

Maradona death kept from Bilardo

AFP, Buenos Aires

Carlos Bilardo, the coach of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning team who is in poor health, was still unaware on Thursday of the death of Diego Maradona, because of his family's wish not to upset him.

Maradona, who captained the 1986 team, died on Wednesday from a heart attack at the age of 60.

"I cannot tell him that Diego is dead," Carlos's brother Jorge Bilardo told Radio Provincia, because he had a "father-son" relationship with Maradona. Carlos Bilardo had



repeatedly said during interviews that Diego was "the son that (he had) not had". The former coach, 82, is suffering from neurological disorders.

He lives in an apartment in Buenos Aires where he is treated by nurses who are prohibited from letting him watch television.

"The nurse already knew that if this happened, the television had to be turned off," said Jorge Bilardo. "She did so by telling him that the cable had been cut."

Carlos Bilardo took Argentina to three World Cups, from 1982 to 1990. They won the title in 1986 and, with Maradona still very much the playmaker, reached the final four years later when they lost to West Germany.



(Bottom) The coffin of Diego Maradona rests at the burning chapel of Casa Rosada presidential palace in Buenos Aires ahead of his burial on Thursday. (Top L) A kid sits on the shoulders of a man holding a poster of the football legend in front of the presidential palace while (Top R) players of Napoli, all wearing Maradona's name and No. 10 printed on their shirts, observe a minute's silence ahead of their UEFA Cup fixture against FC Rijeka at the San Paolo Stadium.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS/TWITTER

Maradona laid to eternal rest

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentina's Diego Maradona, one of the world's greatest ever football players, was buried on Thursday amid a global outpouring of grief from the streets of Buenos Aires to Naples in Italy.

The death of Maradona at the age of 60 on Wednesday, following a heart attack, has sparked both mourning and celebrations of a true sporting star, who was a genius on the soccer field but lived a life marred by struggles with addiction.

In a day of high emotion, the World Cup winner was taken by hearse late on Thursday to the Bella Vista cemetery on the outskirts of Buenos Aires - where his parents are also interred - for a private ceremony of his family and close friends.

Thousands of Argentines lined the roads as the procession passed on the hour-long journey from the presidential palace in central Buenos Aires, where Maradona had lain in state during the day.

Earlier, there were clashes between police and fans and a febrile atmosphere more akin to a rowdy soccer game than a wake, with fans clambering up the palace gates to get as close as possible to their hero.

In Italy, crowds tied hundreds of blue and white scarfs to the railings



outside his former club Napoli, while in France, sports paper L'Equipe's front page blared out: "God is dead."

In Argentina, three days of national mourning were called for the player who led the country to a 1986 World Cup win and is revered with cult-like status. Tens of thousands took to the streets, not all wearing masks, despite fears over the COVID-19 pandemic. Some left flowers and messages at his childhood home.

"Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and

it's like my old man died," Cristian Montelli, 22, a supporter of the star's former club Boca Juniors said with tears in his eyes after he had filed past the coffin.

"If I die young, hopefully upstairs I can play ball and watch a Boca game with him," added Montelli, who had a tattoo of Maradona's face on his leg.

During the day, Maradona's body lay in state in a closed casket at the Casa Rosada presidential palace on the central Plaza de Mayo. It was covered with the blue and white national flag and an Argentina soccer jersey with the number 10

that had been part of his nickname "D10S" - a play on "dios", the Spanish word for God.

Starting at dawn on Thursday, thousands of fans had formed a snaking line estimated at over a mile (1.6 km) long through the streets of Buenos Aires near the plaza, after a night of mourning and reminiscing.

Fans who got inside the palace - many missed out - threw soccer shirts, flowers and other items towards the casket.

"He was someone who touched the sky with his hands but never took his feet off the ground," President Alberto Fernandez said. He visited the casket on Thursday.

In Naples, fans laid out flowers, pictures, candles and even a bottle of wine in a rapidly expanding, makeshift shrine. Major athletes and world leaders have paid their own tributes.

"Diego belongs to the people, Diego belongs to Argentina, Diego belongs to the country," said Dario Lozano, waiting in line to view the casket. Massimo Vignati, owner of a Maradona museum in Naples, said the player had become almost like family.

"My mother was the Neapolitan mother of Maradona. He was our twelfth brother," he told Reuters, surrounded by memorabilia.

'He was there for me in tough times'

AFP, London

Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho has revealed that Diego Maradona would call him after defeats, paying a warm tribute to the late Argentine great with a "big, big" heart.

"I spent the day today telling stories to my guys about him and the time we spent together and that's the guy I miss," Mourinho told BT Sport.

"I especially miss the phone call that was always arriving after defeats and never after victories. He knew that after victories I don't need phone calls, he knew that in difficult moments he was always there and he was always saying after defeats and in difficult moments 'Mou, don't forget you are the best'. It was always with this kind of approach, so I miss Diego."

The Spurs boss said those who had been able to spend time with Maradona had been privileged, drawing a line between the footballer and the man.

"There is Maradona and there is Diego," said Mourinho. "Maradona, I don't need to speak about because the world knows and nobody will forget."

"Diego is different. The people that are the big friends of him, the people that share dressing rooms with him, colleagues, these guys are privileged. I can say he was a good friend of mine, but my contacts with him were by telephone and we met of course a few times."

Mourinho said he would miss Maradona's generous larger-than-life character.

"He had a big, big, big, big heart," said Mourinho, whose side beat Ludogorets 4-0 on Thursday to move to the brink of qualification for the Europa League knockout phase.

"That's the guy I miss, because his football we can find every time we miss him, if we Google we will find it. But Diego, no."



Overcoming hurdles and flying high

SPORTS REPORTER



Selim Reza, a high jumper with a physical disability, hogged all the spotlight from his able-bodied fellows on the first day of the National Junior Athletics Championships as track and field made a comeback at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday after a long coronavirus-induced break.

Selim, a student of Grade 12 at the MM Haque Technical College in Narail, cleared 1.80 metres to win the gold medal in the adolescent high jump event after leaving Ismail Sheikh of Narail (1.75 metres) and Emadul Haque (1.75 metres) of Jashore to stun all and sundry in the championships, which was marked by the cheerful dispositions of participants who had been confined indoors so long because of the pandemic.

Taking inspiration from South African blade-runner Oscar Pistorious, Selim started dreaming of participating in the Paralympics and has been preparing by competing against capable athletes. He left his home district of Kushtia and moved to Narail to avail better training facilities under renowned grassroots coach Deelip Chakrabarti, who along with the district sports association and others is providing facilities to realise Selim's dream.

"I was born with my right leg shorter than the left and my parents could not go to any doctors due to financial constraints. However, I don't face any problems in walking," Selim described his disability to The Daily Star after winning the gold medal for the first time. He won bronze in the last edition after returning home with a wooden spoon in the 2016 edition of the junior championships.

Asked how he jumped so high, Selim said, "It has been possible because of my belief and confidence, which were also strengthened when



I started participating in inter-school championships and won four gold medals.

"Deelip sir has inspired me to compete against capable athletes and I am still dreaming of participating in the 2021 Paralympics, where someone won the gold medal clearing 1.85 metres in the last edition in Rio," said Selim. "If the federation can provide me better facilities, then I can improve myself to win a medal from the Paralympics."

Selim said he had only 15 days' preparation for the junior athletics championships as he had been working as a day labourer to meet the expenses of his studies and other things. His three elder brothers also work as day labourers in Kushtia. With last edition's fastest

sprinter Samiul Islam of Khulna bedridden following the injury he sustained while playing football, neighbouring district Jashore's Akram Hossain Akash became the fastest sprinter in the adolescent group after clocking 10.9 seconds (hand-timing) while Mohammad Limon of Kurigram and Nayeem Islam of Sherpur grabbed the silver and bronze medal, clocking 11.1 and 11.2 seconds respectively. Akash has also won gold in the long-jump event and became the fastest sprinter in his first-ever sprint event of the championships.

In the female adolescent group, Suriya Dewan of Manikganj became the fastest sprinter, clocking 12.8 seconds while Mossammatt Suriya of Naogaon bagged the silver with 13.1 seconds.

NZ go 1-0 up against WI

AFP, Auckland

New Zealand defeated the West Indies by five wickets in a rain-affected first Twenty20 international at Auckland's Eden Park on Friday.

The Black Caps finished on 179-5 after being set a target of 176 in a match where the innings were reduced to 16 overs because of persistent showers.

New Zealand bowler Lockie Ferguson was match of the match after claiming a career-best haul of 5-21.

West Indies captain Kieron Pollard was the stand-out performer for the tourists with an unbeaten 75 from 37 balls.

The next fixture in the three-match series is in Mount Maunganui on Sunday.

Smith, Finch tons smash India

REUTERS, Sydney

Steve Smith and Aaron Finch led the way with centuries as Australia opened their home summer with a one-day victory over India by 66 runs on Friday in the first men's international played in front of a crowd since March.

Finch scored 114 in an opening stand of 156 with David Warner (69) to lay a platform before his predecessor as captain Smith smashed 105 off 66 balls to drive Australia to 374 for six -- their highest total against India.

Hardik Pandya thumped four sixes in a bright 90 to give India hope but the innings petered out after his fifth-wicket partnership of 128 with opener Shikhar Dhawan (74) was broken and India limped to 308-8 in their 50 overs.

Can Khulna's stars step up against Ctg?

SPORTS REPORTER



After two final-over thrillers on the opening day, the Bangabandhu T20 Cup dulled down a bit with Minister Group Rajshahi and Gazi Group Chattogram registering rather comfortable victories over Gemcon Khulna and Beximco Dhaka respectively on the second matchday on Thursday.

From a neutral perspective, spectators will want more edge-of-the-seat stuff when Khulna take on Chattogram in today's day game before high-flying Rajshahi take on Barishal under lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Khulna looked to be the strongest side on paper after the players' draft concluded. Led by Bangladesh T20 skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, Khulna also boast the likes of premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan -- who made his return to cricket through this tournament after serving a year-long ban -- and other national stars like Anamul Haque, Imrul Kayes and Shafiqul Islam.

However, they have failed to live up to the hype and their star power went unseen in their first two games. Surprisingly, it was Ariful Haque who took the match away

from Barishal in their first game by hitting Mehidy Hasan Miraz for four massive sixes in the final over. Even in their next encounter against a young Rajshahi side, Ariful came up with yet another unbeaten knock, this time helping the star-studded Khulna save face as they fell to a six-wicket defeat.

Khulna, going up against a Chattogram side that started their campaign by demolishing Mushfiqur Rahim's Dhaka by nine wickets on Thursday, will be facing their toughest challenge so far in the tournament. Chattogram, inspired by magnificent batting displays from Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar in their opening game, will be hoping their mixed bag of domestic and national talents do the trick once again today.

In the second game of the day, Rajshahi will be hoping to make it three wins out of three while Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal will be desperate to register their first win.

Najmul Hossain Shanto-led Rajshahi, the only team to not have picked a Grade A player during the draft, will continue without top all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who hurt his ankle during training two days before the competition started. The Rajshahi team management is supposed to provide updates about Saifuddin on Sunday.



Captain Aaron Finch (L) and Steve Smith hit hundreds as Australia put on a mammoth 374 for six against India in the first ODI at the SCG yesterday. Josh Hazlewood and Adam Zampa then inspired with the ball in an easy 66-run for the hosts.

PHOTO: REUTERS