



Ribery must serve France if called

AFP, Berlin

UEFA president Michel Platini has threatened compatriot and now-retired former France playmaker Franck Ribery with a suspension, according to Sunday's version of Bild newspaper.

Bayern Munich winger Ribery announced his retirement from France duty after the World Cup in Brazil, which he missed due to a back injury.

But Platini now claims the 31-year-old will have no choice but to continue playing for his country if selected.

"Franck cannot decide himself whether he plays for France," said the former France star and coach.

"If (coach) Didier Deschamps picks him, he must come. That's the FIFA rule. If he doesn't come, he will be suspended for three Bayern Munich games."

There is a FIFA rule in place which forces players to accept national team call-ups to prevent them -- or rather their clubs -- from picking and choosing which internationals they play.

But national teams usually respect a player's decision to retire from international duty.

That wasn't the case, however, back in 2006 when then France coach Raymond Domenech forced Claude Makelele, then 33, to turn up to represent the national team despite having announced his international retirement after the World Cup.

That led to Makelele's then Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho accusing Domenech of treating his player "like a slave".



Argentine soccer players Carlos Tevez (L) of Juventus and Gonzalo Higuain of Napoli enjoy their two-week break by watching the Italian Grand Prix in Monza yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MSC forms new cricket committee

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club yesterday officially announced a 16-member cricket committee for the 2014-2015 season with Bangladesh Cricket Board director Mahbubul Anam named as its chairman while veteran organiser Hanif Bhuiyan the senior vice-chairman.

The club also formed two other committees -- an advisory and a technical committee. The latter has been formed with six former national cricketers and is led by ASM Faruque.

Pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been named the side's captain and will lead them in the Dhaka Premier League this season.

Confident about this season Mashrafe had exuded confidence and hoped that Mohammedan, who finished fourth in the last DPL, would do better.

"The last time teams could not choose players according to their will due to the 'player-by-choice' system. This time it was different and hence the team is better as well," said the pacer.

Bailey quits Twenty20 captaincy

AFP, Sydney

George Bailey has given up the captaincy of Australia's Twenty20 team to focus on playing in next year's World Cup, Cricket Australia said Sunday.

Bailey, 32, has indicated that he wants to prepare for the one-day World Cup in Australia and New Zealand next February-March and to play more first-class cricket for his state Tasmania, particularly before Christmas.

CA said Bailey has made himself unavailable for selection for Australia's T20 International fixtures on the upcoming tour of the United Arab Emirates against Pakistan, and unavailable for Australia's three T20 internationals at home against South Africa in November.

Bailey was appointed T20 captain in January 2012, taking over from Cameron White, and in that time he competed in two ICC World T20 tournaments.

He played for Australia in 28 T20 Internationals, winning 14 and losing 13 with one tied match.

Injury woes for Spain

AFP, Valencia

Spain's bid to put right a disastrous defence of the World Cup gets underway in the modest surroundings of Levante's 26,000 capacity stadium against equally modest opponents Macedonia on Monday.

However, a series of injuries to key players leaves coach Vicente del Bosque searching for goalscorers in his need for a big performance to quell the doubts over his ability to rejuvenate the side and compete for a third consecutive European Championship triumph.

Chelsea striker Diego Costa pulled out of the squad on Thursday after damaging his hamstring in the 1-0 friendly defeat by France on Wednesday, leaving Valencia's Paco Alcacer, who only made his international debut in Paris as a second-half substitute, as the only recognised striker left in the squad.

Scoring goals has been a familiar problem for Spain in recent times as they failed to score from open play before being eliminated in Brazil and found the net just 14 times in eight games in qualifying for the World Cup.

The absence of the injured Andres Iniesta, added to the international retirements of Xavi Hernandez and Xabi Alonso, also significantly affects La Roja's ability to play the tiki-taka style of football that brought them success in three consecutive international tournaments.

However, Manchester City midfielder David Silva insists that that style should remain despite an overhaul in personal.

"There are a lot of new people and we need to link up all the new pieces, that is the way forward.

"But we have won a lot playing this way. Cesc (Fabregas), Andres, myself, there are many of us who are used to this and I think we need to continue with it.

"Important players have left, but

those that remain are important too and I am sure the new ones will be too in time."

Del Bosque has another key decision to make in goal with Manchester United's David de Gea challenging captain Iker Casillas to be the number one.

De Gea made his first start at senior international level against France, but Del Bosque is expected to back Casillas once more despite his culpability as Spain were swept aside by the Netherlands and Chile at the World Cup.

Given the lack of attacking options, Fabregas is also expected to return to the false number nine position he has played regularly over the past few years for Spain, despite starring in central midfield for new club Chelsea so far this season.

Jordi Alba, Raul Albiol, Pedro Rodriguez and Silva are also likely to come back into the side from the experimental line-up that started against France.

UEFA pondering rule changes

Penalty for diving, away goal advantage to go

AGENCIES, Nyon

Former Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson says he supports the proposal to use rugby-style sin bins in football.

Speaking at a UEFA conference in Switzerland, Ferguson said it could be used to eradicate simulation, something he views as a "disease in the game".

The 72-year-old, who took up a position as a UEFA coaching ambassador following his retirement in 2013, also talks about who he thinks may win this season's Champions League.

Europe's top club coaches have also been contemplating whether the away goals rule should remain in force in the Champions League and Europa League.

The rule was introduced nearly 50 years ago when playing away in Europe was a novelty, but critics say it has now become counter-productive, unnecessary and unfair.

"There was a bit of a debate about whether it has any significance today," said former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson following a meeting of the elite coaches' forum at UEFA headquarters on Thursday.

"Some think it is not as important as it used to be....and the attacking emphasis on the game today means more teams go away from home and win."

"If we go back, say, 30 years, counter-attacking consisted of one or maybe two, players. Today, counter-attacks have players flooding forward in fives or sixes and really quick passing."

The rule, under which away goals count double if a two-legged tie ends with the aggregate scores level, was introduced into European competition in the Cup Winners' Cup in 1965-66.

It was first used in a second-round tie when Honved progressed at the expense of

Dukla Prague following a 4-4 aggregate draw.

At the time it was seen as preferable to having a time-consuming playoff or the arbitrary toss of the coin which was sometimes employed and which sent Liverpool to the European Cup semi-final in 1965 after two goalless draws against FC Cologne.

In the early days of European competition, when air travel was far less developed and reliable, an away match was something of an adventure with visiting teams facing unfamiliar, sometimes hostile, conditions.

Away wins were rare and the new rule was an incentive for visiting teams to come out of their shell.

All of that has changed.

Playing conditions in most parts of Europe are pretty much identical and trips abroad no longer carry the air of intimidation that they once did. The old quagmire pitches have also become a thing of the past.

"What is helping is that the state of the pitches, pitches are fantastic nowadays, so coming out of defence with passes is much easier than it was 30 years ago, and you get a better attitude to counter-attack today than you did 30 years ago," said Ferguson.

Rather than encouraging visiting teams to attack, the fear of conceding a potentially decisive away goal often makes home teams more cautious and the rule also means that some goals turn out to be worth more than others.

"From a personal point of view, when I was playing at home, I used to say to myself, don't lose a goal," said Ferguson.

It can even border on the absurd such as in the Champions League semi-final between Inter Milan and AC Milan, when both legs were played in the San Siro stadium.

The first match ended goalless, the second was 1-1, but because AC Milan were technically considered at home in the second leg, they went through on away goals.

Araf making a headway

SPORTS REPORTER

Araf Sharuddin, a Bangladeshi student in the UK is making remarkable progress in European and English Golf. Araf, who is only nineteen-and-a-half years old and turned professional last year, has won numerous accolades in the UK. He secured first position in Hendon Championship, third position in Sundridge Park (east) and was among top ten in Ealing Club championship.

Araf, who is a member of PGA Europro Tour and played as the youngest professional in 2014, started his golfing career at the age of thirteen at Ghatail Golf Club in Bangladesh. He is also doing his under graduation in the Middlesex University, London in business studies and marketing.

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