



ON CLOUD NINE: Juventus players erupted in wild celebrations at the dressing room after clinching their ninth straight Serie A title following a 2-1 win over Sampdoria on Sunday.

PHOTO: JUVENTUS FC

Ronaldo dedicates title to Juve fans battling Covid-19

AGENCIES

Cristiano Ronaldo dedicated Juventus' ninth successive Serie A title to the club's fans, particularly those that have suffered as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Ronaldo scored once, and missed a penalty, and Federico Bernardeschi netted in a 2-0 victory over a 10-man Sampdoria on Sunday to continue Juve's dominance in Italy. Juve secured the league title with two games remaining, having returned to action last month following the coronavirus-enforced break. Ronaldo, who moved onto 35 goals this season, was delighted and paid tribute to Juventus' fans. "Done! Champions of Italy," he wrote on Instagram. "Delighted for the second consecutive championship and to continue building the history of this great and splendid club."

HIGHLIGHTS

Juventus have secured a ninth straight Serie A title, the longest streak in any of Europe's 'big five' leagues and the joint longest across the continent. The first title in this incredible run was secured on May 6, 2012. By defeating Sampdoria, they clinched number nine three days after they celebrated their 3,000th consecutive day as Italian champions. 10 goals in 10 games since the resumption of SerieA has helped Cristiano Ronaldo become a multiple-time league

champion in England, Spain and Italy. No other player has even won all three leagues once. By winning the Serie A title at aged 61, Maurizio Sarri surpassed Nils Liedholm (60 years and 219 days) to become the oldest coach to win a Scudetto. Veteran centre-back Giorgio Chiellini is the only player to have made at least one appearance in each of Juve's past nine Serie A title successes, with Gianluigi Buffon the only player in history to have won more Scudetti.

"This title is dedicated to all Juve fans, in particular to those who have suffered and are suffering from the pandemic that has taken us all by surprise by overturning the world. "It was not easy! Your courage, your attitude and your determination were the strength

we needed to face this tight final of the championship and fight to the end for this title that belongs to all of Italy. A big hug to you all!" Manager Maurizio Sarri was quick to single out both Ronaldo and Paulo Dybala post-match but also stressed the club's continued

success was the result of significant collaboration. "Ronaldo and Dybala make the difference on the field, so clearly they deserve a lot of credit, but the club behind them is every bit as important," Sarri said. "We have a president and directors who attend training every day, are there to exchange ideas, see if you need anything and put petrol in the tank of this team. The club are a big part of why they were able to win for so many years. They back you even when you lose. "In terms of organisation, Juventus are at the top of European football. I could not have asked for anything more. Obviously, it takes a while to settle in, understand the approach, the way things work here, then after a while you can start trying to tweak a few things. "You can't just walk straight into a club that has won for eight years in a row and immediately try to order changes. That wouldn't be very intelligent."

Immobile level with Lewandowski

AGENCIES

Serie A leading scorer Ciro Immobile scored a hattrick, taking his tally to 34 league goals this season, as Lazio came from behind to thump Verona 5-1 away on Sunday. The 30-year-old converted two penalties and scored with a majestic curling shot to leave him two goals short of Gonzalo Higuain's record of 36 goals in a Serie A season with two matches to play. The hattrick means the Italy striker has drawn level with Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski in the race to be crowned Europe's top goal scorer. Both players now have 34 goals but Immobile still has two games to play against Brescia and Napoli. Lewandowski's Bundesliga season is already over. However, the tiebreaker is based on the ratio of goals scored per minute played and in the event of a tie that includes the Poland international, Lewandowski would win. The Bundesliga has 34 games per season and Lewandowski played in 31. Serie A plays four more matches each season and so far, Immobile has appeared in 35 games missing only one on account of a yellow card suspension. After Lewandowski had played in the last Bundesliga game of the season on June 27, he enjoyed what seemed to be a comfortable lead. Immobile was 7 goals behind and Ronaldo 11 behind. Immobile had made an impressive start

to the 2019/20 season with 25 goals from the first 22 Serie A games -- two goals more than the Poland striker. However, goals stopped flowing freely and it looked like his chance had gone. That is until five goals in the last three matches resurrected his drive for the Golden Boot. Not for the first time in his career Cristiano Ronaldo started slowly with just 5 goals in his first 10 Serie A games. Then, the afterburners kicked in with 26 goals coming in his last 22 games. His latest goal came in a 2-0 win over Sampdoria that clinched Juventus' 9th consecutive Serie A

R Lewandowski (Bayern Munich, GER)	34
C Immobile (Lazio, ITA)	34
C Ronaldo (Juventus, ITA)	31
T Werner (Leipzig, GER)	28
L Messi (Barcelona, ESP)	25

title. However, Ronaldo will regret a golden chance to add another goal after missing a late penalty kick that struck the crossbar. Immobile and Ronaldo are also involved in another scoring battle -- to score more goals in a top-flight Italian season than any other player. The record is 36 goals in a season held by Gino Rossetti for Torino in 1928-29 and Gonzalo Higuain for Napoli in 2015-16. Three players Ferenc Hirzer, Julio Libonatti and Gunnar Nordahl each scored 35 goals.



Solskjaer hails Fernandes impact



AGENCIES

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has hailed the impact of Bruno Fernandes as Manchester United returned to the Champions League after securing a third-place finish in the Premier League. A penalty from Bruno Fernandes and an injury time goal from Jesse Lingard secured United's position in Europe's top competition next season and completed a remarkable comeback from Solskjaer's side. After a disappointing start to the season, they ended the campaign 14 games unbeaten, with a large part of that down to the huge impact Fernandes has had on the side since signing from Sporting CP back in January. "We have to admit that he's come in and been a massive influence. A massive impact. He's been fantastic, scoring goals, creating goals, but also his enthusiasm and mentality around the place has helped," Solskjaer said. "Maybe today you can see a tired Bruno and that's natural because he's played too much. You can see his passion -- he's moaning a little bit here and there so we will have to take that away from him at times -- but he's stepped up calm as you like and slotted away the penalty." "It's been a massive achievement by players and staff; the staff are incredible. We did have a chat with everyone this morning that no matter what happens we've come so far as a team, built a culture, very proud of our effort."

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has heaped lavish praise on midfielder Bruno Fernandes for helping change the club's fortune. PHOTO: REUTERS FILE

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	G/D	Pts	Status
1	Liverpool	38	32	3	3	52	99	Champions
2	Man City	38	26	3	9	67	81	
3	Man United	38	18	12	8	30	66	
4	Chelsea	38	20	6	12	15	66	
5	Leicester	38	18	8	12	26	62	
6	Tottenham	38	16	11	11	14	59	
18	Bournemouth	38	9	7	22	-25	34	Relegated
19	Watford	38	8	10	20	-28	34	Relegated
20	Norwich	38	5	6	27	-49	21	Relegated

* Top four qualify for Champions League
* Fifth and sixth places qualify for Europa League
* Bottom three relegated

Four newcomers, four different stories

ANISUR RAHMAN



Four new players have secured places in the preliminary squad of the Bangladesh national football team ahead of the Joint Qualifiers of Qatar World Cup and China Asian Cup, and their journeys to drawing the attention of head coach Jamie Day tell varied stories of ascension to the coveted level. Finland-born Tariq Raihan Kazi is perhaps the most accomplished of the lot as the 20-year-old defender represented Finland's U-17 and U-19 teams. Finland's senior team qualified for the 2020 European Championship (postponed due to Covid-19). The three others -- winger Mathiws Bablu of Bangladesh Police, striker Suman Reza of Uttar Baridhara Club and midfielder Nazmul Islam Rasel of Bangladesh Police -- all have different tales. "The dream of playing for the

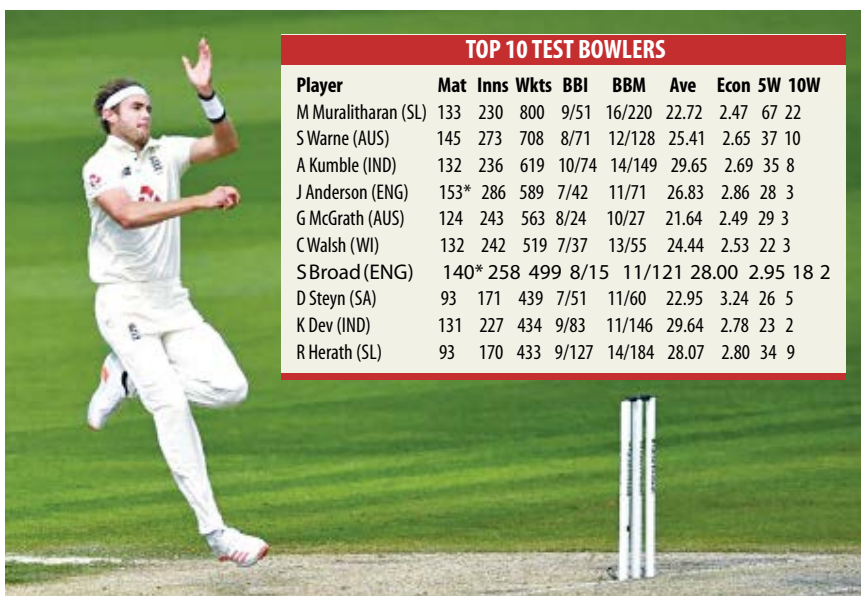
national team vanished when I took the police job in 2017, but my dream has come true because of Bangladesh Police team's promotion to the Bangladesh Premier League. It gave me the platform to showcase my skills again," Bablu told The Daily Star over phone from Dinajpur, adding that he had struck three goals -- one in the Federation Cup and two in the Premier League -- for Police. Having completed the training, Bablu joined the Police football team in 2018 to play the Bangladesh Championship League. He had played top-flight football before, for two seasons with Team BJMC in 2014-15 and 2015-16, after catching the eye of Team BJMC management while playing for their U-18 team in the youth tournament. Bablu had also trained at Sheikh Jamal DC Academy for two years and was picked for the BFF football academy in Sylhet in 2012. Like Bablu, Suman Reza played football across Tangail as a player on hire before joining Bangladesh

Air Force as a soldier in 2015. He never played any lower division or age-group tournament in Dhaka but got a call after playing only six matches in the top-flight. "I had hoped to draw the attention of the coach by performing well throughout the season, but I have unexpectedly been called up for the preliminary squad. I can't express my feelings... every footballer dreams of playing for the national team," Reza told The Daily Star. The 25-year-old Reza, a striker, first drew the attention of Uttar Baridhara Club during an inter-service football match at Bangabandhu National Stadium

in 2016 and since then he has been with Uttar Baridhara Club. The 25-year-old Rasel, hailing from Tangail, has come this far through a football process as he was a BKSP student and represented Bangladesh at age-group teams. "I heard a rumour before that I had been in the squad and finally it turned true yesterday [Sunday] through an official announcement. As I represented the age-group teams, I also dreamed of playing in the national team. I was satisfied with my performance in the Federation Cup and League and was hoping to get a call-up to the national team," said Rasel. All three players are looking forward to securing their places in the final squad for the World Cup Qualifiers by giving more than hundred percent because they all know that getting a call to the preliminary squad is just the first step and they have to outshine the trusted ones, who have been representing the national team for a long time.



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England pacer Stuart Broad was stuck on 499 wickets overnight and had to wait longer for his 500th as rain washed out the morning session of the third Test against West Indies at Old Trafford yesterday. The visitors were two down for 10, chasing a target of 399 in the deciding Test. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Player	Mat	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	Econ	SW	10W
M Muralitharan (SL)	133	230	800	9/51	16/220	22.72	2.47	67	22
S Warne (AUS)	145	273	708	8/71	12/128	25.41	2.65	37	10
A Kumble (IND)	132	236	619	10/74	14/149	29.65	2.69	35	8
J Anderson (ENG)	153*	286	589	7/42	11/71	26.83	2.86	28	3
G McGrath (AUS)	124	243	563	8/24	10/27	21.64	2.49	29	3
C Walsh (WI)	132	242	519	7/37	13/55	24.44	2.53	22	3
S Broad (ENG)	140*	258	499	8/15	11/121	28.00	2.95	18	2
D Steyn (SA)	93	171	439	7/51	11/60	22.95	3.24	26	5
K Dev (IND)	131	227	434	9/83	11/146	29.64	2.78	23	2
R Herath (SL)	93	170	433	9/127	14/184	28.07	2.80	34	9

England, Ireland to kick off ODI Super League

REUTERS, Mumbai



A three-match series between world champions England and Ireland beginning on Thursday will kick off the inaugural Super League, which will determine who qualifies for the 50-over World Cup in India in 2023, the International Cricket Council said on Monday. Aside from during the World Cup every four years, the appeal of the one-day game has dwindled after the arrival of the shorter Twenty20 version of the sport, and it is hoped that the Super League will restore some of the 50-over format's popularity. The launch of the Super League was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a number of series cancelled due to restrictions on international travel and lockdowns in various countries to contain the virus. The league will feature the 12 ICC Test-playing nations and the Netherlands, who qualified by winning the World Cricket Super League 2015-17. The top seven teams in the league, which will see each side play four home and four away series of three matches, will automatically confirm their spot at the 2023 event.