

What to WATCH

TEN CRICKET

Australia v South Africa

Triangular Series

Live from 1:30pm

STAR SPORTS1

England v India

Fourth ODI

Live from 3:30pm

TEN SPORTS

US Open

Men's Rd of 16 & Women's QFs

Live from 9:00pm

LG

Life's Good

LG

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Pirlo still available for Italy

AFP, Rome

Andrea Pirlo may yet don an Italy shirt again despite suggesting after the World Cup he would move aside for younger talent, new national team boss Antonio Conte said Sunday.

"I wanted to be sure that he still had the same old fire," Conte said on Italian television. "He's a warrior. He told me he was available and that's good enough for me."

Pirlo is currently sidelined until October with a hip injury, which means he will miss Italy's friendly with the Netherlands in Bari on Friday and the Euro 2016 qualifier against Norway in Oslo the following Tuesday.

Conte coached Pirlo at Juventus for the last three seasons, in which they won the Serie A title every year, before taking over from Cesare Prandelli as national coach.

Although he spoke about Pirlo, Conte refused to be drawn over Mario Balotelli, the new Liverpool striker who he omitted from the squad.

Cerci joins Atletico

AFP, Madrid

La Liga champions Atletico Madrid have reached an agreement with Torino for the signing of Italian international Alessio Cerci, the Spanish club announced on Sunday.

The 27-year-old becomes Atletico's 10th signing of the summer as they look to bolster their squad following the departures of Diego Costa, Filipe Luis and Thibaut Courtois to Chelsea. "The agreement reached with Torino for the transfer of Cerci is great news for everyone," Atletico sporting director Jose Luis Perez Caminerio told the club's website.

"He was a clear objective to finalise strengthening our squad ahead of the important challenges we have this season."

Cerci scored 13 goals and provided 12 assists as Torino finished seventh in Serie A last season to qualify for the Europa League.

Real sign Hernandez

AFP, Madrid

European champions Real Madrid confirmed the signing of Mexican international striker Javier Hernandez on a season-long loan from Manchester United on Monday.

"Real Madrid and Manchester United have reached an agreement for the loan of Javier Hernandez, who will be tied to the club for this season," the Spanish club said in a statement.

"Real Madrid reserves the option to buy the player."

Hernandez becomes Real's fourth signing of the transfer window after the arrivals of World Cup stars James Rodriguez, Toni Kroos and Keylor Navas and will be paraded at the Santiago Bernabeu on Monday afternoon.

The 26-year-old scored 59 goals in 152 appearances for United over the past four seasons, but had fallen down the pecking order at Old Trafford even before the English side reportedly sealed a sensational loan deal for Colombian hitman Radamel Falcao on Monday.

He is expected to provide cover for first-choice centre forward Karim Benzema after the departure of the Frenchman's previous understudy Alvaro Morata to Juventus in June.

'Horrible Real'

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid captain and goalkeeper Iker Casillas has called for a big improvement after the European champions suffered a surprise early-season setback at Real Sociedad in La Liga on Sunday.

Real were missing injured top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo for their second La Liga outing of the campaign but quickly went 2-0 ahead at the Anoeta in San Sebastian before losing control of the match and crashing to a 4-2 reverse.

"The team was negative in everything, horrible, we did not play well," Casillas told reporters.

"We cannot let a match get away from us in that way after leading 2-0," added the Spain international.

"This is not the attitude or the way to go. We are wearing a very important badge on our chests and this is not the example we should be giving.

"We have to accept the defeat and learn from today's mistakes."

Real's reverse will set alarm bells ringing among fans concerned that the sale of the experienced Xabi Alonso to Bayern Munich last week has left the team exposed in midfield.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti said the problem on Sunday was not the absence of one player but a generally poor attitude.

New arrivals such as Germany midfielder Toni Kroos and Colombia playmaker James Rodriguez needed more time to adapt, the Italian added.

"In matches like today's it is more difficult for the newcomers," Ancelotti told a news conference.

"The first 30 minutes were very good, with quality, pace and focus. The rest was very bad.

"It is difficult to explain what happened. We conceded corners, free kicks.

"We're very sorry, I don't like the team to play like that for an hour. The first half an hour was very good, but we have to think and change this."

Casillas singled out poor defending at set pieces as a particular problem and said the team needed to be more alert at corners and free kicks.

"We were making mistakes throughout the whole game and that's why they put four goals past us," he added.

"We had very clear scoring chances but later we did not defend. We have to up the pressure and be more alert

"We are all to blame, not just the defence, because everyone is back defending at a corner. We have to sort it out because what happened is not normal."

Chelsea seal Remy deal

AFP, London

France international striker Loic Remy has joined Chelsea from Queens Park Rangers on a four-year contract, the two Premier League clubs announced on Sunday.

The announcement came a day after Chelsea reportedly triggered a £10.5 million (\$17.4 million, 13.3 million euros) release clause in the 27-year-old's contract, prompting him to withdraw from QPR's squad to face Sunderland.

"I feel very happy and very proud," said Remy, who was pictured on the Chelsea website posing with a club shirt.

"When I heard Chelsea wanted to sign me I said, 'Let's go' straight away, because they are one of the best clubs in the world."

Remy has been signed to replace Fernando Torres, who has joined AC Milan on a two-year loan deal, and to provide competition for fellow strikers Diego Costa and Didier Drogba.

MU snap up Falcao

AFP, London

Manchester United have agreed a sensational deal to sign Colombia striker Radamel Falcao on a season-long loan from Monaco, according to widespread British media reports on Monday.

The prolific 28-year-old forward, who missed the World Cup with a serious knee injury, has also been linked with Real Madrid, Manchester City and Arsenal.

But several media outlets, including the Press Association and the BBC, reported that United had secured his services -- subject to a medical examination -- on the final day of the close-season transfer window.

United will pay Monaco a fee of around 10 million euros (\$13.1 million) for the loan and will have an option to make the deal permanent for 55 million euros at the end of the season, sources at Monaco told AFP.

Falcao, who has scored 20 goals in 51 appearances for Colombia, is under contract at Monaco until 2018.

Since returning from injury at the start of the season, he has scored two goals in three matches, but he was left out of the squad for Monaco's 1-1 draw at home to Lille in Ligue

1 on Saturday.

If completed, the deal would leave United manager Louis van Gaal with a rich pool of striking talent at his disposal, as Falcao would join Robin van Persie and Wayne Rooney at Old Trafford.

United are rebuilding after a disappointing seventh-place finish in the Premier League last season and have spent around £130 million on new players, including a British-record £59.7 million move for Angel di Maria.

A dejected Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos kneels on the ground during their Primera Liga match against Real Sociedad at the Anoeta Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Sociedad stun Madrid

AFP, Madrid

Real Sociedad produced a stunning fightback from 2-0 down to beat European champions Real Madrid 4-2 on Sunday.

Madrid were without the injured Cristiano Ronaldo and departed Angel di Maria and Xabi Alonso, but still looked on course for a comfortable evening when they flew into a 2-0 lead inside the opening 11 minutes thanks to goals from Sergio Ramos and Gareth Bale.

However, Inigo Martinez and David Zurutuza levelled for the hosts before the break and Zurutuza and Carlos Vela sealed a much-needed win for under-fire Sociedad boss Jagoba Arrasate.

Ramos rose highest to power home Toni Kroos' corner to open the scoring before Bale left Gorka Elustondo trailing with a neat nutmeg and slotted into the bottom corner.

Enaut Zubikarai then had to make fine saves to prevent Marcelo and Kroos putting Madrid out of sight.

But it was the hosts who crucially got the third goal as Martinez slammed home at the far post from Xabi Prieto's flick on.

Zurutuza then levelled four minutes before the break as he powered home Alberto de la Bella's pinpoint cross from the left.

Iker Casillas produced a fine save to turn Imanol Agirretxe's header behind as Sociedad started the second period the stronger.

And they got their reward 25 minutes from time when Zurutuza again timed his run into the box perfectly to connect with Prieto's low cross to the near post.

Madrid's humiliation was complete 10 minutes later when substitute Carlos Vela appeared to control the ball with his hand before spinning to fire into the top corner.

'Reds back at their best'

AFP, London

Brendan Rodgers warned Liverpool's title rivals that his team are back in the groove after they marked Mario Balotelli's debut with a scintillating 3-0 win at Tottenham.

Balotelli was supposed to steal the spotlight on his return to the Premier League, but the flamboyant Italy striker had to play second fiddle to new team-mates Raheem Sterling, Daniel Sturridge and Jordan Henderson on Sunday.

Sterling scored Liverpool's opening goal early in the first half and delivered a sparkling display at the top of the midfield diamond formation Rodgers employed to overwhelm Tottenham's fragile defence.

Balotelli's strike partner Sturridge was a constant menace, while Henderson covered almost every blade of grass in midfield in a typically energetic showing.

Second half goals from Steven Gerrard and Alberto Moreno sealed the rout, capping the kind of vibrant performance that became Liverpool's hallmark as they went within touching distance of winning the Premier League last season before Steven Gerrard's crucial slip against Chelsea gifted the title to Manchester City.

Now, despite the departure of star striker Luis Suarez to Barcelona, Rodgers's team look to have got over last season's title race meltdown and the Reds boss believes they will be among the main contenders to win the English crown once again.

"I thought we were excellent. It was an outstanding performance," Rodgers said.

"We have risen to every challenge since I've been here. It was the same last year when people wondered if we could keep it up. The beauty of this group is they are very humble.

"We clicked back to where we were last season. That was good to see, I think people will enjoy watching us this season."

Balotelli offered glimpses of his vast talent with some neat combinations with Sterling and Sturridge during his 61-minute debut.

Ronaldo unimpressed with Madrid signings

AFP, Madrid

World Player of the Year Cristiano Ronaldo has said he wouldn't have sanctioned the sales of Angel di Maria and Xabi Alonso if he was in charge of Real Madrid.

The European champions sorely missed both departed midfielders and the injured Ronaldo as they succumbed to a shock 4-2 defeat at Real Sociedad on Sunday.

"If I was in charge, I would not do it like this, but everyone has their opinion and is free to say what they think," Ronaldo said at a sponsor's event on Monday.

"I have my strong opinions, but I can't always say what I think. Otherwise, tomorrow it would be on the front pages and I don't want that. If the president thinks it is best for the team to sign some players and let others go then we have to respect and support his decision."

Mexican international Javier Hernandez became Madrid's fourth summer signing on Monday after agreeing to a season-long loan deal from Manchester United.

However, despite the arrivals of World Cup stars James Rodriguez, Toni Kroos and Keylor Navas, there was severe criticism of the club in the Spanish press for letting two of their most consistent performers in their run to the record 10th European Cup leave.

Di Maria was man-of-the-match in the Champions League final victory over Atletico Madrid, but was sold for a British

transfer record £59.7 million (\$98 million) last week.

Alonso, meanwhile, asked to leave the club, citing a need for a new challenge at 32 years of age.

However, Ronaldo also insisted that the new players should be given time to settle in having not had much of a pre-season due to the World Cup.

"We have only been going two weeks, we don't have to sound the alarm bells yet.

"We need to be calm and work hard. There are three or four new players and the World Cup will affect their physical level.

"The players arrived late and didn't have a great pre-season. Hopefully, it is just taking a little longer to adjust, but I believe we will have a good season."

Real face a big test on their return to action in 12 days time though as they face Atletico for already the third time this season after losing 2-1 on aggregate to Los Rojiblancos in the Spanish Super Cup.

And Ronaldo is confident he will be fit to face the La Liga champions.

"My objective is always to play in the next game. I am sure I will be there."

Ronaldo is currently recovering from a knee injury that saw him sit out his side's surprise 4-2 defeat to Real Sociedad at the weekend, but says he expects to back within a week.

Kagawa returns to Dortmund

AFP, Berlin

Japanese international Shinji Kagawa has returned to Borussia Dortmund after completing a move from Manchester United on Sunday.

Dortmund are thought to have paid around 8 million euros (\$10.5m, £6.3m) to re-sign Kagawa, who had a hugely successful first spell at the German club between 2010 and 2012.

After scoring six goals in 38 Premier League games for United, the 25-year-old has now returned to Dortmund on a contract that runs until June 2018.

"I already said in an interview on the day I left that the Borussia Dortmund chapter was not closed for me," Kagawa told Dortmund's official website.

"I wanted to fulfil a dream in the Premier League. Now I'm just happy to be back in Dortmund - with this great team, in this amazing environment, these unique fans.

"BVB is like a family. I'm proud that they haven't forgotten me and that I can belong to it again."

Kagawa found opportunities limited at Old Trafford and was linked with a return to Dortmund throughout his two seasons in England.

The playmaker was finally given the green light to leave by new United manager Louis van Gaal, shortly after he made his last appearance for the club in a 4-0 League Cup defeat to Milton Keynes Dons.

"The chance to bring Shinji Kagawa from Manchester United to BVB presented itself for the first time in the last few days," Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc said. "Naturally we decided to sign this hugely talented player again."

Kagawa first joined Dortmund from Japanese side Cerezo Osaka in the summer of 2010. He scored 21 goals in 49 Bundesliga matches in his first spell at the club, winning the Bundesliga title in 2011 and a league and cup double in 2012.