

Scandalous scores

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria's top football authority has suspended four teams who reported "mind-boggling" results from their play-offs matches, describing the scores of 79-0 and 67-0 as "scandalous" tallies that must be probed.

Plateau United Feeders and Police Machine FC both needed convincing wins to earn promotions to the Nigeria Nationwide League, but officials immediately rejected the eye-popping results.

In a statement, the country's Football Federation described the scores as "a mind-boggling show of shame never previously witnessed in Nigeria."

"Plateau United Feeders somehow manufactured a 79-0 victory over Akurba FC while Police Machine FC demolished Babayaro FC 67-0."

Federation spokesman Ademola Olajire told AFP a deal was certainly struck among the sides, but the details, including whether any money changed hands, are not yet known.

"We are setting up an investigation. We don't know exactly what happened. We just feel scandalised," he said.

"The four teams involved are suspended immediately and indefinitely," federation chairman Mike Emeh said in a statement.

Everyone involved in the Monday matches, including officials and staff at the pitch in northern Bauchi state, could face sanctions, the federation said.

Chelsea sign Schwarzer

REUTERS, London

Premier League Chelsea have signed Australia goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer on a free transfer until the end of next year's World Cup in Brazil.

Schwarzer, 40, has played more than 15 years in England with Bradford City, Middlesbrough and Fulham. Last season he became the first overseas player to complete 500 Premier League appearances.

"It's a phenomenal club," Schwarzer told the Chelsea website (www.chelseafc.com) on Tuesday. "It's one of the biggest and best clubs in the world and it's an honour to sign for Chelsea. I didn't take much convincing to come here."

Falcao aims high

AFP, Monaco



Monaco's newly-acquired Colombian striker Radamel Falcao said Tuesday that he wanted to steer the ambitious newly-promoted French Ligue 1 side "to the top of European football".

Falcao, 27, joined the principality outfit from Spanish side Atletico Madrid at the end of May for a French record 60 million euros (\$77.2 million), as Monaco signalled their intent following the club's return to the top-flight.

"I'm delighted to be part of this project, we want to bring Monaco to the top of European football," said Falcao as he was presented to the media on Tuesday.

"We have great players, great desire and lots of ambition. We want to build a strong and close-knit team with the desire to excel and win lots of trophies," added the Colombian.

Monaco sporting director Vadim Vasilyev admitted the acquisition of one of the game's top strikers was a real coup

for the club.

"We had a lot of competition for the signature of Radamel Falcao. That's normal and it's fantastic that he chose to join Monaco."

"We hope to build a team around Falcao. He represents everything we like, he's a great person and a great player," concluded Vasilyev.

Falcao's international teammate James Rodriguez and Portuguese midfielder Joao Moutinho were also unveiled to the press following their arrivals from Porto.

"I wanted to discover a different league. Ligue 1 is evolving right now and has quite a few good teams such as Paris, Marseille, Lyon and now Monaco," said the 26-year-old Moutinho.

"The medium-term project of qualifying for the Champions League from this season onwards and the presence of great players, all that appealed to me. We want to show ourselves in Europe," he added.

Monaco also announced Tuesday that they would appeal their two-point deduction for next season, according to a club source.

Barca chief dodges press

INTERNET, Undated

Barcelona president Sandro Rosell did not feel like answering questions from the cameras and reporters that swarmed him at the assembly of the Spanish football federation. And just one day after selling David Villa to Atletico Madrid for €5 million (at most), that was understandable.

So, to avoid their microphones and shouting and mentions of Jordi Alba, Rosell did a bit of quick thinking and went into the women's bathroom to get away from them. The move worked like a charm, but it probably also got his name added to a list somewhere.



MARTINS'S unique dining room chairs

INTERNET, Undated

Obafemi Martins is settling in nicely with six goals in 11 appearances during his first season with Seattle and appears he's making himself at home off the pitch as well with his unique set of gold, shirt-upholstered dining room chairs.

Having played for eight clubs

(Reggina, Inter, Newcastle, Wolfsburg, Rubin Kazan, Birmingham City, Levante, Seattle, plus Nigeria) over his 13-year career, Martins can host a pretty large dinner party using a different shirt for each chair. And since his surname is prominently featured on the back of every single one, he can also play a delightful game of musical Martins.



Leonardo resigns

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain's turbulent close-season took another twist on Wednesday with the club announcing that sporting director Leonardo had resigned.

"The club management regrets this decision, but respects it," a club statement said, adding that the resignation would take effect from September 2.

"The club would like to take the opportunity to thank him for the remarkable work he put in to build in Paris a team that is now in the forefront of European football and wishes him every future success in his brilliant career."

Leonardo last week was banned for the entire new season for pushing a referee after PSG's 1-1 draw against Valenciennes on May 5.

The Brazilian was originally banned

for nine months, but after he appealed against the decision, French football authorities increased the sanction to 13 months.

It means more instability and turmoil in a difficult off-season for the big-spending French champions who have already seen coach Carlo Ancelotti leave for Real Madrid.

The Leonardo-Ancelotti partnership was instrumental in attracting some of the biggest names in football to the Parc des Princes and the departure of the pair will do little to reassure the likes of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva, both captured from AC Milan a year ago, that their long-term future lies in the French capital.

Ancelotti and Leonardo were crucial in convincing Italian-based players to cross the Alps, by using their extensive contacts in Serie A.

Italian Ancelotti had spent eight years coaching AC Milan following spells at Parma and Juventus, as well as remaining in Italy throughout his entire playing career, while Leonardo had a 13-year relationship with the Rossoneri as a player, scout, official and finally a year as coach.

Their contacts helped the French club raid Italy for the likes of goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu, defensive midfielder Marco Verratti, attacking midfielder Javier Pastore and forward Ezequiel Lavezzi as well as the two big-money star names from Milan.

With both now gone and Frenchman Laurent Blanc the new coach almost by default as PSG allegedly failed to secure the services of a host of preferred top names, the feeling of instability is palpable, not helped by the lack of a sporting director.

USA crush Belize

RESULTS

United States 6 (Wondolowski 12, 37, 40, Holden 58, Orozco 72, Donovan 76-pen) **Belize 1** (Gaynair 42)
Costa Rica 3 (Barrantes 51, 76, Arrieta 70) **Cuba 0**

REUTERS, Undated

Striker Chris Wondolowski scored a first half hat-trick as the United States crushed Belize 6-1 in their opening CONCACAF Gold Cup Group C game in Portland on Tuesday.

Belize, whose mostly amateur and semi-professional squad are playing in their first Gold Cup tournament, fell behind after 12 minutes when Wondolowski fired home from close range after Joe Corona headed down a Jose Torres cross.



Wondolowski, who produced the perfect riposte to having his name misspelled on his shirt, then added a second in the 37th minute with a diving header from an excellent Kyle Beckerman cross.

Belize gained some reward for their efforts when they pulled a goal back after Ian Gaynair was left unattended to head in a cross from Elroy Smith in the 40th minute.

The joy was short-lived, however, and the hosts restored their two-goal advantage within a minute via another diving header from Wondolowski.

After the break, goals from substitute Stuart Holden, defender Michael Orozco and a Landon Donovan penalty completed the rout for Juergen Klinsmann's team, who are looking for their fifth Gold Cup title.

Benfica snap up Lopez

AFP, Lisbon

Benfica have signed highly-rated Argentine centre-back Lisandro Lopez from Arsenal de Sarandi on a five-year contract, the Portuguese giants said Wednesday.

The 23-year-old -- not to be confused with his namesake, the Argentine striker at Lyon -- cost Benfica five million euros (\$6.4 million), according to sports newspaper A Bola.

Benfica have inserted a 35 million euros buy-out clause in the Argentine international's contract.

Urine thrown at Cavendish

AFP, Mont-Saint-Michel



British cycling star Mark Cavendish had urine thrown at him by a spectator during the 11th stage of the Tour de France on Wednesday, his team have

confirmed.

The incident happened during the 33-kilometre individual time-trial from Avranches to Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy, a day after Cavendish was blamed for a collision that sent Argos rider Tom Veelers crashing to the ground in Saint-Malo.

"Probably some spectators were not very pleased with what happened yesterday and they yelled to him and then one other idiot threw urine at him," Omega Pharma team

CEO Patrick Lefevere told AFP.

"Mark is not upset, but he is really disappointed because he thinks he didn't deserve this."

Lefevere was unable to confirm when exactly the incident had occurred, but sought to play down its importance as Cavendish's teammate Tony Martin, the world time-trial champion, went for the stage win.

"The cycling public is known for being very fair, we have no hooligans, but there are thousands and thousands of people on the roads and not everybody is a gentleman," the Belgian added.

Cavendish escaped without punishment following Tuesday's clash with Veelers, which happened during a sprint for the line won by German rider Marcel Kittel.

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