

Barca accept dilemma

AP, Madrid

Just like with Lionel Messi four years ago, Barcelona are faced with another Olympic dilemma.

Jordi Alba, a recently signed Barcelona defender who helped Spain win the European Championship on July 1, is heading to London to represent his country at the Olympics.

"It's completely clear from his side that he wants to be here," Spain Olympic coach Luis Milla said. "Barcelona have always been an exemplary club in these types of situations. I'm at ease because I know Jordi wants to be here."

Barcelona appear to be one of the few European clubs that will relent rather than risk the wrath of players who feel they are being kept out of the games.

Four years ago, Barcelona went to sport's highest court and won a decision that let clubs decide whether their players competed in the Olympics or not. Despite the favourable decision, it buckled and allowed Messi to play in Beijing, where he and his Argentina teammates won the gold medal.

Unlike Messi, who was 21 during the Beijing Olympics, Alba is one of Spain's three overage players. The 23-year-old defender will play alongside Juan Mata of Chelsea and Javi Martinez of Athletic Bilbao in London.

But while Spain's three overage exemptions are being allowed to compete by their clubs, players from

Gabon, Senegal, Morocco and New Zealand haven't been so lucky.

In 2008, FIFA President Sepp Blatter feared the ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport four years ago would prompt other clubs to withdraw their players from the Olympics.

But Liverpool have allowed Luis Suarez to play for Uruguay, which is also counting on Edinson Cavani of Lazio.

Mexico is on the other side after Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson kept Javier Hernandez from participation so he could rest up for the coming season. Arsenal duo Theo Walcott and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain weren't included in Britain's team after playing for England at the European Championship.

Luckily for Mexico and Britain, they have deep squads. Others aren't so lucky.

Gabon's medal hopes are slim, and French club Lorient haven't helped by denying defender Bruno Ecuele-Manga a spot on the Olympic team.

"I'd like to play at the Olympics. It's a competition you rarely get the chance to participate in. And you never know when a country like Gabon will qualify again," Ecuele-Manga has said. "There's some deception but I understand the decision. I'm still going to try and convince (Lorient coach Christian Gourcuff) to let me go."

Gabon coach Claude Albert Mbourounot called on his federation to "speed up negotiations" with

European clubs with key players like Pierre Emerick Aubameyang of Saint-Etienne also being denied a spot on the Olympic team.

Newcastle strikers Papiss Cisse and Demba Ba were left out of Senegal's squad after the two sides failed to reach common ground. Morocco defender Mehdi Benatia has been denied a chance to play by Italian club Udinese, while West Ham has refused to release defender Winston Reid to New Zealand.

So while some clubs risk the wrath of their talent, Barcelona prefer to comply.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola showed his trademark wisdom with one of his first decisions after taking charge in 2008, when he let Messi play at the Beijing Olympics. The Argentine forward won three Ballon d'Ors and helped Barcelona win 14 trophies over the four seasons since.

Guardiola's replacement, Tito Vilanova, and sport director Andoni Zubizarreta seem ready to relent over Alba this time around.

Zubizarreta initially said Barcelona had "to look out for its own interests," but spokesman Toni Freixa said this week that "if (Alba) or any other player wants to go the games, we should accept that."

Alba, who joined Barcelona from Valencia last month, started in all six of Spain's Euro 2012 matches. He even scored in the 4-0 victory over Italy in the final.

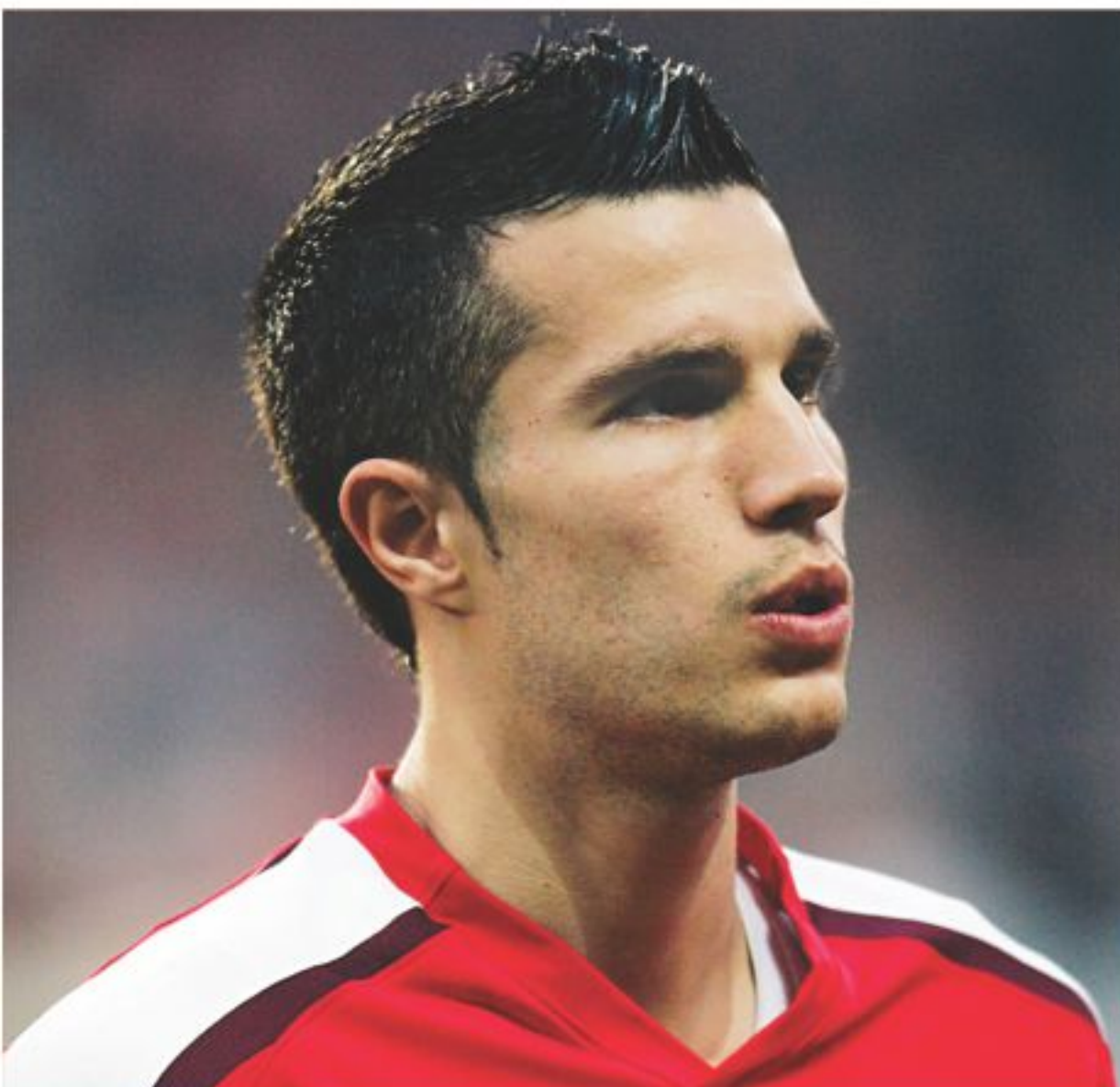
"I'm in favour of him playing," Spain coach Vicente del Bosque said.



Spain wingback Jordi Alba (R) challenges Mexico defender Diego Reyes during their international friendly before the London Olympics at the Nuevo Stadium on Wednesday. Spain won the match 1-0.

PHOTO: AFP

Van Persie wants out



Football

MAIL ONLINE

Manchester United and Manchester City have made £15million bids for wantaway Arsenal striker Robin van Persie, who has refused to join his team-mates on the pre-season tour of the Far East.

The Premier League giants have been joined in the race for the Dutchman's signature by Juventus who have also made an official approach.

Arsenal are holding out for at least £20m for Van Persie, whose contract expires next summer.

Manager Arsene Wenger wants a quick resolution to the Van Persie saga so he can either prepare for the new season with the Dutchman in his plans or have enough time to find a replacement.

Arsenal had been adamant their captain will make the trip to Malaysia on Saturday, but he will now remain behind, which surely signals the beginning of the end of his Gunners career.

Arsenal fly to Kuala Lumpur on Saturday for a three-match tour. Arsenal play City at the Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing next Friday.

Sportsmail understands Wenger and his scouting team have spoken at depth about a move for Spain forward Fernando Llorente should their talisman leave.

The 27-year-old - who scored 28 goals for Bilbao last season - has a £28million release clause written into his contract.

And Wenger would use the £20m-plus from Van Persie's sale in his attempt to lure the striker.

At 6ft 5ins, Wenger believes Llorente has the physical attributes and ability on the ball to deal with the rigours of English football.

But whether Bilbao would be willing to negotiate a deal below his hefty release clause remains unclear.

In addition to Llorente, Fiorentina Stevan Jovetic and Borussia Dortmund's Robert Lewandowski have also been discussed as possible replacements for Van Persie.

No further action

AFP, London



QPR midfielder Joey Barton discovered on Thursday that he will not face further action after being arrested for affray last month.

Barton was involved in a fight with two men outside a Liverpool nightclub in the early hours of June 4.

The 29-year-old was reportedly on a night out with his girlfriend when the incident took place.

After being arrested, the Liverpool-born midfielder tweeted: "I got sucker punched in the back of the head. Not injured as reported just a small bruise on rear of head/ear."

A picture of the incident, apparently showing a shirtless Barton being held back by police and a woman, was also circulated on Twitter.

However, a police spokesman said: "Merseyside Police can confirm that four men arrested in connection with an altercation in Eberle Street, Liverpool city centre on June 4 will face no further police action."

"The four -- two 21-year-olds from Liverpool, a 29-year-old from Widnes, Cheshire, and a 20-year-old from Liverpool -- had been arrested on suspicion of affray, and subsequently released on police bail."

"All four have now been notified by the police that, following advice from the Crown Prosecution Service, they will not face any further action."

In 2008, Barton was given a six-month jail term after admitting assault and affray during an incident which also took place in Liverpool.

In May, he was given a 12-match ban by the Football Association and fined £75,000 (\$118,000) for violent conduct during QPR's defeat at Manchester City on the final day of

the Premier League season.

As a result, he was stripped of the club captaincy and faces an uncertain future at QPR, amid reports that coach Mark Hughes is willing to loan him out to a Championship team.

'Sing anthem or don't play'

AFP, Berlin

The former head of the German football federation Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder said in an interview published on Friday that national team players should sing the national anthem or risk not being picked.

"The coach (Joachim Loew) has to make singing the national anthem compulsory," he was quoted as saying in an interview with the Bild daily. "He (Loew) has always said that he can't force them to. But I think it's possible."

"He should say to a player that he has to sing otherwise he will not be picked."

The former DFB president cited the Euro 2012 semi-final in Warsaw as an example, noting that "the Italians (who won 2-1) sang with gusto and played with the same passion for their country. And us? It was almost shameful".

Mayer-Vorfelder, 79, said he did not understand the argument of players like Sami Khedira, who is of Tunisian origin, that he did not sing out of respect for his roots.

"For me, that's not a reason to stay silent. You can't play for Germany and benefit from it and yet at the same time act as if you're only half-German," he told the newspaper.

Germany are due to play a friendly match against Argentina in Frankfurt on August 15.

'Truth has prevailed'

Football

AFP, Nicosia

Mohamed Bin Hammam exclusively told AFP that "the truth has been established" after the life-long ban handed to him by FIFA was lifted by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Thursday.

Bin Hammam was banned from football for life in July last year after being accused of trying to buy votes during the FIFA presidential election, but the CAS ruled that the allegations had not been proven.

"The truth has been established after this long procedure and my conscience is clear," he told AFP in a telephone interview. "It's not revenge for me (against FIFA), it's about showing equanimity from my point of view (towards FIFA)."

Bin Hammam was the president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) when he was banned from the sport by FIFA's Ethics Committee following an investigation that took place behind closed doors at the organisation's Zurich headquarters.

"I always said that I was innocent during the process," added Bin Hammam.

"I was sure that when the affair went before an independent body, the truth would come out, and that's what happened."

"I'm very happy because I've been able to prove that all the allegations against me were false and were intended to tarnish my reputation."

Bin Hammam was accused of trying to purchase votes by distributing envelopes containing \$40,000 in cash to delegates during a Caribbean Football Union (CFU) meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in May 2011.

His subsequent withdrawal from the presidential election saw Sepp Blatter re-elected unopposed for a fourth consecutive term at the head of world football's governing body.

"I'm even more happy because my colleagues from CONCACAF, who were at my side, see their honour restored after their names were dragged through the mud due to these unfounded accusations," Bin Hammam said.

SPORTS POLL

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First ODI

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STAR Cricket

England v South Africa

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Live from 4:00pm

TEN Action

Tour de France

Stage 19



Premier Div Hockey

S Bima v Azad SC

Time: 2:30pm

Sonali Bank v Ajax AC

Time: 4:15pm

Venue: Maulana Bhasani



সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড (এসজিএফএল)-এর প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক

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জৈন্তাপুর উপজেলার শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে বৃত্তি বিতরণ করছেন সিলেট-৪ আসনের মাননীয় সংসদ সদস্য জনাব ইমরান আহমদ



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