for the World Championships in Manama and the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September. "We are making every effort to make sure the wrestlers go to Zagreb. Wrestling has always spearheaded Iranian sport on the global stage, and we will try to utilize the country's sports diplomacy apparatus to resolve the issue," Nasirzadeh said.

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Iranian freestyle wrestlers are seen in action during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on January 19, 2026.
● FARSHAD BANDANI/
IAWFIR



WTT Youth Contender Doha 2026: Faraji triumphs in U17 boys' singles



● IRNA

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji rounded out the latest WTT Youth Contender event in style, claiming the U17 boys' singles title in Doha. A winner of a historic under-15 bronze medal for the country at the 2024 World Youth Championships, Faraji defeated Vietnam's Man Lung Sai in straight games (11-8, 11-6, 11-7) in Tuesday's final at the

Lusail Sports Arena. Given a bye in the first round, the Iranian began his campaign with a 3-0 (11-7, 11-8, 11-8) win against Lam Sheung Man – also from Vietnam – in the round of 32, and then came from behind to beat India's Rishaan Chattopadhyay 3-1 (5-11, 11-4, 11-7, 11-5) for a place in the quarterfinals. A straight-game win (11-7, 11-9, 11-6) against Malaysian Lai Yong Ren sent Faraji into the

semifinals, where he defeated South Korea's Ma Yeongmin 3-1 (13-11, 16-18, 11-5, 11-5). Arshia Lorestani was the other Iranian boy in the under-17 action in Doha. Lorestani beat both Lebanon's Michel Abi Nader and Lin Chin-Ting of Chinese Taipei in straight games, but relinquished a first-game lead to suffer a 3-1 setback (10-12, 11-7, 11-8, 11-4) against the Vietnamese finalist in the round of 16.

Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League: Six teams guaranteed playoff spots

Sports Desk

Four more teams booked a place in the playoffs, joining already-qualified Saipa and Shahar Arka, after the latest round of the Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League regular season on Tuesday. Sepahan held off a late surge by Shahar Arka to prevail 3-1 (25-23, 25-23, 25-27, 29-27) in Karaj, avenging its setback

in the reverse fixture earlier in the season. The win puts Sepahan second in Group B, level on six wins and 18 points with its host, and secures its playoff qualification. Shahin Bandar Ameri also guaranteed a playoff berth with a 3-1 victory (25-21, 20-25, 25-16, 25-14) at Mehregan Shiraz. Shahin is now third in the group with five wins from seven games. Malavan Tehran claimed its

third win of the campaign with a four-set victory over Padideh San'at (25-19, 25-8, 22-25, 25-21) to sit fourth in the group, remaining in playoff contention with two games left in the regular season. In Group A, defending champion Saipa saw its perfect record end after a straight-set loss (25-21, 25-15, 25-19) away to Moqavemat Shahrdari in Tabriz. The home side progressed after securing its

fifth win of the season, moving into third in the table. Majan Mazandaran eased to a straight-sets victory (25-12, 25-22, 25-14) over Naft Omidyeh at home, sitting second in Group A with six wins and 17 points – just one point behind Saipa. San'at Mes Rafsanjan boosted its playoff hopes with a 3-0 win (26-24, 25-17, 25-18) over Dr. Farhad Clinic at home.



● MNA