

A-LEAGUE HEAD ESCAPES INJURY

Football Federation Australian chairman Frank Lowy has a sore shoulder after falling off the presentation stage after the A-League final in Melbourne. Lowy, 84, the tycoon with an estimated wealth of \$5.6 billion, tumbled off the dais as he went to present Melbourne Victory coach Kevin Muscat with the championship trophy after Victory's 3-0 triumph over Sydney FC. Medics rushed to the Westfield founder's aid, but he soon got to his feet and completed the post-match formalities



JFA returns with women's football

SPORTS REPORTER

The JFA (Japan Football Association) Cup football tournament returns after a three-year hiatus in a different form as it will be an under-14 women's affair this time instead of the under-15 boys' championship held previously.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), in financial association with the JFA, started the under-15 boys' tournament in 2005 which created a buzz among the budding booters at district level. But the JFA stopped sanctioning the annual fund of 20,000 dollars since 2012 after the game's governing body had used the fund in other purpose instead of holding the youth tournament. There was no JFA Cup held in the last three years.

The BFF, however, revived the tournament with a fresh sanctioning of 30,000 dollars from the JFA and chose to hold the under-14 women's national football championship which will get underway at six different venues from today.

After the knockout phase featuring 33 teams, six zonal champions, one best runners-up and the host district will play in the eight-team final round.

"In a bid to finding new players, we are going to hold the under-14 women's football championship and we think this will help forming the national women's team in future," said Mahfuza Akter, co-chairman of BFF women's football committee, at a press conference yesterday.

Walton-BSJC media cricket from Tuesday

SPORTS REPORTER

Walton-BSJC Media cricket tournament will start from Tuesday at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium with 24 media houses taking part in the six-a-side tournament.

The participating teams, split into eight groups, will play in round-robin league format from where the eight group champions will advance to the quarterfinals, informed Bangladesh Sports Journalists Community's general secretary Shafiqul Islam at a press conference yesterday.

'Pep dreams of Brazil'

AGENCIES, Sao Paulo

Former Santos and Roma goalkeeper Julio Sergio claims Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola told him he dreams of coaching Brazil and would take the job without hesitation.

The 44-year-old was linked with the position following Mano Menezes' dismissal in June 2012, but CBF president Joe Maria refused to appoint a foreign coach for the first time in their history.

"Guardiola told me that he dreams of coaching the Brazilian national team, and he would accept an invitation without thinking," Julio Sergio, who spent time with Guardiola at Bayern earlier this year as he prepares for a coaching career said.

"He also said he wanted to lead Brazil in the 2014 World Cup and assured me that if he was the coach, and had Neymar, he would have been champion."

The 44-year-old has recently been tipped to quit his current club before declaring his intention to see out the remaining 12 months of his contract last week.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi struck the all-important goal against Atletico Madrid to present the Blaugrana their 23rd La Liga crown at the Vicente Calderon stadium in Madrid yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Messi hands Barca 23rd title

AFP, Madrid



Sunday.

Exactly a year to the day since Atletico won the league in a title decider at Barca's Camp Nou, the Catalans exacted some measure of revenge to seal the first of a potential treble of trophies this season.

Luis Enrique's men face Athletic Bilbao in the final of the Copa del Rey on home soil at the Camp Nou on May 30 and Juventus in the Champions League final a week later in Berlin.

Cristiano Ronaldo struck his 30th Real Madrid hat-trick as Los Blancos bounced back from their Champions League elimination at the hands of Juventus to beat

Espanyol 4-1, but it mattered little as they still trail Barca by four points with just one game to play.

Meanwhile, defeat means Atletico need just a point on the final day to secure their place in the group stages of the Champions League next season by finishing third as Valencia could only manage a 1-1 draw at home to Celta Vigo.

With temperatures at kick-off above 30 degrees celsius, a somewhat subdued start wasn't surprising, but it was the hosts who had the better openings early on.

Claudio Bravo made a stunning save to palm Jose Maria Gimenez's header from a corner and the Chilean produced another fine stop moments later from Antoine Griezmann, although the Frenchman had already been flagged offside.

Barca grew into the game as the half wore on with Messi testing Jan Oblak with a drive from the edge of the area and then a headed effort that was easily held by the

RESULTS

Atletico Madrid 0 **Barcelona 1** (Messi 65)
 Espanyol 1 (Stuani 73) **Real Madrid 4** (Cristiano Ronaldo 59, 83, 90+1, Marcelo 79)
 Valencia 1 (Otamendi 71) Celta Vigo 1 (Hernandez 8)
Villarreal 2 (Moreno 82, 87) Malaga 1 (Darder 90)
 Elche 2 (Jonathas 32, 45) **Athletic Bilbao 3** (Aketxe 80, San Jose 87, Williams 90+2)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Lopo 21, Juanfran 79) Levante 0
 Real Sociedad 0 **Granada 3** (El-Arabi 74, Ibanez Castro 79, Rochina 88)
 Cordoba 1 (Luso 57) **Rayo Vallecano 2** (Baena 21, Embarba 78)
 Espanyol 1 (Stuani 73) **Real Madrid 4** (Cristiano Ronaldo 59, 83, 90+1, Marcelo 79)
Sevilla 2 (Iborra 65, 70) Almeria 1 (Bifouma 30)

Slovenian. The visitors were then left furious at referee Alberto Undiano Mallenco as he turned down two huge penalty claims.

Firstly, another goalbound Messi header was diverted off target

by the arm of Juanfran before Dani Alves went down under pressure from Diego Godin.

Godin was booked for a foul outside the box despite contact continuing inside the area and Messi curled the resulting free-kick off the crossbar.

Atletico threatened once more from a set-piece at the start of the second period but unlike his title winning strike last season, the unmarked Diego Godin couldn't turn his header on target.

As so often this season, it was Messi who provided the moment of magic for Barca as he played a neat one-two with Pedro Rodriguez inside the area before prodding the ball into the far corner.

Messi then teed up Neymar with a great opportunity to seal the title, but the Brazilian failed to continue his seven-game scoring streak as he blasted over with just Oblak to beat.

That miss mattered little, though, as the visitors comfortably saw out the final few minutes.

Brazil by business!

AGENCIES, Sao Paulo



BRASIL

Believe it or not, the Brazilian football team is currently not being picked by the manager, but by the commercial partners of the Canarinho, according to Brazilian newspaper 'O Estado de S. Paulo.'

The Portuguese language daily said that it has obtained a document from the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) to support its claim.

The document -- a 10-year contract agreed to in 2006 between CBF and Internacional Sports Events (ISE) -- clearly outlines that the list of players called-up by the Brazilian manager must match the criteria established by their commercial partners.

This "partner", ISE, is based in the Cayman Islands and don't have a headquarters, let alone any employees.

The main criterion is that the player must be marketable and therefore generate revenue and the manager may not call up other players without prior consent. The findings also showed that no fresh player can play in the Brazilian football team until they generate as much money as the player they would be replacing. This means that the national coach may not call someone who he assumes to be the best for the team, but those who are the most market-

Newspaper Estadao claims the Brazil national team has been selected by its commercial partners since 2006
 It claims only players 'marketable' enough are picked
 Estadao have disclosed a contract signed by the Brazilian FA and a Cayman Islands-based company called ISE
 It suggests the manager has little or no say in team selection
 Certain elite players chosen by ISE must feature in every Brazil match
 ISE decide on replacements on the bases of how 'marketable' they are



Maria Sharapova holds the winner's trophy after beating Carla Suarez Navarro in the Italian Open final in Rome yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic defends in style

AFP, Rome



his fourth Italian Open title on Sunday.

In the absence of seven-time champion Rafael Nadal, ousted in the quarterfinals, the Serbian produced a near flawless performance on centre court to defend his title and hand Federer his fourth final defeat in Rome.

With Roland Garros a little more than a week away, Djokovic could emerge as the favourite to claim what is an elusive title in the French capital, especially in light of Nadal's current

woes on clay.

The Spaniard has won only one title on the surface this year, at Buenos Aires, and been beaten by Italian Fabio Fognini, Andy Murray, Djokovic and Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka in recent tournaments.

Djokovic, meanwhile, has brought his game to boiling point this week to claim his fifth title of the season and take his head-to-head record over the Swiss ace to 21-18.

On this performance, Djokovic will be hard to beat at the French Open, where Nadal's bid for a 10th title could be compounded by a lack of top seeding.

The Serbian traded blows with Federer from the opening stages and, at 5-4 ahead, converted his first break of the set with a return winner that clipped the edge of the tramline.

Federer was not without some choice shots of his own, the classy Swiss powering a backhand winner down the line to save a second break point in the second game of the second set.

But Djokovic's precision, power and pace looked unstoppable.

He took the early lead with a break for 2-0 and, after taking a three-game advantage behind a total of 30-12 baseline points won, was never in danger.

Djokovic secured his fourth Rome trophy in just 76 minutes as Federer struck a forehand wide on match point.

Earlier, Russia's Maria Sharapova warmed up for the defence of her French Open title by securing her third Italian Open crown with a 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 win over Spain's Carla Suarez.

PSG's third on the trot

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint Germain players were euphoric after clinching their third straight French Ligue 1 title on Saturday with midfielder Blaise Matuidi insisting this title had been the most enjoyable.

"This title feels just great, it being the third and being more difficult than the others. We've been chasing down other teams most of the season but we really do deserve this title," insisted the French international after he opened the scoring in a 2-1 away win at Montpellier.

While Marseille led for most of the first half of the season, PSG were chasing Lyon throughout 2015 and only hit top spot late in the campaign.

Italian goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu said the club's current run of eight straight wins had proved the doubters wrong.

"It's been a difficult season and we have been heavily criticised at times," he said. "But we showed great mental strength and deserve everything we have achieved."

PSG and Brazil captain Thiago Silva also said it had been a tough season, having to pick himself up from the horror of a 7-1 defeat in the World Cup semi-final to Germany.

"We the players know how hard it is. People say it's easy to win but we had to dig deep for this," said Silva.

able and generate more money than their counterparts. The document delves deeper into footballing matters, suggesting that the top players, considered part of the main team, must start every single match, with no space for newcomers whatsoever, until they have a proper "marketing value".

If these claims are true, Brazilian football will be rocked to its core as it suggests that Dunga, Mano Menezes and Luis Felipe Scolari -- the team's managers since 2006 -- did not have the final call on team selection.

Any breach of this arrangement would result in the commercial partners paying only half the agreed match fee of 660,000 pounds and in the event of one of these "elite players" being injured, the CBF would have to send ISE a medical certificate and agree on a suitable replacement.

A clause states: "Any changes to the list shall be communicated in writing to ISE and confirmed by mutual agreement."

"In this case, the CBF will endeavour to replace with new players of a similar level, with respect to marketing value, technical skill and reputation."

In addition, the contract states all broadcast rights and copyright are signed over in full to ISE with any violation resulting in a fine of 630,000 pounds.

"All terms and conditions of this agreement shall be treated as confidential by the parties and neither will disclose them," concluded the document.



State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder and Managing Director of Leatherex Footwear Industries Limited Mohammad Nazmul Hasan Sohel handing over the prize to the winner of the Leatherex Pro-Am Golf Tournament at the Army Golf Club in Dhaka Cantonment recently. President of Army Golf Club Major General Md. Masud Razzak, Chairman of the Tournament Committee Brigadier General Ahsanul Haque Mia were present on the occasion.