

## Neymar close to return

REUTERS, Barcelona  
Barcelona forward Neymar has trained with the squad for the first time since injuring his ankle last month and is close to a return to action, the club said on Monday.

The Brazil international damaged tendons in a King's Cup tie against Getafe on Jan. 16, the latest setback for the 22-year-old who had not started a match since Christmas due to lack of fitness and a stomach bug.

"Neymar Jr has taken one more step in his recovery and had his first training session with the team on Monday morning," La Liga leaders Barca said on their website.

## Tyre-less!

AFP, Berlin  
Borussia Dortmund's Bayern Munich-bound star striker Robert Lewandowski has fallen foul of pranksters after all four tyres were stolen from his luxury Porsche, which was also damaged.

Reports in the German media say the 25-year-old had the tyres stolen from his Porsche Cayenne GTS, which was parked outside his Dortmund home, with only bricks left to keep the car off the ground.

Lewandowski's car was tipped forward during the prank, badly damaging the front brakes.

Dortmund fans are suspected of carrying out the attack.



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club's Nigerian forward Emeka Darlington leaps over the East Bengal defence to head in the opening goal while the Dhaka giant's coach Joseph Afusi (R) is ecstatic after his side's fantastic 3-0 win in the IFA Shield semifinal at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTOS: INTERNET/TV GRAB



# Winning hearts & minds

ANISUR RAHMAN and ATIQUE ANAM



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club may have caused a few bleeding hearts in the Kolkata football circuit within the space of the last four days, but they have also won over the respect of millions with their breathtaking football throughout the 118th IFA Shield tournament.

The Green and Maroons of Kolkata were made to bow to the new leviathans of Dhaka football on Saturday while yesterday it was the Red and Golds who could only admire the football that even Abahani and Mohammedan failed to display in their heady days.

Sheikh Jamal manager and former footballer Abdul Gaffar summed up the sentiment quite precisely when he said: "Except for Monem Munna, the Indians hardly ever recognised our football talents. This time though they had to take notice and admire. They will remember these

performances for a very long time."

Two back-to-back wins against the two giants of Indian football is a unique feat for a Bangladeshi club as no other club from Bangladesh ever managed to beat either of them in their own backyard. Mohammedan SC once reached the final of the tournament in 1995 but that team too could not achieve this feat. They were ultimately beaten by East Bengal in tiebreakers. Sheikh Jamal will have the opportunity to eclipsing that feat when they take on Kolkata Mohammedan in the final on Saturday.

The charges of Joseph Afusi took some time to adapt to the artificial turf of the Salt Lake Stadium and they went down against Mohammedan in their opening match. But since then they have grown from strength to strength as they outplayed United Sikkim 3-1 and Mohun Bagan 1-0 before putting on a complete performance against East Bengal yesterday, which was capped off by three wonderful goals from the attacking trio of

Sony Norde, Wedson Anselme and Emeka Darlington.

Sheikh Jamal's dominance was so emphatic that TV commentators said time and again that they had never seen East Bengal so helpless against any club from outside India and that their players were only recognisable from the colour of their jerseys, not by their performance.

Captain Mamunul Islam was ecstatic with the win, but reminded that their mission is not accomplished yet.

"It is a historic win for Sheikh Jamal, for Bangladesh and the football-loving people of the country. But our job is not done yet, as we want to bring the trophy home to fulfil the dreams of 16 crore people," said Mamunul on his way back to the hotel.

This triumph has not been a sudden outcome, it is rather an extension of the consistent performances that Sheikh Jamal have been showing in the domestic circuit, winning the Federation Cup early

in the season and earning 13 points from their five matches in the professional league so far.

And it comes as a new ray of hope for football lovers after the dismal performance of the national team in the recent SAFF Championships.

"I am still haunted by the SAFF Championship failure. We had our backs to the wall and there was no other way to prove our worth," said Mamunul, who is also the skipper of the national team.

Those who had taken their mind off domestic football after those debacles, had taken heart from Sheikh Jamal's win against Mohun Bagan and turned on their TV sets with bated breath to watch them battle against India's best.

The Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin flew out yesterday morning to watch the match while a pack of Bangladeshi expats gathered at the gallery with the Red and Green flag to egg on the Sheikh Jamal boys.

And they were richly rewarded.

## Battle for credibility

AFP, London  
Both reeling from embarrassing weekend results in the Premier League, Arsenal and Manchester United will each be determined to restore credibility when they meet at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday.

While Arsenal ceded first place to Chelsea after being blown away in a 5-1 defeat at Liverpool on Saturday, United could only record a 2-2 draw at home to Fulham, who had started the game at the foot of the table.

Arsenal's capitulation ended a run of 10 games without defeat in all competitions, but manager Arsene Wenger can at least console himself

that it left his side only a point off the summit.

Silver linings are not quite as easy to find for United, who trail fourth-place Liverpool by nine points and therefore seem destined to miss out on a place in next season's Champions League.

The defending champions dominated Sunday's game against Fulham at Old Trafford, enjoying 75 percent of possession and sending no fewer than 81 crosses into the visitors' box.

They would have prevailed had it not been for a 94th-minute equaliser scored by Fulham's Darren Bent, but record signing Juan Mata says that his side must develop a keener cutting edge.

"It seems that luck is not on our side, but I don't like to give excuses,"

the former Chelsea midfielder wrote on his personal blog on Monday.

"We have to get better and improve our shooting accuracy, because we got many times to the box and could have scored more than two goals.

"I'm sure we will make it, but there are less and less games to play so the sooner the better."

Michael Carrick, who scored United's second goal, said the result was "hard to explain", but he warned that he and his team-mates were desperate to take their frustrations out on Arsenal.

"We'll be ready," said the England midfielder.

"It's one of those seasons -- setback after setback. We have to believe that with performances, things are going to

## FA charges Bellamy

AFP, London  
Craig Bellamy was charged with violent conduct by the Football Association on Monday following the Cardiff forward's clash with Swansea midfielder Jonathan de Guzman in last weekend's south Wales derby.

Bellamy appeared to catch de Guzman with his arm during the second half of Swansea's 3-0 victory at their Liberty Stadium ground on Saturday.

The incident was not seen by referee Andre Marriner and his linesmen, with an FA statement on Monday saying: "Cardiff City's Craig Bellamy has been charged by the FA for violent conduct following an incident which was not seen by the match officials but caught on video."

Bellamy has until 1800GMT Tuesday to respond to the charge.

If the former Wales striker accepts the charge, he will receive a three-game ban that would mean he missed Tuesday's Premier League game against Aston Villa, the FA Cup tie with Wigan and a further league match against Hull.

Prior to Monday's announcement by the FA, Cardiff manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said there was no need for any action to be taken against his player.

"For me it was absolutely nothing. If that was me going down like that, my Dad would have had something to say," the former Manchester United and Norway striker said.

"But then again you can look at (Angel) Rangel when he kicks (Wilfried) Zaha in the first half. Nothing is mentioned about that. But that's just football.

## No room for Kaka

AFP, Rio de Janeiro  
Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari on Tuesday brought in two new faces but dropped AC Milan veteran Kaka in unveiling his Europe-based players to face South Africa in a March 5 friendly.

Scolari, architect of Brazil's 2002 World Cup success in Japan as well as last year's home triumph over Spain on the Confederations Cup, said he will call up three more home-based players ahead of the game in Johannesburg.

The new faces are Bayern Munich defender Rafinha and Manchester City midfielder Fernandinho.

Brazil will be without Fluminense striker Fred, who scored five times in the Confederations Cup, as the 30-year-old aggravated a serious thigh injury last week.

Aside from Fred, the World Cup hosts are short of forwards and last year saw Atletico Madrid's in-form Brazil-born forward Diego Costa elect to play for his adopted country, Spain.

Former Milan star Alexandre Pato is out of form and goalscoring duties will be borne, at least against South Africa, by Neymar and Zenit St Petersburg striker Hulk with Bernard of Shakhtar Donetsk providing back-up.

There was no place for Lucas or Maxwell of Paris Saint Germain.

Julio Cesar retains his slot as undisputed first choice goalkeeper despite not playing all season with English Championship side Queens Park Rangers.

Brazil squad to face South Africa (Europe-based players only):

Goalkeeper: Julio Cesar (QPR/ENG)

Defenders: Thiago Silva (Paris SG/FRA), David Luiz (Chelsea/ENG), Dante (Bayern Munich/GER), Dani Alves (FC Barcelona/ESP), Rafinha (Bayern Munich/GER), Marcelo (Real Madrid/ESP)

Midfielders: Paulinho (Tottenham/ENG), Fernandinho (Manchester City/ENG), Luiz Gustavo (Wolfsburg/GER), Ramires (Chelsea/ENG), Oscar (Chelsea/ENG), Willian (Chelsea/ENG)

Strikers: Neymar (Barcelona/ESP), Hulk (Zenit St

The Daily Star  
**Spelling Bee**  
Powered by Horlicks  
Brought to you by Champs21

Season 3

**স্পেলিং এখন খেলা!**  
HORLICKS\* খাও • PRACTICE করো  
JOIN করো SPELLING BEE - তে

৬ষ্ঠ থেকে ১০ম শ্রেণীর শিক্ষার্থীরা অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আজই রেজিস্ট্রেশন করতে লগ ইন করো  
**Champs21.com** -এ  
Online Round চলবে ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০১৪ পর্যন্ত

\*হরলিক্স একটি পুষ্টিকর পানীয় হিসেবে প্রসিদ্ধির সুস্থ খাবারের সাথে অভ্যর্কৃত হতে পারে  
\*এই প্রতিযোগিতায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য হরলিক্স অ্যাসোসিয়েটস নাম, তবে বিসর্গ-এ প্রযুক্তি নিয়মিত খাবারের সাথে হরলিক্স বাজারের মধ্যস্থতা পুষ্টিতে সাহায্য করে