

LORD BENDTNER A REALITY

The day is finally upon us. Nicklas Bendtner has a title. As of today, Bendtner is a real lord. Danish magazine SE OG HØR have paid to buy a 30cm square metre of land on a country estate in the west of Scotland and registered it in Bendtner's name, therefore making him a lord of the manor. "We have seen it, and Nicklas think it's a fun gimmick. We have asked to be sent a receipt and we are pleased that it supports a nature conservation area," said Elisa Lykke, Bendtner's PR agent.

- INTERNET



SERIE A

Morata fires Juventus

AFP, Rome

Alvaro Morata came off the bench to hit a superb curling strike that earned a 1-0 win at Palermo as Juventus continued their march towards a likely fourth consecutive Serie A title on Saturday.

With closest challengers Roma not in action until Monday when they host Sampdoria at the Stadio Olimpico, the Turin giants had the chance to open up a 14-point gap on the Giallorossi at the top of the Italian championship.

However Massimiliano Allegri's men had to battle throughout as Palermo fought to defend their formidable home record before Morata secured the points thanks to a fine piece of individual skill in the 70th minute.

The Sicilians had suffered only one defeat at the Renzo Barbera stadium this season -- a 4-0 rout to Lazio in September -- and seemed intent on frustrating the champions throughout a physical encounter of few real chances.

AMATEUR GOLF Title goes to Sajib

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's amateur golfer Sajib Ali clinched the title of the 30th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship yesterday.

The Bangladesh national team player finished the fourth round with a four-under-par (66) for an aggregate of 18-under-par (270), to beat his nearest competitor Sadom Kaewkanjana of Thailand (284) by 14 strokes. Promising local golfer Mohammad Russell finished third with three-over-par (291).

Parinda Phokan of Thailand beat her compatriot Kanyalak Preadasuthijit to claim the women's singles title while Bangladesh team had earlier won the men's team title.

BUNDESLIGA

Bayern thrash Bremen

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich put the finishing touches on a perfect week's work as they defeated Werder Bremen 4-0 on Saturday to extend their lead at the top of the Bundesliga to 14 points.

Pep Guardiola's side made it three wins in seven days, scoring 14 goals and conceding just one, as they not only padded their lead in the domestic flight but also qualified for the Champions League quarterfinals.

German international striker Thomas Mueller grabbed his fourth goal of the week with a left foot shot past Raphael Wolf to put the champions 1-0 in front on 24 minutes at the Weser-Stadion.

Austrian defender David Alaba then scored his second league goal of the season to cushion the advantage.

Polish international Robert Lewandowski added the gloss with two late goals to round out the scoring.

While Bremen, who came into the weekend five points behind the European places, toiled bravely they were unable to breach the goalline of Pepe Reina, who was standing in for first-choice keeper Manuel Neuer.

The absence of Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery, who picked up knocks during the 7-0 rout of Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Wednesday, had little effect as Bayern picked up their 20th victory in 25 league outings against just one defeat.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (R) celebrates one of his two goals with teammate Neymar during their Primera Liga match against Eibar at the Ipurua Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Messi on the double

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona moved four points clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga as a double from Lionel Messi eased them to a 2-0 win at Eibar on Saturday.

The Argentine overcame his recent penalty yips to open the scoring from the spot and then headed in his side's second from Ivan Rakitic's corner.

Madrid have the chance to reduce the gap back to a point ahead of next weekend's El Clasico between the two sides when they face Levante on Sunday.

Champions Atletico Madrid are now nine points off the top, though, as they had Miranda sent-off in a 0-0 draw at Espanyol.

Barca boss Luis Enrique made seven changes with Wednesday's meeting with Manchester City in the Champions League, as well as the Clasico, in mind.

And it took the Catalans half an hour to break down Eibar's well-organised defence with a sweeping move that led to Borja Ekiza handling a shot from Messi.

The four-time World Player of the Year had missed five of his last 11 penalties for club and country, but made no mistake from the spot as he thumped the ball home left-footed.

Barca could have been further ahead at the break as Luis Suarez fired just off target from Rakitic's chested pass.

Neymar was then denied from a narrow angle by Jaime Jimenez after a lovely through ball by Messi.

But it was to be Messi himself who put the game beyond any doubt in usual circumstances as he was left free inside the area to head Rakitic's cross into the far corner and move two goals clear of Cristiano Ronaldo in the fight to be La Liga's top goalscorer.

Burnley stun Man City

AFP, London



Manchester City wasted a chance to put pressure on Premier League leaders Chelsea as the champions crashed to a shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Burnley on Saturday.

Manuel Pellegrini's side would have moved within two points of Chelsea with a victory, but instead they departed Turf Moor with their hopes of retaining the title hanging by a slender thread after a lacklustre performance was punished by George Boyd's second half winner.

City remain five points behind Chelsea, who can extend that advantage to eight with a victory against Southampton at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

To make matters worse for City, Jose Mourinho's side will still have one more game in hand after facing Southampton.

The dismal defeat, their first against Burnley since 1974, was the worst possible warm-up for City's Champions League last 16 second leg trip to Barcelona in midweek and added to the growing pressure on Pellegrini.

RESULTS

Arsenal 3 (Giroud 45, Ramsey 81, Flamini 84) West Ham 0

Burnley 1 (Boyd 61) Manchester City 0

Crystal Palace 3 (Zaha 21, McArthur 40, Ward 42) QPR 1 (Phillips 83)

Leicester 0 Hull 0

Sunderland 0 **Aston Villa 4** (Benteke 16, 44 Agbonlahor 18, 37)

West Brom 1 (Ideye 19) Stoke 0

City captain Vincent Kompany and midfielder Fernando had both returned to the starting line-up after the pair were left out of their last game against Leicester following reports of a dressing room row.

But the third bottom Claret took the lead in the 61st minute when Kompany's header only reached the edge of the penalty area, where Scotland midfielder Boyd drove a fine low left-footed strike past City goalkeeper Joe Hart.

City had a strong penalty appeal turned down in stoppage-time when Pablo Zabaleta tumbled under a challenge from Ben Mee.

Arsenal cemented their position in the top four as Olivier Giroud's blistering strike inspired a 3-0 rout of West

Ham.

Arsene Wenger's third-placed side are aiming to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish for the 18th year in a row and they are well on course after a fifth successive league victory.

It was also the ideal preparation for next week's Champions League last 16 trip to Monaco, who hold a 3-1 lead from the first leg.

Giroud broke the deadlock seconds before the break as the France striker cut in from the right edge of the penalty area to lash an unstoppable left-footed shot into the far corner.

Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey got Arsenal's second, and his first since December, in the 81st minute when he played a one-two with Giroud and finished with aplomb.

Mathieu Flamini came off the bench to seal the points with an 84th minute goal that lifted the Gunners four points ahead of fourth-placed Manchester United and six clear of fifth-placed Liverpool.

Aston Villa's revival under new manager Tim Sherwood gathered pace as they boosted their bid to avoid relegation with a crucial 4-0 win at fellow strugglers Sunderland.

AFC U-23 CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS Singapore under-23s lined up for practice

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday informed that they are planning to send the under-23 national team to Singapore for two practice matches ahead of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers, which will be held in Dhaka from March 27 to 31.

The BFF boss said if the plan goes through, the team would leave for Singapore as early as tomorrow.

"We have requested them (Singapore Football Association) for arranging two practice matches between the under-23 teams. The first match, if everything goes according to plan, will be held on March 18," said Salahuddin after emerging from a meeting with head coach Lodewijk de Kruij and newly-appointed goalkeeping coach Christian Schweichler at his office.

De Kruij, who arrived last Thursday along with Schweichler, was worried over the fitness and match-experience of his charges as Bangladesh will be up against

some high-ranked teams in the championship. The hosts will start the campaign with the game against Syria on March 27, followed by the match against top-seeded Uzbekistan on March 29 before taking on neighbours India on March 31.

"The main problem with this squad is most of the players did not get enough opportunity to play in league and cup matches last season. I am also worried about the injuries to some of my key players. However, anything is possible in football and my job would be to try and organise these players," said the Dutchman.

Schweichler, who has only had four sessions with the five goalkeepers of the squad so far, has identified a few aspects to work on already.

"I only have a very short time to work. I think I will need to improve on the tactical issues and positional sense of these 'keepers as their fitness and skill level is satisfactory," said the German, who had a stint with Lebanon national team as their goalkeeping coach in 2012.

The squad is expected to be trimmed as the camp moves to BKSP in Savar today.

Case against Barca bosses upheld

AFP, Madrid



A Spanish judge on Friday upheld a tax fraud case against FC Barcelona's current and ex-chairmen over the signing of striker Neymar, taking them a step closer to a possible trial, a judicial source said.

Wrapping up his preliminary investigation, a judge at the National Court in Madrid ruled there were grounds for suspecting tax fraud by Barca's chairman Josep Maria Bartomeu and his predecessor Sandro Rosell, the source said.

The court, Spain's top criminal tribunal, upheld the charges against the two and the club as a whole and referred the case to the state prosecution service -- one of the last steps towards a possible trial.

Judge Pablo Ruz decided to proceed with the case... and rejected the request by

Bartomeu and Rosell for the case to be dismissed," the source told AFP.

The judge suspects the club understated the real cost of signing Neymar in order to "surreptitiously evade or reduce the payment to the public treasury".

The club has denied any wrongdoing. In a statement it vowed to appeal against Friday's decision immediately.

It said its attempts at a defence were being disrupted by the "abnormal swiftness" with which the case was moving forward.

State prosecutors now have 10 days to present formal accusations. The judge will then have to rule whether the two defendants and the club should be sent to trial.

Following months of investigations, Ruz said the two defendants were suspected of three counts of tax fraud worth a total 13 million euros (\$13.6 million) relating to the signing of the star striker in 2013.

England lose Arsenal duo

AFP, London

Arsenal midfielders Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Jack Wilshere will not be fit for international duty with England later this month, Gunners manager Arsene Wenger revealed on Friday.

Oxlade-Chamberlain suffered a hamstring injury during the second half of Arsenal's 2-1 FA Cup quarterfinal win at Manchester United on Monday.

Wilshere, meanwhile, is recovering from minor surgery to remove studs from the pin in his ankle, and is also expected to need a few more weeks recovery time.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin (L) makes a point to newly-appointed goalkeeping coach of the national under-23 team Christian Schweichler (R) and head coach Lodewijk de Kruij (2nd from R) at his office yesterday.

Chinks in India's armour?

FROM PAGE S1

The Indian spinners, who had their cracks covered mostly by some serious effort of the seamers so far, were exposed to some daredevil batting by Zimbabwe's stand-in skipper Brendan Taylor. The wicketkeeper-batsman, who is turning his back on the national team for a lucrative three-year stint with English county side Nottinghamshire, was severe on both Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, as he found the spin-adverse wicket and the shortish boundaries of the Eden Park much to his liking. The two spinners went for an aggregate of 146 runs in twenty overs. Ashwin

conceded 75, his highest in an ODI while Jadeja went for 71, his fifth-highest. Overall India's spinners have claimed 20 wickets so far in this tournament against 36 by the seamers, which should be a fair indication that the twenty overs likely to be offered to the spinners is the best opportunity for Bangladesh batsmen to target. We know how drastically fielding standard drops on the face of constant battering, and hopefully a positive intent from the Bangladesh batters would exert that pressure on the Indian fielders.

The batting, too, came under tremendous scrutiny yesterday as India were down to four for 92 at one stage

in their chase. And if it was not for some sloppy catching from Zimbabweans, India might have been in a lot more trouble. It was not the first time in this tournament that India's vaunted batting line-up showed discernable weaknesses. It was the second time, after the match against West Indies that none of their top four batsmen managed to score either a century or a half-century. In both cases, they were let off the hook, or to give credit where it is due, Mahendra Singh Dhoni bailed them out. Bangladesh would surely have better plans than the West Indies and Zimbabwe, if they do get India into such a situation come March 19.

Amalfitano signs new deal

AFP, London

West Ham midfielder Morgan Amalfitano signed a new two-year contract with the Premier League club on Friday.

The 29-year-old, who spent last season on loan at West Brom, initially signed a one-year deal with the Hammers, but his form has seen him rewarded with a further two years, following in the footsteps of Mark Noble.

ARE YOU A CRICKET GURU?

Play our cricket quiz and win a **Nokia Lumia 535** every week. The highest scorer will get an **iPhone 6**. To play, type 'Q' and send to **4007**.

Charge: Tk. 2.30/SMS
Join: facebook.com/airtelbuzz
Visit: bd.airtel.com