

ST MARY'S LOVE STORY

The Southampton social media team are trying to bring love between a couple of fans at St Mary's. It started when a Southampton fan Tweeted the club asking for the details of an "unreal looking girl" who sits near him at home games, which he was denied for confidentiality purposes. However, Southampton are trying to push the romance, with some roses on the lucky lady's seat for yesterday's game and have



Lampard stays at Man City

English Premier League champions Manchester City announced on Wednesday they had secured the services of Frank Lampard until the end of the season despite the midfielder signing for New York City in June. "Manchester City can confirm that it has extended Frank Lampard's contract up to the end of Manchester City's season, enabling his continued participation in both domestic and European campaigns," said a statement on the club's website. England star Lampard has scored six goals in 17 appearances for City this season after signing on loan from the fledgling MLS club. The US team said the date he will join them will be revealed "as the Premier League and MLS seasons unfold". New York City FC director of football Claudio Reyna said: "Frank is a star and it is no surprise Manchester City is rewarded by his contributions on the field every single day. "He is eager to get to New York once his commitment ends in England and will be available to play on arrival as a permanent member of the squad, given he will come to us having played at the highest level."



Manchester United striker Radamel Falcao celebrates his equalising goal against Stoke City during their Premier League encounter at the Britannia Stadium yesterday.

Lampard nets crucial winner

Frank Lampard celebrated his loan extension by scoring the winning goal as Manchester City edged Sunderland 3-2 on Thursday to move level on points with Premier League leaders Chelsea. City announced late on Wednesday that Lampard's loan move from their sister club New York City FC had been prolonged to the end of the season and he proved his worth by coming off the bench to score the winner. City, who left goalkeeper Joe Hart on the bench, took the lead in the 57th minute at the Etihad Stadium when Yaya Toure slammed an exquisite shot into the top-left corner from outside the box. Stevan Jovetic's flick made it 2-0, but just as they had done in Sunday's 2-2 draw with Burnley, the champions allowed

Sunderland back into the game. Two City old boys did the damage, with Jack Rodwell's header reducing the arrears in the 68th minute and Adam Johnson equalising from the penalty spot three minutes later after Pablo Zabaleta had fouled Santiago Vergini. But just three minutes after replacing Jovetic, Lampard headed home a cross from Gael Clichy to take City level with his former club Chelsea, who visit Tottenham Hotspur in the late New Year's Day fixture. Earlier, Manchester United had lost further momentum in the title race after drawing 1-1 with Stoke City at a windy Britannia Stadium. Radamel Falcao equalised for the visitors in the 26th minute after former United trainee Ryan Shawcross had scored the first goal of 2015 in the second minute by hooking home from Peter Crouch's header. United remain third, but will fall 12 points off the pace if Chelsea win at White Hart Lane. Southampton tightened their grip on

fourth place and closed to within a point of United by winning 2-0 at home to nearest rivals Arsenal, who fell three points off the Champions League places as a result. Sadio Mane curled home from a narrow angle on the right after Arsenal goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny went walkabout in the 34th minute, with Dusan Tadic adding a second in the 56th minute after a defensive mix-up. Freshly appointed West Bromwich Albion manager Tony Pulis watched from the stands as his new club drew 1-1 at West Ham United, with Saido Berahino cancelling out Diafra Sakho's neatly constructed 10th-minute opener. The result kept West Brom a point above the relegation zone. Pardew was in the stands to watch Palace draw 0-0 at Aston Villa, ahead of his expected appointment as the successor to the sacked Neil Warnock. Liverpool's recent momentum was curbed as they threw away a 2-0 lead to

RESULTS

- Aston Villa 0 Crystal Palace 0
- Hull 2 (Elmohamady 33, Jelavic 43) Everton 0
- Liverpool 2 (Gerrard 17-pen, 40-pen) Leicester 2 (Nugent 58, Schlupp 60)
- Manchester City 3 (Toure 57, Jovetic 66, Lampard 73)
- Sunderland 2 (Rodwell 68, Johnson 71-pen)
- Newcastle 3 (Taylor 15, Colback 26, Sissoko 78) Burnley 3 (Dummett 19-og, Ings 66, Boyd 86)
- QPR 1 (Fer 20) Swansea 1 (Bony 90)
- Southampton 2 (Mane 34, Tadic 56) Arsenal 0
- Stoke 1 (Shawcross 2) Manchester United 1 (Falcao 26)

draw 2-2 at home to bottom club Leicester City, which left them seven points below the top four in eighth place. A pair of first-half Steven Gerrard penalties put Liverpool in control, but two goals in two minutes by David Nugent and Jeffrey Schlupp prevented Brendan Rodgers's side from registering a third successive win.

Gutierrez best in South America

Colombia striker Teofilo Gutierrez has been voted South America's footballer of the year and their Argentine coach Jose Pekerman the best coach for the third time in a row. Gutierrez, who helped Colombia reach the World Cup quarterfinals in Brazil, was a key member of the River Plate side that won the Copa Sudamericana, the region's equivalent of the Europa League, this month.

WI-SA third Test starts today

West Indies captain Denes Ramdin said on Thursday that the main benefit of playing in South Africa was the opportunity for his young side to absorb some of the lessons that have made the hosts the number one team in the world. Speaking ahead of the third and final Test starting at Newlands on Friday, Ramdin said he hoped the West Indies would continue the improvement they had shown in the rain-hit drawn second Test after being beaten by an innings and 220 runs in the first contest. "We made a slow start to the tour. Now we are gaining momentum," he said. "Going into the third game, it is going to be a different atmosphere here, we can really enjoy it. It's a new year, hopefully we can change some things. We are playing against the number one team in the world. If we can take some of the things they do, we can probably move up against the rankings."

Tevez not keen on Juve stay

Argentina striker Carlos Tevez, quizzed over the chances of him returning to Boca Juniors, has no plans to sign a contract extension with Juventus. The Italian champions reportedly want to offer Tevez, whose contract runs until June 2016, a deal to stay in Turin to 2018. "I said I wanted to fulfil my contract and that's my idea, I'm not thinking of signing an extension because that's not how I feel at the moment," Tevez told reporters in Buenos Aires on Wednesday before returning to Turin from the year-end holidays. "As I always said, my idea is to complete my contract. Everyone knows I said so from the moment I arrived at Juve."

West Bromwich appoint Pulis

Tony Pulis has been appointed as the new head coach of West Bromwich Albion on a two-and-a-half-year contract, the Premier League strugglers announced on Thursday. The 56-year-old former Stoke City and Crystal Palace manager replaces Alan Irvine, who was sacked on Monday after a run of seven defeats in nine matches that left the club just a point above the relegation zone. "I'm absolutely delighted to accept the job and I do so with a simple but important message for the Albion fans and everyone at the club," the Welshman said in a statement on the club website. "Every successful club is built on unity and that is what I shall strive to help bring to Albion. We need everyone together from top to bottom -- the supporters, all the staff, the players, everyone who has an interest in the club's welfare. "With that, we can go forward together and hopefully take this club up the Premier League."



Pulis was named the Premier League's Manager of the Year for steering Palace away from relegation last season, but he left the club on the eve of the current campaign after falling out with chairman Steve Parish. He is due to watch West Brom's away game at West Ham United later on Thursday from the stands, with assistant head coach Rob Kelly taking charge of the first team. His first game in charge will be Saturday's FA Cup third-round tie at home to fifth-tier Gateshead. West Brom reportedly held talks with Pulis and former Tottenham Hotspur manager Tim Sherwood, but Pulis's record of having never been relegated as a manager gave him the edge. "We are delighted to secure a man of Tony's calibre and proven ability," West

Bruce won't succeed Pardew

Hull City manager Steve Bruce on Wednesday ruled himself out of the running to succeed Alan Pardew, who is believed to be on the verge of leaving Newcastle United. Pardew has been given permission to speak to Crystal Palace, who sacked Neil Warnock at the weekend, and is reported to have said his farewells to Newcastle's staff and players at their training ground on Tuesday. Bruce, 54, was a boyhood Newcastle fan and has previously expressed regret over rejecting a chance to manage the club in 2004, but he says that he is fully committed to Hull. "People know that I am from Newcastle, I was a Newcastle supporter as a boy and it has been regretted since I was a 22-year-old playing for Norwich and Gillingham," he told a press conference. "For that obvious reason, every time I am linked with them. It's very flattering as I'm a Geordie, but that's it. "I have a job to do here and it would be wrong for me to think of anything else other than get this club out of the position we are in and that's all I am focused on."

Hull are currently above the Premier League relegation zone on goal difference alone and host Everton on New Year's Day.

Gemcon title pleases Siddikur

Siddikur Rahman had his sights on the course record in the Kurmitola Golf Club. The two-time Asian Tour winner couldn't quite achieve that feat, but made sure he ended the BPGA 2014 season on a high note, racing away with the Gemcon Players Championship title. Starting the day at 15-under (201), Siddikur needed four-under finish in the last round to match the course record (19-under) he himself had set during an event of the PGTI tour in 2011. However, the final round didn't start too well for the 30-year-old golfer, who carded a double bogey in the front nine, apart from a couple of bogeys and birdies. But the ace golfer managed consecutive birdies in the last three holes to end the day at three-



under (69) for an aggregate of 18-under (270). Siddikur was satisfied to have fin-

ished the season, which was plagued with a persistent back-strain forcing him out of action for quite a few months, on the right note. "Despite not being able to set the new record, I am happy that I could perform so well, especially after enduring a difficult season in 2014. Now I look forward to more success in the new season," said Siddikur after receiving the title of the Gemcon Players Championship. Up next for Siddikur is another BPGA event starting on January 4 at the Kurmitola Golf Club, before he embarks on a new Asian Tour season in February. Meanwhile, Jakiruzzaman Jakir grabbed the second position of the tournament with an aggregate score of six-under (282), followed by Jamal Hossain Mollah at five-under (283). A total of 30 professional golfers from Bangladesh took part in the event.

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