

BTV
SAFF Championship
Bangladesh v Pakistan
Live from 3:45pm
TEN Sports
US Open
Men's Qtrs

Live from 9:00pm
TEN Cricket
Zimbabwe v Pakistan
First Test, Day 3
Live from 2:00pm

HOCKEY DEBACLE

'Players lacked understanding'

SPORTS REPORTER

Lack of understanding among the players was the main reason behind the failure of the Bangladesh national hockey team in the just-concluded AHF 9th Asia Cup and team manager Abdur Rashid Sikdar is set to mention it in his official report to the Bangladesh Hockey Federation.

With a target of fifth or sixth finish, Bangladesh had to be content with a seventh position and the tactics of Pakistani coach Naveed Alam as well as the roles of players, who have been demanding the inter-club players' transfer over the last two months, came into question following four straight defeats including a shock 2-4 reversal at the hands of debutants Oman.

But Rashid Sikdar ruled out any errors on the coaches or players' part.

"There was a lack of understanding in the team and we could not perform as a team and that was the reason behind the failure," said the manager. "There was no problem with the tactics of the coaches who are certified by the international hockey federation and there was no lack of effort from the players also."

There had hardly been any reflection of the performance that Bangladesh put up in the World Hockey League Round-2 in the four matches of the Asia Cup before posting their biggest victory, 11-3, over Chinese Taipei to finish seventh among eight teams.

"We wanted to give opportunity to all the players till the match against Japan. Afterwards, we dropped a couple of senior players from the starting eleven in the match against Chinese Taipei and it was a message to other players and it finally worked," informed Rashid Sikdar.

Afghanistan and Maldives in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Maldives and Afghanistan confirmed their semifinal berths from Group B of the SAFF Championship after notching up their second successive victories in Kathmandu yesterday.

Captain Ali Ashfaq continued his dominance in the regional football extravaganza as the 27-year-old striker followed up on his first match double hat-trick with four goals in the second that powered Maldives to a convincing 8-2 win over minnows Bhutan.

Apart from Ashfaq, Ali Fashir and Ali Umair netted two goals each to book the last four seats at the Dasarath Stadium.

At the Halchowk Stadium, Afghanistan came from behind to beat Sri Lanka 3-1 to move into the knockout stage.

Mohammad Fazal put Sri Lanka ahead in the first half before Afghanistan bounced back strongly in the second half with Mohammad Rafi, Haroon Fakhruddin and Hasmatullah scoring one goal each.

Women coaches' course begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation is all set to hold the first-ever coaching course for women which gets underway today at the BFF House.

FIFA instructor Constance Selby will conduct the "FIFA Women's Football Coaching Course" in which some 24 women from across the country will be taking part for six days, said a BFF press release yesterday.



PHOTO: REUTERS
Wales winger Gareth Bale do warm-up exercises during training in Cardiff on Tuesday. Wales play Macedonia in a 2014 World Cup qualifying match on Friday

'Bale must earn place' Moyes backs Fellaini

AGENCIES, London



Gareth Bale will not be guaranteed to start every game at Real Madrid despite his enormous price tag, the Spanish club's assistant coach Paul Clement warned on Wednesday.

The Welshman was officially presented as a Madrid player on Monday, after signing from Tottenham Hotspur on a six-year contract for a fee of around £80 million (\$124 million, 94 million euros).

As for the price, that was nothing to do with him: "The transfer is between Tottenham and Real Madrid," Bale said. "I'd have come here for a penny."

However, Clement says that Bale must prove his worth if he is to hold down a place in manager Carlo Ancelotti's team.

"There's a lot of competition for places -- no-one will be guaranteed anything," Clement told BBC Sport.

"Coach Carlo Ancelotti has a clear idea how to use him, but things can change."

Ancelotti must also decide how to

accommodate Bale in his team.

The 24-year-old habitually played on the left for Spurs, occasionally being deployed in the centre, but the left flank at Madrid is Ronaldo's established domain.

"Carlo is flexible enough to use Gareth and other players in different capacities," said Clement, who previously worked alongside Ancelotti at Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain.

"At Southampton, Bale played at left-back, which he also did at Spurs, where he became a more left-sided player. He recently became more central. He's got that versatility."

"It'll be interesting to see how players fit in together. We'll be trying to find their best position and what's best for the team as quickly as possible."

"Gareth has the goalscoring talent and ability to set up goals for others."

Bale, who is currently on international duty with Wales, is expected to make his Madrid debut in the Liga game against Villarreal on September 14.

Bale has no chance of playing a full 90 minutes in either of Wales's

upcoming World Cup qualifiers, his national team manager Chris Coleman said on Tuesday.

"He is not carrying an injury as such, he is not fit in terms of we could consider him for 90 minutes," Coleman said on Sky Sports News.

"He's going to train with us this afternoon. He's obviously had a lot going on physically and mentally but he's with us, that's the main thing."

"Is he going to start on Friday? I think that's a big question, abig doubt." Wales are fourth in Group A and have admitted they have no chance of qualifying for next year's World Cup in Brazil. Belgium lead the group on 19 points with Croatia on 16, Serbia on seven and Wales on six.

Coleman is all too aware that Real Madrid would not be pleased if Bale were to pick up an injury on international duty.

"They are not our players, we borrow them, and we have to hand them back in at least the same state as what they arrived otherwise the relationship you try to build with clubs comes crashing down and that's no good," he said.

AFP, London



Manchester United manager David Moyes vowed on Tuesday that Marouane Fellaini will prove a success at the club after his transfer deadline-day switch from Everton.

Moyes, who signed Fellaini during his time as Everton manager, had met with disappointment at every turn in the transfer window until he completed a £27.5 million (\$42.7 million, 32.4 million euros) deal for the Belgian midfielder shortly before the deadline passed.

The fee was £4 million more than United would have had to pay had they triggered a clause in Fellaini's contract that expired at the end of July and made him the club's fourth most expensive acquisition after Dimitar Berbatov, Rio Ferdinand and Wayne Rooney.

However, having spent four years working with Fellaini at Everton, Moyes is confident he will improve his squad.

"Marouane is not someone you want to be playing against," Moyes told United's in-house television channel, MUTV.

Isco misses training

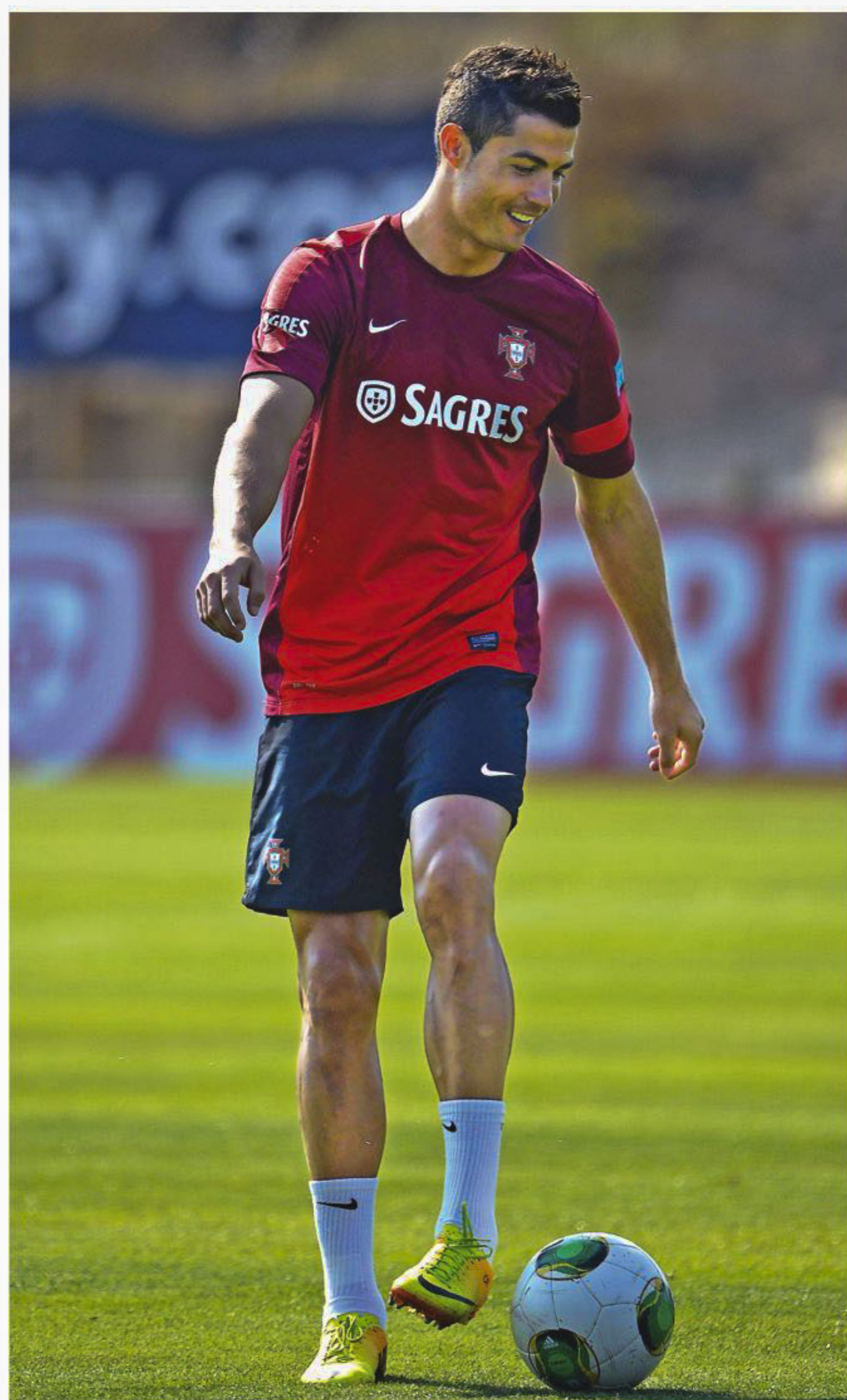
REUTERS, Madrid

Spain playmaker Isco hurt an ankle in Tuesday's training session and will have tests to determine whether he can play in Friday's World Cup qualifier against Finland in Helsinki, the Spanish soccer federation (RFEF) said on Wednesday.

The Real Madrid midfielder, who has been in fine form for his club in recent weeks, did not train with the world and European champions on Wednesday before they fly to the Finnish capital, the RFEF said on the national team's website (www.sefutbol.com).

"Tests will be conducted at the CEMTRO clinic (in Madrid) to assess the extent of the problem," they added.

Spain top qualification Group I by a point from France after five of eight matches.



Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo controls the ball during a training session at Praia del Rey yesterday ahead of their 2014 World Cup qualifier against Northern Ireland on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ozil wanted to stay

AFP, Berlin



New Arsenal signing Mesut Ozil admits that he had no intention of leaving Real Madrid until realising that he risked being left on the sidelines in the Spanish capital.

Ozil saw Gareth Bale complete his transfer from Tottenham Hotspur to the Santiago Bernabeu earlier on Monday before agreeing to move to the Emirates Stadium for a reported £42.4 million (\$66 million, 50 million euros).

And the Germany playmaker later said in an interview with the German Football Association's official website, www.dfb.de that he agreed to the move after it became clear that he no longer

figured in the plans of Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"At that moment (a few days ago), I was certain that I would stay at Real Madrid, but afterwards I realised that the coach and the board no longer had confidence in me," he said.

"I am a player who needs that confidence and the possibility came up to go to Arsenal, which is why I chose to go there."

Now he is looking forward to linking up with international colleagues such as Per Mertesacker and Lukas Podolski in north London, as well as working for Arsenal's German-speaking manager Arsene Wenger.

Meanwhile, Mesut Ozil's move to Arsenal is good for the German national side, coach Joachim Loew

believes, but he is bemused by Real Madrid's decision to sell their midfielder star.

Loew said he was happy to see Ozil move to the Gunners to work under coach Arsene Wenger, but bemused as to why Real let him go.

"The transfer is good for the national team, he will have a top coach at Arsenal and will be playing at a very high level, that'll suit him well," said Loew with Germany hosting Austria in a World Cup qualifier in Munich on Friday.

"I have heard a few players like Cristiano Ronaldo or Sami Khedira are sad to lose a class player."

"And for me it's hard to understand why Real let one of their top scorers go, but that's business."

Zimbabwe take lead

AGENCIES, Harare



Zimbabwe ended the second day of the Test match 32 runs ahead of Pakistan at the Harare Sports Club yesterday.

Pakistan, who had an overnight score of 249 failed to add anything more to the tally as Saeed Ajmal, who had earlier helped his side fight back from a precarious position, was bowled in the second delivery of the day.

In reply, Zimbabwe, despite a collapse in the start of the innings which saw them lose their top three batsmen, finished the day on 281 for 7. The highlight of the innings was a 95-run partnership between Sikandar Raza (60) and Malcolm Waller (70) for the fourth wicket. The pair rescued Zimbabwe from a precarious 68 for 3.

Earlier, Vusi Sibanda survived some hostile bowling as Zimbabwe made a cautious start to their first innings.

Zimbabwe were 67 for one at lunch in reply

to Pakistan's first innings total of 249, with opening batsman Sibanda unbeaten on 30.

Wickets started falling immediately after lunch as Sibanda and Hamilton Masakadza were sent back to the pavilion in consecutive overs.

Ajmal continued with his good run and was Pakistan's bowler of the day as he took the key wickets of Raza, Waller and Masakadza. He finished with figures of 4 for 77 and remains Pakistan's main hope for restricting Zimbabwe on Thursday.

After bowling four overs from over the wicket at the start of the innings, Junaid switched to around the wicket and the change of angle brought immediate success as Mawoyo nudged at the first delivery of the new over and was caught behind for 13.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 249 (Ajmal 78, Misbah 53, Akmal 18, Ajmal 49, Junaid 17; Chatara 3-64, Panyangara 3-71, Masakadza 2-40)

ZIMBABWE: First innings 281 for 7 in 87 overs (Waller 70, Raza 60; Ajmal 4-77, Junaid 2-61)

Stomach bug strikes

Venezuela

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuela's national soccer team has been struck by a stomach bug before their visit to Chile for a potentially decisive World Cup qualifier.

Coach Cesar Farias told a news conference that 20 of his players, nearly the entire squad, had been affected.

"They didn't have a good night and they weren't able to train well," he told reporters, without giving further details.

Venezuela, the only South American team never to have played at the World Cup, are sixth in the nine-team South American group, with 16 points from 13 games, behind Uruguay on goal difference. Chile are fourth with 21.