

RONALDO'S SISTER SLAMS JUVENTUS

Cristiano Ronaldo's sister hit out at Juventus after their Coppa Italia defeat to Napoli. The defeat was the first time Ronaldo has ever lost consecutive finals in his career with the Portugal forward criticised for his performance by Luca Toni. Elma has however leaped to her brother's defence on social media as she seemingly slammed Sarri's tactics and pleaded for Ronaldo's Juventus teammates to step up. "What more can you do?" wrote Ronaldo's sister Elma Alveiro on Instagram. "That's all there is, my darling can't work miracles and do it all by himself... I don't understand how they can play like this... Anyway, keep your chin up, but you can't do it all, my King."



AGENCIES



Real Madrid frontman Karim Benzema (R) celebrates one of his two goals with Eden Hazard during a La Liga match against Valencia on Thursday. The Frenchman scored his second from a sensational volley.

PHOTO: AFP

Zidane hails Benzema's brilliance

AFP, Madrid



LaLiga

Zinedine Zidane said Karim Benzema "shuts people up a bit" when he scores goals like his stunning volley against Valencia on Thursday. Benzema brilliantly lifted the ball over defender Hugo Gillamon with his right foot and then shot with his left into the top corner as Madrid beat Valencia 3-0 at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium. Marco Asensio had earlier made it two after Benzema gave Madrid the lead, his brace taking his tally for the season to 21 goals in 38 games. "His performance was magnificent, like the whole team,

but his goal was extraordinary," said Zidane. "We know that he is comfortable with his left foot but wow, to lift the ball in that way and to swing like that with his left foot, without the ball touching the ground, truly it's a very complicated piece of skill. "It's beautiful to see it and I'm happy for him. "Often we see Karim as the number nine of Madrid and he must score goals, but he doesn't only do that. So when he does score, I'm happy because he shuts people up a bit, and the work, he always does that no matter what." Benzema is a controversial figure in France after his alleged involvement in a blackmail plot

against former teammate Mathieu Valbuena. He has not played for the national team since 2015. But the 32-year-old has been in sensational form for Real Madrid this season and his latest goal was his 243rd for the club, putting him fifth on Madrid's all-time list. "We know all these matches are finals so this was very important for us and for me personally as well," said Benzema. "It was a beautiful goal, I think I can say it was beautiful, it went in and that was great. Sometimes I do that in practice and today I did it in the match." Meanwhile, Asensio came back with a bang. On his return to action, he needed just 29 seconds

and a single touch to score a fine goal, before turning provider for Karim Benzema. It was a dream return following the serious injury he suffered in Maryland on July 24. "We started well but after that Valencia grew into the game and we knew we had to change something and push higher up the pitch, that's what we did and we won the game," said Asensio, who had a dream return after expecting to miss the whole season before the campaign was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. "I feel a lot of emotion and satisfaction but there was a lot of work behind this goal but the most important thing is that we won and I'm here for the rest of the season."

An ageless pioneer departs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh



Ram Chand Goala, a legendary figure in the country's domestic cricket circuit during the 80s, passed away at the age of 80 at his Brahmapally residence in Mymensingh city yesterday morning. With his long curly figure and thick moustache, he became a beloved figure amongst the cricket lovers in the country during long career and was popularly known as 'Goalaji'. A complete bachelor, he left behind sisters-in-law, niece, nephew, grandchildren and a host of relatives, well-wishers and admirers. Prangon Ghosh, a grandson, informed that Goala suffered a stroke on June 9 and was under treatment at home after undergoing necessary examinations at a local hospital. "He had also suffered a massive stroke four years ago and since then he was almost bed-ridden and could not go outside," Prangon said. "He also had some other old-age complications including high blood pressure".

His cremation took place at the Bolashpur cremation ground on Friday afternoon.

"He was a legend in the truest sense of the word and inspired many generations of cricketers in Bangladesh," BCB director Sajjadul Alam Bobby told The Daily Star.

Considered one of the pioneers of left-arm spin in the country, Goala played for various reputed clubs in Mymensingh and Dhaka in a career spanning three decades. In 1981, at the age of 40, he joined Abahani and played there for 12 years up to 1993. At the age of 43, he became the oldest cricketer to debut for the national team and was included in the side that toured West Bengal in 1983. During that tour, he went on to play at the Eden Gardens in a match against West Bengal.

Goala has played with nationally

and internationally reputed players like Raqibul Hasan, Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, Jahagir Shah Badsha, Shamim Kabir, Dulatuzzaman, Sadrul Anam, Jalal Yunus, Naimur Rahman Durjoy, National Team Captain Minhazul Abedin Nannu, Javed Omar Belim and Habibul Bashar Sumon.

He continued playing club cricket till the age of 57.

Goala offered his whole life for cricket and also served as a coach for various local clubs and organisations including Abahani, Mohammedan, Pandit Para and Al-Helal.



Ram Chand Goala (1940-2020)

"Mymensingh produced many cricketing talents who enriched the game through their great devotion. Of them, the oldest one, Ram Chand Goala, had been inspiring and grooming the younger generations of players, passed away today," Amir Ahmed Chowdhury Ratan, a veteran sports organiser of Mymensingh region, said yesterday.

In an interview with The Daily Star in 2007, Goala had said in an emotion-choked voice, "I want to stay alive in the field forever through my boys".

Juventus supremacy under threat

AFP, Milan



Serie A

Juventus's Serie A supremacy faces a stiff test with the champions just one point ahead of Lazio as the Italian league kicks off again this weekend following a three-month shutdown. A return had looked unthinkable back in April as Italy counted their daily coronavirus deaths in the hundreds for nearly 35,000 victims in the country. But the situation has improved with strict health protocols in place and all matches being played behind closed doors. Four postponed games will take place first this weekend involving teams at the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak. Atalanta host Sassuolo in Bergamo on Sunday, and Inter Milan are at home against Sampdoria. On Saturday, Torino host Parma and Cagliari travel to Hellas Verona. Next week all teams will have 12 games left to play with Juventus at Bologna on Monday, and Lazio travelling to Atalanta on Wednesday. Maurizio Sarri's Juventus fell in the Italian Cup final to Napoli on penalties midweek, having also lost the Italian SuperCup to Lazio in December. "Ronaldo, (Paulo) Dybala and our great soloists lack that little bit of brilliance, but I consider it quite normal in this period," said Sarri. "I didn't say anything to the players, we

were all very angry and disappointed and I think it's better to be silent right now." Sarri's woes have been compounded with Brazilian defender Alex Sandro tearing a knee ligament against Napoli and Sami Khedira picking up a potentially serious tendon problem. Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain and captain Giorgio Chiellini are also not yet at full fitness. Juventus will be counting on their top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo to react after suffering two defeats in a final for the first time in his career, and missing a penalty in the Italian Cup semi-final. Lazio's Ciro Immobile has scored 27 goals this season, six more than Ronaldo, as the in-form Romans target their third Scudetto and first in two decades. Simone Inzaghi's side have already beaten Juventus twice this season, in the Italian SuperCup final and 3-1 in the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. The top two teams will meet in Turin on July 20. Inter Milan are third, nine points behind Juventus. Inter lost to Lazio (2-1) and Juventus (2-0) just before the suspension. "If I have to find a positive part of this crisis, it's that I've had time to focus and try to find different areas in which the team can improve," said coach Antonio Conte. Atalanta occupy the final Champions League berth, three points ahead of Roma, with Napoli sixth a further six points back.



Flamengo players vie for the ball with Bangu players during their match at the iconic Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. The Carioca Championship fixture, played behind closed doors, ushered the resumption of football as the city started to ease its social distancing measures.

PHOTO: AFP

Football back in Brazil

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian football resumed after a three-month hiatus on Thursday night, with Flamengo beating Bangu 3-0 at an empty Maracana stadium in the first game of the restarted Rio de Janeiro state championship. The match marked the return of Brazil's state leagues, most of which were halted in March as the novel coronavirus spread. The resumption in Brazil has caused controversy, with two top clubs, Botafogo and Fluminense, saying they will not turn up for scheduled games this weekend. Thursday night's game at the Maracana began after the two sides arrived to be met by a handful of fans, some of whom were protesting the policies of Brazil's far-right president, and others who carried placards celebrating the 70th anniversary of the stadium.

Foreign booters still stuck in Dhaka

ANISUR RAHMAN



Even though Bangladesh has resumed international flight operations on a limited scale from Tuesday after three months' halt due to the coronavirus pandemic, a total of 52 foreign footballers of different clubs are still stuck in the country due to the closure of certain routes. 65 foreigners from Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America were signed by 13 clubs for the 2019-20 BPL season which was later cancelled. Even after settling payments as per the FIFA-prescribed mutual understanding, the clubs are still arranging accommodation and food for the players on humanitarian grounds despite going through financial constraints themselves. According to the BFF, only 13 of the 65 -- one each from

Abahani, Sheikh Russel KC, Sheikh Jamal DC, Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Brothers Union and two players each from Bashundhara Kings, Saif SC, Mohammedan SC and Bangladesh Police FC -- have left Bangladesh during the pandemic with a few embassies arranging for special flights to take their citizen home. However, no players from Arambagh, Chattogram Abahani, Rahmatganj or Uttar Baridhara Club could leave the country. "All five players are still in the club because the airports of their respective countries have not opened yet. The players told us that they are searching for available flights to leave Bangladesh but at the moment, ticket prices are very high," Rahmatganj MFS general secretary Imtiaz Hamid Sabuj said, adding that they have players from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Nigeria, Guinea and Gambia.

"Our foreign players were supposed to leave Bangladesh on June 16 but they either can't ensure their return tickets or the airports in their countries are closed," said Brothers Union manager Amer Khan. Amer also mentioned that Nigerian striker Nkwocha Kingsley, who has a residential card in the USA, and German coach Reza Parkas had left the country. "Two of Brothers' players from Cameroon and Ivory Coast are now counting days to join their families back home. Chattogram Abahani manager Arman Aziz said: "All five players from Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Brazil and Uzbekistan are trying to leave Bangladesh after June 25 as the flights for their destinations haven't resumed yet." "Chattogram Abahani are still arranging everything such as

accommodation, food, internet for the players even after clearing all the payments," said Aziz. However, Brothers manager Amer said that they are struggling to arrange everything for the foreign players due to financial constraints. "Brothers Union are not strong enough financially, so it is an extra burden for us." Foreign players of other clubs are also facing similar problems. BFF's competitions manager Taher Bin Ansari informed that Uzbekistani players, who tried to go to India to catch special flights to Uzbekistan, had to stay put as flights from India to Uzbekistan got cancelled. However, the Uzbekistan embassy in Dhaka is trying to arrange for a chartered flight for its citizens. Ansari added that five Brazilian footballers are in touch with the Brazilian Embassy to leave Bangladesh.

WHAT TO WATCH

LA LIGA

FACEBOOK
Espanyol v Levante
Live from 6:00pm
Athletic Club v Real Betis
Live from 9:00pm
Getafe v Eibar
Live from 11:30pm
Atletico Madrid v Real
Valladolid
Live from 2:00am
(Sunday)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Star Sports Select 1
Wartford v Leicester City
Live from 5:30pm
Brighton and Hove v
Arsenal
Live from 8:00pm
West Ham v Wolves
Live from 10:30pm
Bournemouth v Crystal
Palace
Live from 12:45am
(Sunday)

SERIE A

Ten 2
Torino v Parma
Live from 11:30pm
Verona v Cagliari
Live from 1:45am
(Sunday)
BUNDESLIGA
Star Sports Select 2
Bayern Munich v Freiburg
Live from 7:30pm