

## Rakitic joins Barcelona

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona have agreed to buy Croatia World Cup midfielder Ivan Rakitic from La Liga rivals Sevilla, the two clubs said on Monday, in a deal local media reported was worth around 20 million.

"Barcelona and Sevilla have reached agreement for the transfer of Ivan Rakitic," Barca said in a statement on their website adding that the 26-year-old would sign a five-year contract.

Rakitic arrives at Barca after the club announced last week Cesc Fabregas was leaving to join English Premier League side Chelsea and he is seen as a natural replacement for the Spain playmaker.

Rakitic, who was born in Switzerland, is a "multi-faceted midfielder who combines two great virtues: physical strength and technical quality," Barca said.

## L'pool sign up Lallana

REUTERS, London

Premier League giants Liverpool signed England midfielder Adam Lallana from Southampton on a long-term deal on Tuesday, reuniting the 26-year-old with his former club mate Rickie Lambert at Anfield.

No transfer fee was announced but British media estimated Liverpool paid around 25 million pounds (\$42.54 million) for Lallana, part of the England team who failed to progress to the second round of the World Cup in Brazil last month.

"I'm over the moon for it to be sorted," Lallana told the club website after passing a medical at Melwood.



PHOTO: AFP

German fans enjoy their time as they watch the World Cup Round of 16 match between Germany and Algeria in Rio de Janeiro on Monday.

# Suarez says sorry

AFP, Montevideo



Disgraced Uruguay striker Luis Suarez apologised Monday to Italian defender Giorgio Chiellini for the bite that saw him banned for four months and expelled from the World Cup.

Suarez acknowledged for the first time that the Italian was bitten. "I deeply regret what occurred," said the 27-year-old Liverpool striker.

"I apologise to Giorgio Chiellini and the entire football family," said a statement on Suarez's official Twitter account.

"I vow to the public there will never again be another incident like" it, he added.

Chiellini reacted quickly to Suarez's apology. "It's all forgotten. I hope FIFA will reduce your suspension," he tweeted.

Suarez bit Chiellini during Uruguay's 1-0 win over Italy on June 24 which took the South Americans into the World Cup last 16. They were beaten by Colombia on Sunday.

The prolific striker initially denied the charges against him. He told a FIFA disciplinary commission that he had lost his balance and there was no bite.

But within 48 hours of the incident, Suarez was handed a four month ban from all football activities, suspended from nine internationals and fined 100,000 Swiss francs (\$112,000). It was the third time in his career he

had been guilty of biting an opponent.

He returned on Friday to Uruguay where the sanction has caused national outrage. President Jose Mujica slammed FIFA leaders as "sons of bitches" for imposing the sanction.

But Suarez said: "After several days of being home with my family, I have had the opportunity to regain my calm and reflect about the reality of what occurred during the Italy-Uruguay match on June 24, 2014.

He said there had been "contradicting declarations" of the events but that he had no "intention of interfering with the good performance of my national team.

"The truth is that my colleague Giorgio Chiellini suffered the

physical result of a bite in the collision he suffered with me. For this:

"I deeply regret what occurred. I apologize to Giorgio Chiellini and the entire football family. I vow to the public that there will never again be another incident like."

Despite Suarez's denials, the disciplinary commission gave a damning assessment of Suarez's actions in its final report, which was leaked to various media.

It said "the offence was carried out directly against an opposing player, while the ball was not being disputed, and it was done deliberately, intentionally and without provocation."

## Tigers begin camp for WI tour

SPORTS REPORTER



Amid the fanfare surrounding the ongoing football world cup the Bangladesh national cricket team quietly began their preparatory camp for their tour of the West Indies yesterday.

The Tigers will play two Tests, three ODIs and a T20I from August 20 onwards.

The 25-member contingent went through a number of fitness tests at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) new strength and conditioning coach Mario Vilavarayan.

Opener Tamim Iqbal, who is in England to take part in the bicentenary celebrations at Lord's, was the only player absent. Tamim will be playing for the Rest of the World in a friendly game against the MCC XI on June 5. Tamim will play alongside the likes of Shane Warne, Saeed Ajmal and Shahid Afridi. At the other end, Sachin Tendulkar will be leading the MCC XI.

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan also attended the session yesterday. He will however leave for the West Indies today in order to participate in the Caribbean Premier League which starts from July 11. Shakib will play for Barbados for whom he put up a phenomenal performance in the last season, which saw him take a six-wicket haul against Trinidad and Tobago. Barbados is scheduled to play their last game on August 10. Shakib is then expected to join the team once they reach the Caribbean.

Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha is expected to join the team next week.

## Baridhara in dark as BFF defer match

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) once again showed its inefficiency after postponing yesterday's Bangladesh Premier League match between Team BJMC and Uttar Baridhara just two hours before the scheduled start at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The players and officials of Uttar Baridhara Club turned up to the Big Bowl and later gathered at the headquarters of the football governing body to claim the full three points against Team BJMC, who unbeknownst to Uttar Baridhara had earlier formally appealed to the BFF to defer Tuesday's match due to the internal strike imposed by BJMC employees.

"We arrived here at 2:30pm and then we were informed there was no match today at 3:30, just a half-hour before the scheduled start," Uttar Baridhara general secretary Jahangir Alam stated black and white.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag however disagreed with Jahangir Alam and claimed that they informed Baridhara four hours before the start of the match. He however admitted that they should have informed Uttar Baridhara at least a day before the scheduled match.

## Life ban for Lou

AFP, Wellington



Disgraced former New Zealand batsman Lou Vincent on Tuesday was banned for life from cricket for match-fixing, admitting he was a cheat who had shamed the sport and his country.

"My name is Lou Vincent and I am a cheat. I have abused my position as a professional sportsman on a number of occasions by choosing to accept money through fixing," he said in a statement.

The punishment, which was confirmed by the England and Wales Cricket Board, stems from one-day matches that Vincent admitted he helped rig in English county cricket.

His former Sussex team mate, Naveed Arif, was also banned for life last month after admitting similar corruption offences.

The ECB said in a statement that Vincent pleaded guilty to 18 breaches of its anti-corruption regulations.

Four charges related to a Twenty20 match between Lancashire and Durham in June 2008. The remaining 14 concerned two fixtures played in August 2011 -- a Sussex v Lancashire Twenty20 and a Sussex v Kent CB40 match.

"We are extremely pleased that the matter has now been brought to a satisfactory conclusion and that an individual who repeatedly sought to involve others in corrupt activity for his own personal gain has accepted that his conduct warrants a lifetime ban from cricket," said ECB chief David Collier.

"It once again highlights our resolve to keep cricket clean and rid the game of the tiny minority who seek to undermine the sport's integrity."

Vincent, 35, has given additional evidence to International Cricket Council anti-corruption investigators about his involvement in fixing in five countries between 2008 and 2012.

Among his allegations were that a "world-famous international" dubbed "Player X" recruited him into the murky world of match-rigging.

## Chelsea sign Diego Costa

AFP, London

Chelsea have agreed to sign striker Diego Costa from Atletico Madrid, the Premier League club announced Tuesday.

The Spain international had long been linked with a move to the London side and completion of the deal appears to be imminent after the Blues said they had met the buy-out clause for the 25-year-old forward.

"Chelsea Football Club can confirm an agreement has been reached with Atletico Madrid for the transfer of Diego Costa, with Chelsea meeting the buy-out clause for the Spanish international," said a statement on the club's website.



PHOTO: AFP

Australia's Nick Kyrgios lets out a roar after sensationally knocking world number one Rafael Nadal out of the Wimbledon Championships on Monday.

## Wild card stuns Nadal

AFP, London



Australia's world number 144 Nick Kyrgios caused one of the greatest Wimbledon sensations on Tuesday when he sent world number one and 14-time Grand Slam title winner Rafael Nadal crashing to a shock defeat.

Seven-time champion Roger Federer, on the other hand, will take on close friend Stan Wawrinka in the Wimbledon quarter-finals after both men hurried to victory just in time to watch their native Switzerland tackle mighty Argentina in the World Cup.

The 19-year-old Kyrgios, making his Wimbledon debut, clinched a fearless 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 victory to become the first wildcard in 10 years to make the quarter-finals at the All England Club.

He is also the first player ranked outside the top 100 to defeat a world number one since Andrei Olhovskiy stunned Jim Courier in the Wimbledon third round in 1992.

It was a performance of brutal inventiveness and uninhibited bludgeoning from a man who had had to save nine match points in his second round win against Richard Gasquet and his reward is a clash with Canada's Milos Raonic for a place in the semi-finals.

But he cannot argue with the statistics

of Tuesday's Centre Court demolition which showed Kyrgios firing 37 aces and 70 winners as a new star was born.

"I was in a bit of a zone out there. It hasn't sunk in at all what's just played out out there," said Kyrgios.

"I played some extraordinary tennis. I was struggling a little bit on return but I worked my way into it and I got that break in the fourth set. I served at a really good level all throughout the match so I was really happy."

He said he always believed he could cause a sensation regardless of the status of Nadal who had arrived at Wimbledon having wrapped up a ninth French Open title.

"You've got to believe that you can win the match from the start and I definitely thought that. I'm playing some unbelievable tennis on the grass."

For the fourth match in succession at this year's Wimbledon, Nadal dropped the first set against a confident Kyrgios, the player of Greek-Malaysian origin firing 13 aces and 22 winners past the bewildered Spaniard in the opener.

The Australian, showing no stage fright on his Centre Court bow, showed a brash disregard for the occasion, attempting a cheeky 'tweener' (hitting the ball from between the legs) in the seventh game of the second set.

But Nadal then levelled the tie by converting the first break points of the

match in the 12th game.

That would usually signal the beginning of the end for an opponent of Nadal, but Kyrgios dug deep to seize his moment.

He saved a set point in the 12th game of the third set before again dominating the tiebreak to take it courtesy of a vicious run around forehand cross-court off a Nadal second serve.

With Nadal wilting beneath the barrage, Kyrgios broke for a 3-1 lead in the fourth set and he wasn't going to let up.

He worked his way confidently to three match points but only needed one with his 37th ace shooting past the flat-footed Nadal.

In the other game, Federer eased into his 12th Wimbledon quarter-final with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-4 win over Tommy Robredo, a victory headlined by a perfect second set.

Australian Open champion Wawrinka, the fifth seed, made his first last-eight date at the All England Club at the 10th attempt by seeing off Spain's Feliciano Lopez 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (9/7), 6-3.

On the women's side of the draw Maria Sharapova suffered more Wimbledon heartache as the French Open champion crashed to a shock 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-4 defeat against Germany's Angelique Kerber in the fourth round, while Lucie Safarova stormed into her first Grand Slam semi-final on Tuesday.