



Blackburn Rovers striker Benjani Mwaruware (L) scores the second goal past Liverpool defender Sotirios Kyrgiakos (C) during their Premier League encounter at Ewood Park on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Sepp remains defiant

Football

AFP, Doha

Sepp Blatter on Thursday hit out at what he called the "envy and jealousy" of FIFA's success and vowed football's powerful world



NEO Cricket
New Zealand v Pakistan
First Test, Day 1
Live from 4:00am

STAR Cricket
Australia v England
Fifth Test, Day 5
Live from 5:00am

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

STAR Sports
Hopman Cup

governing body would not bow to criticism.

FIFA and its 74-year-old president, who is expected to stand for re-election in May, came under heavy fire last year over alleged corruption.

It also faced condemnation by some for awarding the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 event to Qatar amid claims that the voting system of world football's governing body aids collusion and secrecy.

But Blatter remains defiant, telling the Asian Football Confederation Congress that the organisation continued to go from strength-to-strength.

"In 2010 we had some milestones in the history of football, starting with the first World Cup on the African continent, and what a success," he said in his address.

"Then we had the women's Under-17 World Cup which had its first

Asian champions -- South Korea -- and then the decision of FIFA's executive committee to go to new destinations in 2018 and 2022.

"All these successes have created a lot of envy and jealousy in our world because you cannot satisfy everybody."

He added that FIFA was powerful and rich enough to ward off any attacks.

"The success story of FIFA can continue because we are in a comfortable situation, despite the criticism given to FIFA," he said.

With elections at key confederations, as well as FIFA, due this year, Blatter cautioned that people needed to learn how to lose, as well as win.

"In 2011 we will have competitions but there is something else at stake, this is the elections in all the confederations," he said.

Carlo doesn't fear sack

AFP, Wolverhampton



Carlo Ancelotti insists he doesn't fear the sack even though he effectively wrote off Chelsea's title hopes after their shock 1-0 defeat

at Wolves.

Ancelotti is facing an increasingly uncertain future after a run of one win in nine league games left the champions nine points adrift of leaders Manchester United, having played one game more.

Another dismal result against Wolves, who had been bottom of the league before kick-off, only served to pile the pressure on the beleaguered Italian.

Even a top four finish in the Premier League - and a place in the Champions League - can't be taken for granted by the fifth-placed Blues.

But Ancelotti insisted he will not be worrying about the reaction of notoriously demanding Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich.

"Would I be surprised if I got the sack? Yes. It is obviously not my decision but I hope I can continue this job," Ancelotti said.

"I would like to stay here, I have got a good relationship with the players and the club. I don't fear for my job. I'm worried because the team doesn't reach the right results.

"It's obvious that we are not good enough at the moment but the team has the skill, the ability and the personality to move on. It's important to stay compact and work together.

"It's another defeat but I think we have to keep going. We have to work hard, stay focused and we've got to keep fighting for the title.

"There is a big gap but now the most important thing is to come back to win the games and to fight everyday game by game.

"Nothing is lost at the moment. Obviously it's difficult to come back in the Premier League but we have the FA Cup and the Champions League, and the most important thing now is to move on."

Ancelotti admitted he had got it wrong after boasting "we will win" the day before the game.

He added: "I made a mistake. I saw the players working hard. I don't see problems in the squad.

"They are working hard with a good spirit but I think that is not enough. We have to stay more focused on the little details because I think the little details decided this match.

"We could do better in the first situation when we conceded the goal and we could have done better when we had the opportunities to score."



PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti reacts during the Premier League clash against Wolverhampton Wanderers at the Molineux Stadium on Wednesday.

IN brief

Drugs inside Ade painting

AFP, London

Drug traffickers tried to smuggle cannabis into Britain inside a painting of English Premier League footballer Emmanuel Adebayor, border officials said Thursday.

Almost 3,000 pounds (4,650 dollars, 3,550 euros) worth of the drug was concealed inside a painting of the Manchester City striker, which was sent from his native Togo.

UK Border Agency officials seized the wooden-framed picture at the international postal hub in Coventry, central England.

Klose eyes move abroad

AEP, Berlin

Germany and Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose said Thursday he is hoping the Bundesliga champions will extend his contract but did not rule out a move abroad to further his experience.

The Polish-born star, 32, whose contract with Bayern runs out at the end of the season, told sport magazine Kicker: "My first point of contact is Bayern Munich.

"But I am open to anything and could seriously imagine a move within the Bundesliga or overseas," he said.

Prince Ali unseats Chung

AFP, Doha

Jordan's Prince Ali bin Al Hussein stunned powerful South Korean Chung Mong-Joon to unseat him as a FIFA vice-president here on Thursday.

Chung, the controlling shareholder in industrial giant Hyundai Heavy Industries, a major FIFA sponsor, had been in the job since 1994 and was widely expected to retain the role.

But in a vote of the Asian Football Confederation's 45 eligible members at their Congress in Doha, the prince won 25-20.

Bin Hammam re-elected

AFP, Doha

Mohamed Bin Hammam won a new four-year term as Asian Football Confederation president on Thursday, winning a vote in which he was the only candidate.

The Qatari, who has been in the job since 2002, when he was also elected unopposed, was confirmed in the role until 2015, at the AFC Congress in Doha ahead of the Asian Cup which kicks off on Friday.

Touted as a potential successor to Sepp Blatter as head of FIFA, Bin Hammam has been instru-

Higuain surgery next week

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain will undergo surgery to fix a slipped disc that has sidelined him since November in the United States next week, the Spanish club said Thursday.

The 23-year-old Argentine international will be operated on at Chicago's Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine on Tuesday, it said in a statement.

Real revealed at the beginning of December that the player had sustained a slipped disc that could require an operation, prompting media speculation that the club could bring in another striker in the January transfer window.

Robben ready to return

Football

AFP, Doha

Dutch international Arjen Robben says he is fit and ready to return for Bayern Munich after a six-month injury layoff that has kept him out of action since the World Cup in South Africa.

The 26-year-old winger's last competitive game was the World Cup final defeat to Spain on July 11.

But his torn hamstring has finally healed and he wants to play in the German club's friendly against Qatar Stars League side Al Wakrah in Doha on Saturday.

"I would rather play today than in three or four weeks. I want to come back stronger than before," Robben told Qatari media.

Football giants Bayern are training in Doha, taking advantage of a winter break of the Bundesliga season, which restarts on January 15.

Bayern coach Louis van Gaal said Robben could play "30 minutes or more" against Al Wakrah.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona defender Eric Abidal celebrates his goal against Athletic Bilbao during their Copa del Rey tie at the San Mames Stadium on Wednesday.

Wolves stun Chelsea

AFP, London



Chelsea were sent spinning to a shock 1-0 defeat at Wolves on Wednesday as the Premier League champions fell further behind in the title race and left manager Carlo Ancelotti clinging to his job.

An own goal by defender Jose Bosingwa after five minutes handed victory to Wolves, who climbed out of the relegation zone as Chelsea's miserable run of form -- just one win in nine matches -- continued.

In the battle for second place, Arsenal and Manchester City fought out a 0-0 stalemate at the Emirates. Arsenal dominated throughout but were unable to find their way through a blanket City defence.

The game ended on a sour note after Arsenal defender Bacary Sagna and City's Pablo Zabaleta were given red cards after clashing on the touchline.

The other big headline of the night came at Ewood Park, where Blackburn piled the pressure on Liverpool manager

Roy Hodgson with a 3-1 victory over the troubled Merseysiders.

Hodgson, reportedly set to be replaced by the club's American owners, fielded a strong side, with Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres both starting.

But the result was virtually sealed by half-time, with Martin Olsson opening the

scoring on 32 minutes before Benjani Mwaruware doubled the lead six minutes later. Benjani rubbed salt into the wound with Blackburn's third on 57 minutes.

Gerrard scored a late consolation but hopes of an unlikely comeback were extinguished when the Liverpool skipper missed a late spot-kick.

Elsewhere, Tottenham were unable to capitalise on Chelsea's defeat as they crashed 2-1 at Everton.

Aston Villa's abysmal run of recent form continued as they slumped to a 1-0 defeat at home to Sunderland at Villa Park.

West Ham's hopes of following up their New Year's Day victory over Wolves with another three points were given a brutal mauling at St James Park as Newcastle recorded a crushing 5-0 victory.

RESULTS

Arsenal 0 Manchester City 0
Aston Villa 0 Sunderland 1
(Bardsley 80)
Blackburn 3 (Olsson 32,
Mwaruware 38, 57)
Liverpool 1 (Gerrard 81)
Bolton 1 (Moreno 54)
Wigan 1 (Stam 80)
Everton 2 (Saha 3, Coleman 75)
Tottenham 1 (Van der Vaart 11)
Newcastle 5 (Best 18, 39, 60,
Nolan 45, Lovenkrands 63)
West Ham 0
Wolverhampton 1 (Bosingwa 5-

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Division Cricket League
Mohammedan v Cricket Coaching
Venue: KSOAS
Biman v Victoria
Venue: BKSP-2
Abahani v Kalabagan
Venue: SBNC
Bangladesh League
Abahani v Farashganj
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal