

Mexico, Panama in last 8

REUTERS, Undated

Mexico booked their spot in the quarter-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup on Sunday with a 3-1 victory over Martinique, while Panama also advanced from Group A after a goalless draw with Canada.

Mexico, who were stunned by Panama in the group opener but got their bid for a third consecutive Gold Cup title back on track by winning their remaining games, went ahead in the first half through Marco Fabian and Luis Montes before Kevin Parnsemain's penalty made it 2-1.

Martinique had opportunities to equalize in the second half but could not make the breakthrough, and Miguel Ponce scored from close range in the 90th minute to make the game safe for the Mexicans. In the earlier Group A match, Panama settled for a 0-0 draw with Canada to top the group on seven points.

Ortega's teary farewell

INTERNET, Undated

Former Argentina international and River Plate legend Ariel Ortega was joined by some of South American football's finest names for the final match of his career but the diminutive midfielder's 12-year-old son, Tomas, stole the headlines after causing his dad to cry.

The 39-year-old brought the curtain down on his professional career -- which started in 1991 and brought him seven league and cup trophies during three spells at the club -- on Saturday with a match between River Plate XI and an 'Ortega XI'.

Players who took to the field for their former teammate and compatriot included Romario, Juan Sebastian Veron, Javier Saviola, Roberto Ayala and Enzo Francescoli but it was Ortega's son who put the famous names in the shade.

Sixty-thousand fans packed into El Monumental to witness the match and were treated to a rare sight when Ortega picked out his son, Tomas, inside the area and he calmly placed the ball into the net.

The achievement was all too much for Ortega, who burst into tears as he celebrated with his son.

Capello happy with job

AFP, Moscow

Russia coach Fabio Capello dismissed rumours about his possible resignation from the post, saying he was happy to work in Russia, Soviet Sport daily reported Monday.

"When a coach achieves some success in his profession it's natural that serious clubs show their interest in his services," the newspaper quoted the 67-year-old coach as saying.

"However, I can say that I love Russia and I'm completely happy to work here."

Capello stressed the importance of the upcoming 2014 World Cup qualifier with Northern Ireland, saying that the success in this match may become a key factor for Russia's success in the qualifying campaign.

"Definitely it will be one of the most important games in this qualifying cycle," the coach said of the match, due to be played on August 14.

"And the positive result in Belfast will be vital for our overall success. But even after it we should never lose concentration and relax."

MU table £25m for Fabregas

AFP, London



Manchester United have made a £25 million (\$37.7 million, 28.9-million-euro) offer for Barcelona midfielder Cesc Fabregas, reports in the British media suggested on Monday.

Sky Sports News television, the BBC and the domestic Press Association news agency all said that the English Premier League champions were interested in signing the Spanish international.

The Press Association said that an offer had been submitted for the player, who came through Barcelona's youth academy before joining Arsenal as a 16-year-old in 2003.

Sky Sports News, however, said a potential stumbling block could be a clause in Fabregas' contract that Arsenal have first refusal should he decide to leave the Camp Nou.

Barcelona said they had no comment to make when contacted by AFP.

If completed the Fabregas move would represent new manager David Moyes' first major signing since the former Everton boss succeeded Alex Ferguson during the close season.

United, who are currently on a pre-season tour of Asia, have the cash to allow Moyes to chase "a stellar player" before the start of the upcoming season, the club's chief executive Ed Woodward was quoted as telling British media on Sunday.

According to Woodward, the Old Trafford club are "absolutely" able to compete for players in the £60 million to £70million bracket.

News of a potential offer for Fabregas emerged a day after confirmation that Barcelona had sold Spain Under-21 captain Thiago Alcantara to European champions Bayern Munich.

Fabregas graduated to become the Gunners' captain and one of their most influential players before returning to Barca in a £25.4 million, five-year deal in August 2011.

Since then he has helped the Catalan giants claim the Copa del Rey in 2011-2012 and La Liga in 2012-13.



US sprinter Tyson Gay (L) is seen competing with Jamaica's Asafa Powell (R) in the men's 100m final at the Aviva British Grand Prix in July 2010. Both athletes -- two of the four fastest men in history -- on Sunday confirmed separately that they had failed a dope test.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

Doping hits athletics again

Top brass including Gay, Powell fail test

AFP, Paris



Less than a month away from the World Championships in Moscow, sprinting has succumbed once again to the shame of doping as American Tyson Gay and Jamaican Asafa Powell were caught out.

The 30-year-old Gay insisted he made a mistake in erroneously trusting someone he shouldn't have.

Powell confirmed he too had failed a dope test, one of five Jamaicans reportedly to have done so at their country's national trials.

The 2007 world champion Gay would have gone into the worlds not as favourite, but as close a fancied challenger to Usain Bolt as anyone could be.

He had posted the fastest 100m time of the year with 9.75sec, almost two tenths quicker than Bolt's best effort in 2013.

Alongside Yohan Blake, who has been suffering with a thigh injury this season, Gay is the second fastest man of all time with his 9.69sec managed in Shanghai in 2009 bettered only by Bolt himself.

Powell had not qualified for the worlds but had the third fastest 100m time this year and is the fourth fastest man in history, behind Bolt, Gay and Blake.

Gay was majestic in cruising to a 100m and 200m double at the American World Championship trials in June.

Yet following fast on the heels of Jamaica's double Olympic 200m champion Veronica Campbell-Brown's own failed dope test, this latest news is another crushing blow to the credibility of sprinting.

There was yet more bad news to come from the Caribbean.

Powell and Sherone Simpson, the 2008 Olympic women's 100m runner-up, and member of the sprint relay gold-medal winning team in 2004, were immediately identified.

"I want to be clear that I have never knowingly or wilfully taken any supplements or substances that break any rules. I am not now nor have I ever been a cheat," insisted Powell.

With a host of eastern European athletes failing tests this year, including Bulgaria's European indoor 60m champion Tezdzhian Naimova, Russian European 800m winner

Yelena Arzhakova and Russian Olympic discus silver medalist Daria Pishchalnikova, athletics is reeling.

Not that athletics, and in particular sprinting, have ever been strangers to the scourge of drug use.

The impact of Gay's doping case will be wider ranging, though, not least because one of the favourites to challenge Bolt in his absence will be his US compatriot Justin Gatlin, who has already served two drug suspensions during his career.

The credibility of the sprint disciplines in track and field will now be hanging by an even thinner thread than ever before.

Reuters adds from Frankfurt, Adidas AG has suspended its contract with Gay after the former double world sprint champion failed an out-of-competition dope test, the German sportswear company said on Monday.

German company Puma SE, which sponsors Jamaican athletics through a contract with the national association there, declined to comment because it does not have individual contracts with any of the athletes involved.

City eyeing new striker

REUTERS, Pretoria

Manchester City hope to have a new striker in place by the end of this month, manager Manuel Pellegrini said on Sunday after his side lost 2-0 to South Africa's SuperSport United in his first match in charge.

Last season's Premier League runners-up want a replacement for Argentina forward Carlos Tevez who has joined Juventus and their performance in Pretoria in the first of two matches in South Africa highlighted the need for attacking reinforcements.

"We are aware that we need two or three more players," Chilean Pellegrini told a news conference after the defeat in the friendly at Loftus Versfeld.

"It's important to have a very good squad. I said before we came to South Africa that we need two players for each position and that's what we are looking for and I'm sure we will get them.

"It's difficult to say exactly which day but before the end of the month we will have a new attacker."

City, who finished 11 points behind Premier League champions Manchester United last term, have already bolstered their squad with the signings of Brazil midfielder Fernandinho and Spain winger Jesus Navas but they still have more shopping to do.

"We are working hard on new acquisitions before the start of the new season but we are not in an immediate hurry to bring them on board," said Pellegrini, who joined the club last month after the sacking of Roberto Mancini.

Sunday's match came less than a week after City's players reported back from their summer holidays with Pellegrini fielding two different sides in each half. The English club play a second game in South Africa on Thursday, against AmaZulu in Durban.

Bayern snap up Thiago

REUTERS, Madrid



European champions Bayern Munich have strengthened their midfield by agreeing to buy sought-after Spain Under-21 international Thiago Alcantara from Barcelona for a fee of 25 million euros (\$32.6 million).

Thiago, 22, who will join up again with former Barca coach Pep Guardiola in Munich, will have a medical in the next few days before signing a four-year contract, Bayern said on their website on Sunday.

Barca also confirmed the deal, which it said included a friendly between the two clubs sometime in the next four years.

Bayern said 5 million euros of the transfer fee would come partly from income from the match and partly from Thiago agreeing to forego some wages.

"Thiago Alcantara was the great wish of our new coach Pep Guardiola," Bayern chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said.

"We are delighted that we have been able to seal this great transfer," added the former Bayern and Germany player.

"He is a fantastic player with great promise who will strengthen FC Bayern."

Match-fixing lessons on YouTube

AFP, Singapore

A Lebanese football referee jailed for accepting sex in exchange for agreeing to rig matches testified Monday that a Singaporean businessman used YouTube to show him how to fix a game.

Ali Sabbagh, speaking on the first day of the trial of Eric Ding Si Yang, said the businessman sent him "20 to 30" YouTube links to "teach me how to make wrong decisions".

"The videos had too many decisions where the decision made by the referee is not the right decision," he said.

Ding is accused of providing Sabbagh, 34, and two other Lebanese officials with women who gave them free sexual services ahead of a match in Singapore in April in which they were supposed to officiate.

Sabbagh and the other two officials were all pulled out and placed under investigation before the match. He was found guilty in June and sentenced to six months in jail over the scandal.

Assistant referees Ali Eid and Abdallah Taleb were also convicted and have since been released and deported.

Sabbagh said that in a series of email exchanges late last year, Ding told him that the best way to rig a match was to award penalties.

Sabbagh quoted Ding as saying that "nobody will stop you, nobody will do anything... When the corner comes, just blow and say pushing and pulling... If there is anything in the penalty area, you can blow your whistle".

Sabbagh repeatedly referred to Ding as "James", saying the Singaporean communicated with him through the email address jameszen7@gmail.com.

He said Ding, currently out on bail, gave him assurances that he would not be asked to rig matches that would affect his career within the Asian Football Confederation.



PHOTO: AFP

Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani leaves a hospital in Paris after passing a medical yesterday.

Cavani in Paris

AFP, Paris



Edinson Cavani was in Paris on Monday to finalise his transfer to Paris Saint-Germain, with sources close to the deal saying his 64-million-euro (\$84 million) price tag would break the French record.

The 26-year-old Napoli forward, who was Serie A top scorer last season with 29 goals, landed in Paris on Monday morning before heading to a top city hotel.

Late morning, outgoing PSG sporting director Leonardo was seen leaving the luxury hotel with an advisor of the Uruguay player, who is nicknamed "The Matador".

Cavani will have to pass a medical before putting pen to paper, with a five-year deal expected, according to PSG sources.

Should the South American sign a contract with the French champions, he will line up alongside his former Napoli team-mate Ezequiel Lavezzi, of Argentina.

The current French Ligue 1 transfer record was set earlier this year, when Colombia forward Radamel Falcao signed for Monaco from Atletico Madrid for a figure estimated at nearly 60 million euros.

PSG meanwhile sought to silence rumours that have been flying in the Catalan sporting press since last week about a possible departure of the Brazil central defender Thiago Silva to Barcelona.

Silva's agent, Paulo Tonietto, was quoted as saying on PSG's official website: "Thiago is a PSG player. He has a contract and he will respect it."

"The rumours are the same as the ones last year but Thiago Silva is a PSG player and he'll see out his contract with his club."

Arsenal a la Brazil

AFP, Jakarta



Arsenal donned their new, Brazil-style away kit and played like five-time world champions as they blew away the Indonesia Dream Team 7-0 at the start of their Asian tour on Sunday.

Unveiling their yellow shirts and blue shorts in Jakarta, academy whizz-kids Chuba Akpom and Kristoffer Olsson scored on their first-team debuts as Arsenal poured on six goals after half-time.

England striker Theo Walcott got the opener on 19 minutes, Olivier Giroud grabbed a rapid-fire double and Lukas Podolski and fringe midfielder Thomas Eisfeld both scored late on.

Fittingly for the occasion, it was exhibition stuff and eclipsed English champions Manchester United, who lost 1-0 to the Singha All-Star XI in Bangkok in their first game under new boss David Moyes on Saturday.

The yellow-shirted visitors laid siege to the Dream Team goal from the start and academy striker Akpom, 17, passed up two good chances in the early minutes.

Akpom was only denied by some last-ditch defending when Aaron Ramsey's dangerous ball to the far post was nodded back into the six-yard box by Walcott, playing on the right of attack.

The opener never looked far away and

Walcott duly slotted it from the edge of the box on 19 minutes after neat skills from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, in a strike which was warmly applauded by Wenger.

Akpom was left frustrated when Oxlade-Chamberlain took on and missed a difficult shot into an empty net rather than pass to his team-mate for what would have been the simplest of debut goals.

The Dream Team were largely chasing shadows but they escaped to half-time without further damage -- before the floodgates opened as Wenger threw on first-team regulars including Podolski, Giroud and Tomas Rosicky.

Gnabry laid on Akpom's goal, a tap-in, after another marauding run down the left flank. Giroud also got off the mark from close range, on 70 minutes, before turning and blasting his second just three minutes later.

The inexperienced Dream Team were given some unsporting boos by the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium crowd as they ran out of legs against the Premier League outfit.

And Arsenal finished with a flourish of three goals inside the last seven minutes, starting with Podolski who received the ball from Tomas Rosicky and drilled home a left-footed shot in the 83rd.

Two minutes later, Swedish 18-year-old Olsson's goal also came courtesy of Rosicky and Eisfeld then smashed in the final strike off the underside of the bar to bring up Arsenal's seventh.