



PHOTO: AFP

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi (L) kicks the ball during a training session in Ezeiza near Buenos Aires on Friday.

FIFA probe demanded

AFP, Port Of Spain

Trinidad and Tobago opposition leader Keith Rowley gave police commissioner Dwayne Gibbs until Tuesday to launch a probe into suspended FIFA executives Mohammed Bin Hammam and compatriot Jack Warner.

The investigation would center upon whether or not the two suspended FIFA executive committee members illegally brought US\$1 million into the nation.

Warner, who like Rowley is a member of the Trinidad parliament, also serves as Minister of Works and Transport.

Qatar Bin Hammam and Warner are among four people suspended by FIFA for alleged roles in the attempted bribery of 25 Caribbean Football Union associations in the build-up to the FIFA presidential elections.

Bin Hammam challenged FIFA President Sepp Blatter for the top football post but bowed out after being charged. Blatter was re-elected unopposed on June 1.

Gibbs, who is Canadian, said on Tuesday that there was "nothing tangible to investigate" regarding the allegations of bribery at a meeting in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Port of Spain.

Spending spree on for L'pool

AFP, London

Liverpool's director of football Damien Comolli vowed on Saturday that the club's purchase of English midfielder Jordan Henderson was just the beginning of their summer transfer activity.

The Reds completed the signing of the 20-year-old midfielder from Sunderland on Thursday for a reported fee of £20 million (\$32.75m).

Henderson, capped once by England, became Liverpool's third major signing since Kenny Dalglish returned as coach, after strikers Andy Carroll and Luis Suarez arrived in the January transfer window.

"We wanted to make a signing early," Comolli told the Daily Mirror.

No offers for Aguero

Football

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid has received no offers for Argentine star Sergio 'Kun' Aguero, who announced last month he wants to leave the club, new coach Gregorio Manzano said Friday.

"Kun is an Atletico Madrid player. The club has been clear about everything that has been written and said, and it was said to me as well, that as of today there is no offer for Kun," Manzano said as he was presented to the club.

"I would like, with all my heart, to be able to coach him. I would be disappointed if Kun left."

In a statement on May 24, Aguero said he was ready to leave the club he has played for since moving from Independiente of Argentina in 2006.

"I said long ago that when I wanted to go, I would say so publicly. And the time has come. So I have kept my word and here I am," said the 22-year-old striker, who is married to Diego Maradona's daughter.

Spanish media has said a number of top clubs are interested.

The president of Italian club Juventus, Andrea Agnelli, and its sporting director Giuseppe Marotta were in talks with Aguero's agent last month, according to Italian news agency Ansa.

Real Madrid, Barcelona, Chelsea and Manchester City have also been mentioned.

In January, Aguero signed a contract extension that committed him to Atletico until 2014, with a buyout clause of 45 million euros.

Atletico on Wednesday announced they had signed Manzano to a one-year contract, replacing Quique Sanchez Flores who quit at the end of last season.

The 55-year-old has coached numerous Spanish clubs in a managerial career that began in 1983. He was last in charge of Atletico in the 2003-2004 season.

He returns to the club from Sevilla, which refused to offer him a new contract.

"Gregorio Manzano picks up where he left off, ahead of entry into Europe and return to a competition with which we have an outstanding debt," said club president Enrique Cerezo.



SERGIO 'KUN' AGUERO

Real appeal suspension

AFP, Paris

Real Madrid on Friday launched an appeal against the three-match ban handed to coach Jose Mourinho for his comments after the first leg of Real's Champions League semifinal defeat by Barcelona.

"Real Madrid CF have appealed against the disciplinary verdict handed down to Real Madrid CF coach Jose Mourinho by the UEFA Control and Disciplinary Body on 6 May, and relating to the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg between Real Madrid CF and FC Barcelona in Madrid on 27 April," read a statement on the UEFA website.

"The appeal follows the sending by UEFA of the reasoned decision on 6 June. The date of the hearing will be communicated in due course."

Mourinho has already completed one match of his ban, having watched the second leg of the Barcelona tie in a hotel room.

He was also ordered to pay a 50,000-euro (\$72,000 dollars) fine by UEFA.

European football's governing body gave a three-match European ban to Mourinho, with one match suspended, after he made allegations of favouritism towards Barcelona.

Barca won the first leg 2-0 at Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium before a 1-1 draw in the return leg took them into the final, where they beat Manchester United.

UEFA's Control and Disciplinary Body found that a string of comments from Mourinho alleging that Barcelona benefited from decisions in their favour at their rivals' expense had constituted "inappropriate statements".

Mourinho unleashed a tirade against Barca after seeing Portuguese defender Pepe sent off during his team's first-leg defeat on April 27.

"I don't know if it's the Unicef (Barca's sponsor) publicity or the friendship of (Spanish football federation chief Angel) Villar at UEFA, where he is vice-president," Mourinho said.

Grafite set for exodus

AFP, Berlin

Former Bundesliga top-scorer Grafite looks set to become the third star striker to leave the Bundesliga in recent weeks as reports in the German media on Saturday link him to Dubai side Al Ahli.

After Ruud van Nistelrooy quit Hamburg to join Spanish side Malaga at the end of May and Miroslav Klose signed for Italy's Lazio from Bayern Munich last week, Brazilian Grafite is now also poised to turn his back on Germany.

According to German daily Bild, Grafite is set to sign a three-year contract with the side from the United Arab Emirates worth around three million euros (\$4.3m) per year.

Having scored 28 goals in 25 league games, Grafite was the Bundesliga's top-scorer in the 2008-09 season when Wolfsburg won the German league title.

But having scored 11 goals in 30 games in 2009/10, then just nine in 23 last season, he has failed to capture the form he showed in his first season, which earned him a place in Brazil's World Cup squad in South Africa last year.

Bild report Wolfsburg coach Felix Magath authorised the early release of Grafite from his contract while on holiday in Puerto Rico.

The Brazilian's departure would mean Wolfsburg have now lost both of their star strikers.

Mexicans fail dope test

Football

AFP, Los Angeles

Five Mexican footballers who were suspended from the Gold Cup for doping after testing positive for the banned substance clenbuterol were flown to Los Angeles on Friday for more tests.

Mexico won 5-0 over Cuba on Thursday after opening last Sunday with a 5-0 rout of El Salvador, a result that could be protested in the wake of doping positives revealed Thursday from a May 21 test during Mexico's training camp.

CONCACAF football's governing body for North and Central America and the Caribbean had said Thursday that the victory over El Salvador would stand.

On Friday, the governing body said it wanted more information before deciding whether Mexico would be able to call up replacement players for the remainder of the Gold Cup, the regional championship.

"The committee has asked the Mexican federation to provide more details regarding the doping tests that discovered the banned substance clenbuterol in the urine samples of five players taken during a pre-Gold Cup training camp in Mexico in May," CONCACAF said in a statement on its website.

Goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa, defenders Francisco Rodriguez and Edgar Duenas and midfielders Antonio "Sinha" Naelson and Christian Bermudez tested positive for the banned muscle-building drug.

Naelson, a Brazil-born playmaker whose flew home to his father's funeral in Sao Paulo before joining Mexico for the Gold Cup, was angry about the positive test.

"Right now, I am angry. The sadness comes later," he told CONCACAF. "You are trying to get up after being knocked down and then you are hit and knocked down again. That is difficult and even more so knowing that you didn't do anything."

"I didn't commit a crime or make any mistakes. My career will not be tainted for something I didn't do. Everyone knows me. Fourteen years in Mexican soccer and I've never had a problem."

Ochoa, who has just finished his contract with Mexican side Club America, said on the CONCACAF website that he was shocked by the doping positive.

"It was surprising to all of us," Ochoa said. "We don't have anything to hide. We are here to face the issue. We have a clear conscious because we haven't done anything that is incorrect."

The defending champion Mexicans, who complete group play Sunday at Chicago against Costa Rica, are among 12 CONCACAF nations competing for the regional crown and a berth in the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup.

Mexican national team director Hector Inarritu brought the players to Los Angeles for further tests at the UCLA doping laboratory even as officials investigate the team's claims that eating tainted beef and chicken caused the positive tests.

"This is an accident," Inarritu said in a posting on the CONCACAF website.

"We will wait for all the results and see what the department of agriculture in Mexico finds in the meat that we used."

Mexican team doctor Jose Luis Serrano said players were not provided any supplements during the training camp and wondered about so many players testing positive for the same substance at the same time.

"There is no remote absolute possibility that this happened because of a supplement," Serrano said. "I think there is no literature that has five positive tests with only one substance in one event."

While US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) reports have shown clenbuterol is used to promote growth in livestock, the drug is illegal in Europe and the United States.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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