

Enrique unfazed

Barca president calls for early elections

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona coach Luis Enrique insisted he had no regrets over his handling of the Catalans' star-studded squad this season amid reports his relationship with Lionel Messi is at breaking point.

Enrique left the four-time World Player of the Year on the bench for Barca's 1-0 defeat to Real Sociedad on Sunday and wanted to discipline the Argentine after he missed an open training session with the club's fans on Monday citing a stomach bug, according to Barcelona sports daily Sport.

"I don't have anything to regret at the moment with any of my players. Every coach has to manage his squad as he sees fit. The primary objective is to win titles and we are on that road," Enrique said at a press conference on Wednesday.

"I am not going to confirm or deny these stories or supposed stories that appear because they are too varied and there are too many of them."

"What I have to do is do my job the best I can and in the manner I think is best for the team and the club."

Enrique denied that he had been given an ultimatum by the club's underfire president Josep Maria Bartomeu that his job would be on the line if they don't beat Spanish champions Atletico Madrid at home on Sunday.

However, he claimed that the sacking of sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta on Monday by Bartomeu had weakened his position.

"The future of a coach always depends on results, that is the first thing they teach us on coaching courses," he added. "I feel I have the backing of the club and the players."

The root of Barca's meltdown in recent days started when Messi and Brazilian stars Neymar and Dani Alves were given two extra days off than the rest of the squad during the winter break.

All three players returned to Spain just 48 hours before Barca's match in San Sebastian and were among nearly 300 million euros worth of talent left on the sidelines by Enrique, also including Ivan Rakitic and Gerard Pique.

The former Roma boss repeated his belief that Messi is the best player in the world, but said there were certain rules which all his squad had to abide by.

"In the same way that I don't treat all my children the same, I don't treat all my players in the same way. That would be a mistake, but there are rules for everyone."

Meanwhile, Barcelona president Bartomeu has called club elections for the end of the season in a bid to ease the tension surrounding the embattled Catalan club.

"I have called this press conference to say that we have called elections for the end of the season to reduce the tension that surrounds the club which I think is disproportionate and doesn't correspond to the reality of the club," Bartomeu said on Wednesday.

"It is better than the mandates are completed, but it is clear that in recent weeks the level of tension hasn't been right. We will keep managing things as we had previewed and will not change our programme." The current board's mandate was due to run until 2016.

However, Bartomeu strongly denied claims in Barcelona sports daily Sport that a request from Enrique to discipline the Argentine for missing the training session had been rejected by the club.

"That story is completely false. Whoever sent it did so with the intention to damage the club."

Bartomeu also dismissed suggestions that Messi could leave the club having signed a new contract to keep him at the Camp Nou until 2018 in May.

"Messi had a contract until 2018. He is happy and content, so we are calm."



Inter Milan forward Mauro Icardi (2nd from L) celebrates his equalising goal with teammates during their Serie A clash against Juventus in Turin on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Icardi denies Juve

AFP, Milan



Inter Milan showed encouraging signs on new-signing Lukas Podolski's debut as they battled to a 1-1 draw at champions Juventus to hand Roma a welcome Serie A title boost.

Roma had Davide Astori's controversial first-half goal to thank for a 1-0 win away to Udinese earlier in the day.

Rudi Garcia's men are now only a point behind the leaders, who had to settle for share of the spoils in Turin after Mauro Icardi struck in the second half to level Carlos Tevez's fifth-minute opener.

Juventus started their first official game of the year looking to make amends for their Italian Super Cup defeat to Napoli in December.

And Massimiliano Allegri's men made a blistering start, Tevez bundling Arturo Vidal's inviting ball past Samir Handanovic to take his league-leading tally to 11 for the season.

Inter squandered their best chance of the half in the 23rd minute when Mateo Kovacic, sent off minutes from full-time for a rash challenge on Stephan Lichsteiner, saw his attempt to send Icardi through go awry.

Podolski made his debut for Inter 10 minutes after the restart, replacing Zdravko Kuzmanovic, and his arrival sparked an Inter revival.

Inter levelled on 64 minutes, as Icardi was somehow allowed to collect Fredy Guarin's long ball from midfield and then held off Leonardo Bonucci to the right of goal to slip the ball under the onrushing Gianluigi Buffon.

It was the Argentinian's fifth goal in four league games against Juventus.

Juventus came close twice in succession to restoring their advantage, Handanovic batting away Andrea Pirlo's swerving free

- Udinese 0 AS Roma 1 (Astori 17)
- Chievo 0 Torino 0
- Empoli 0 Verona 0
- Genoa 2 (Iago 51-pen, Matri 69) Atalanta 2 (Zappacosta 37, Moralez 49)
- AC Milan 1 (Poli 9) Sassuolo 2 (Sansone 28, Zaza 67)
- Cesena 1 (Brienza 75) Napoli 4 (Callejon 29, Higuain 41, 72, Hamsik 64)

kick with one hand, while Paul Pogba's header trickled wide of the upright from a corner.

But Inter were far from finished, Icardi narrowly missing the target after sliding in to meet Podolski's drive across the face of goal, after Bonucci had lost possession in midfield, and then forcing Buffon to block his well-struck drive.

Kovacic saw red in the final minutes for a studs-up challenge on Lichsteiner, but Juve failed to capitalise as Inter held on for a precious point that moved Roberto Mancini's men up one place to 11th.

Elsewhere, Napoli's push for a place in Europe was buoyed by a 4-1 away win at struggling Cesena, who dropped one place to bottom with Parma moving the other way after a shock 1-0 win over nine-man Fiorentina.

Gonzalo Higuain struck a brace, the Argentinian's eighth and ninth goals of the campaign, as Rafael Benitez's men moved level on points with Lazio in the third and final Champions League qualifying spot.

AC Milan's European ambitions stalled after a shock 2-1 home defeat to Sassuolo left Filippo Inzaghi's men seventh but five points behind Lazio and Napoli.

Gerrard's MSL move confirmed

AFP, Los Angeles



The Los Angeles Galaxy confirmed on Wednesday that Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard will join their roster as a designated player in July.

The 34-year-old midfielder will join up with the Major League Soccer side at the end of the Premier League season, pending receipt of a visa and international transfer certificate.

"I'm very excited to begin the next chapter of my career in the United States with LA Galaxy," Gerrard said on the LA Galaxy website.

"The Galaxy are the most successful club in Major League Soccer history and I am looking forward to competing for more championships in the years to come."

The terms of the deal were not specified, but Gerrard is believed to have signed an 18-month contract, which British media reports suggest will be worth around £6 million (\$9.1 million, 7.6 million euros).

Gerrard announced last Friday that he will leave Liverpool at the end of the current campaign, ending a 25-year association with the club that has seen him make 696 appearances and score 182 goals.

The move to the Galaxy will reunite him with his old Liverpool team-mate Robbie Keane and see him follow in the footsteps of former England colleague David Beckham, who spent five years at the California club.

"My discussions with (head coach) Bruce Arena and (president) Chris Klein were extremely positive and the future of the team is very bright," Gerrard added.

"I am committed to helping the LA Galaxy compete for trophies and to having an impact in Los Angeles and I will give my all for the club."

"In the meantime, I will continue to give everything for Liverpool for the remainder of this season before joining up with the Galaxy."

Galaxy coach Arena said: "We're very pleased to acquire a player of Steven's caliber, experience and character."

"He is one of the most decorated players in the world and will join our team with a wealth of success playing at the highest level of the sport."

Football fiesta to begin

SPORTS REPORTER

Mir Corporate Football Fiesta gets underway from tomorrow at the International Turkish Hope School premises in Uttara with 16 houses taking part in the six-a-side tournament to be held under floodlights.

The participating teams, divided into four groups, will be playing round-robin matches and the top two teams will move into the Plate stage, while the lower two teams will play Bowl stage, informed organisers at a press briefing at the BOA House yesterday.

Participating teams are Mir Group, Int'l Turkish Hope School, Accenture-GPIT, Bando Design, Spell-Bound, HSBC, IDLC, Qubee, Magnito Digital, Computer Source, Comfit Composite Knit Ltd, Vizrt, Dhaka Tribune, BAT, IFC and SCB.

Ali released from hospital

AFP, Louisville

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali has been released from the hospital after being treated for a urinary tract infection, media reports said Wednesday.

Ali, 72, was admitted more than two weeks ago with what was then thought to be pneumonia.

But doctors ultimately determined he had a severe urinary tract infection, and he was released Tuesday night, the Courier-Journal newspaper reported, quoting Ali spokesman Bob Gunnell.

Ali is a three time world heavy-weight champion and Olympic gold medallist. He has suffered from Parkinson's disease since the 1980s.

"The boxing legend has fully recovered and is now at his home. Ali looks forward to celebrating his upcoming 73rd birthday on January 17th with his family and friends," Gunnell said in a statement, according to www.allsports.com.

"The Ali family greatly appreciates the outpouring of support and continued well wishes. They also want to thank the team of doctors and nurses for their exceptional care."

ঢাকা পানি সরবরাহ ও পয়ঃ নিষ্কাশন কর্তৃপক্ষ
 Dhaka Water Supply & Sewerage Authority

"বিশ্বমানের 'শান্তি' পানি পান করুন
 'শান্তি' পানি মায়ের মমতার মত নিরাপদ"

Invitation for Tender

The undersigned is inviting tenders from eligible tenderers
 The details of tenders are given below;
 Name of tenders:-
 1. Repair & maintenance work of approach road at Bashabo-3 water pump house under MODS Zone-1, Dhaka WASA.
 Tender No: 46.113.404.00.00.2014-15.2510/Zone-1, Date-01/01/2015.
 Procurement Method: L.T.M
 Tender last selling date: 19/01/2015 during office hours.
 Tender closing date & time: 20/01/2015 up to 12.00 noon.
 For details, visit Dhaka WASA website: www.dwasa.org.bd
 The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.

Engr. Md. Nurul Islam
 Executive Engineer
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