

OLD LADY'S HOMECOMING

Hundreds of Juventus fans waited for their team at Turin airport on Saturday night following the Champions League final. The likes of Fernando Llorente, Claudio Marchisio and Leonardo Bonucci filmed the incredible scenes at Turin airport as Juve fans welcomed their players home and uploaded the videos to their Instagram accounts with messages of gratitude. While Juventus lost the final, they ended were Serie A winners, and fans were only too happy to celebrate the achievements of the Old Lady after their final



At 30, Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka became the oldest player to win the French Open title defeating Novak Djokovic in a pulsating final 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 at the Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Novak Stan-ned

AFP, Paris



Stan Wawrinka spectacularly shattered Novak Djokovic's dream of a career Grand Slam on Sunday when he became the oldest winner of the French Open in 25 years.

The 30-year-old Swiss claimed a famous 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 victory to secure his second career major after the 2014 Australian Open.

It ended world number one Djokovic's bid to become only the eighth man to secure a career Slam as he slumped to his third defeat in a Roland Garros final in four years.

Wawrinka became the oldest champion in Paris since Andre Gomez in 1990 after just his fourth win in 21 meetings against the Serb.

"It's really hard to believe but it has finally happened," said Wawrinka, who fired 60 winners past the Serb.

"It was the match of my life. But bravo to Novak, it's a great challenge, the biggest one to play him."

"It's a special moment for me." Sunday's shock defeat, meanwhile,

was only Djokovic's third in 44 outings in 2015 and ended his 28-match win streak. It was also his eighth loss in 16 finals at the majors.

"It's hard for me to speak right now," said Djokovic who was in tears on the presentation podium.

"I'd like to say well done to Stan. He has a great heart and I have all respect for him. He is a deserving winner."

"But I'd like to say I will be back next year and I will try again."

Djokovic, playing in his 16th Grand Slam final to Wawrinka's second, had the Swiss player under siege in the first set.

Eighth-seeded Wawrinka had to save break points in the opening game -- which featured a 39-shot rally -- and the fifth.

But the world number one broke through for a 4-3 lead when Wawrinka served up a double fault.

The battling 30-year-old Swiss saved two set points in the 10th game -- one after a botched forehand put-away by Djokovic -- and then carved out a first break opportunity.

That was swiftly saved and the Serb gobbled up the opener after 43 minutes, celebrating with a mighty, arena-

shaking roar.

Wawrinka cranked up the forehand winners early in the second set but was unable to convert two break points in the fourth game as Djokovic's renowned powers of recovery made him an intimidating target to pass.

Wawrinka saw another break point disappear in the sixth game.

In the eighth, it was the same story as Djokovic saved another break point causing Wawrinka to violently smash his racquet into the net in frustration.

But he wasn't to be denied as Djokovic surrendered the set in the 10th game with a wild backhand, collecting a warning for destroying his racquet in the Paris clay.

Djokovic was playing for the third day in succession having needed five sets to beat Andy Murray in the semi-finals.

He looked suddenly jaded and unplugged, fighting off three break opportunities in the second game of the third set.

He dropped serve again to trail 4-2 and when he carved out a break point in the next game it was his first such morsel since the seventh game of the opener.

Argentina run riot England fail to fire

AGENCIES, Dublin

England's winless run against neighbours the Republic of Ireland was extended to six matches on Sunday following a torpid 0-0 draw in a friendly game at Dublin's Aviva Stadium.

Both teams will now focus on their 2016 European Championship qualifiers next weekend, when Ireland host Scotland in a Group D fixture and England look to extend their 100 percent record in Group E away to Slovenia.

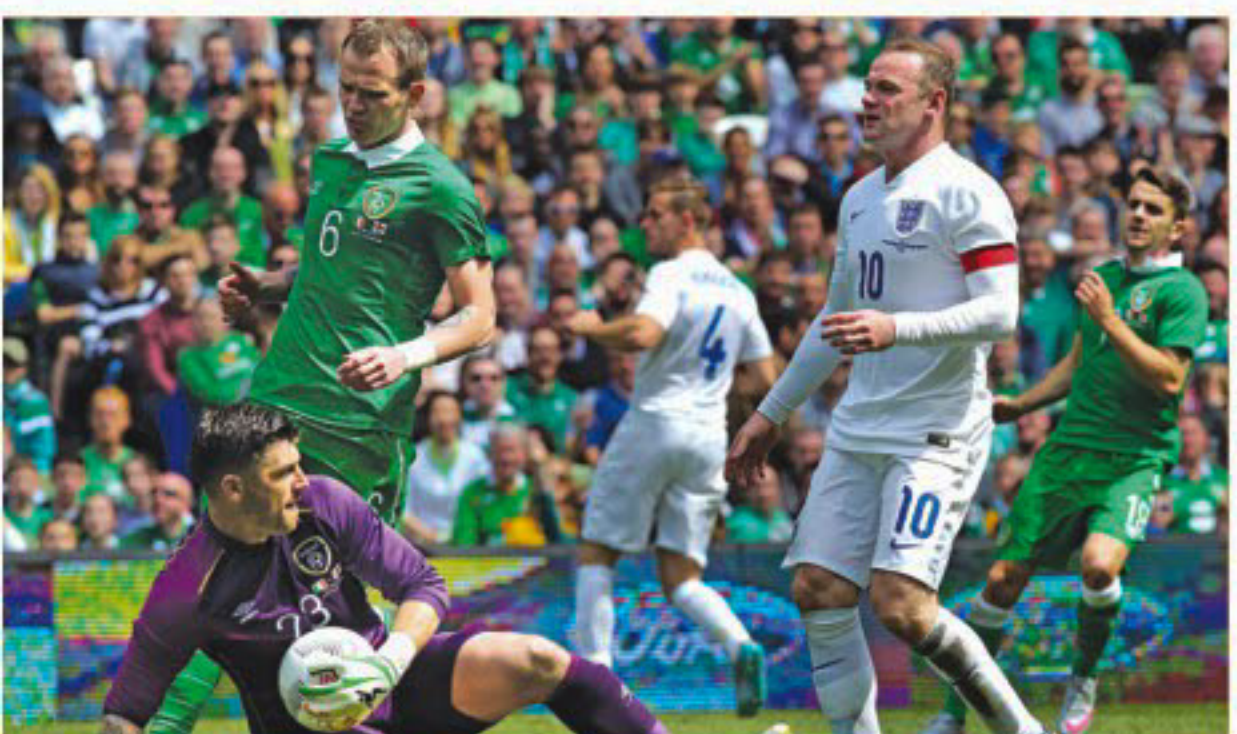
Uruguay handed Guatemala a 5-1 roasting in a friendly on Saturday that augurs well for their defence of the Copa America in the absence of suspended striker Luis Suarez.

Argentina also impressed in the leadup to the tournament in Chile, with Sergio Aguero scoring a hat-trick and Angel Di Maria a brace in their 5-0 demolition of Bolivia in San Juan.

Despite missing Lionel Messi, Javier Mascherano and Carlos Tevez, all of whom played in the Champions League final, Argentina found it just as easy against Bolivia.

Di Maria had the opener after 24 minutes, Aguero got his first four minutes later with a penalty kick and then added another on the half-hour when he clipped home a cross at the near post.

Di Maria slotted home from the spot at 54 minutes and Aguero sealed his hat-trick a minute later.



None of the England players had a good game against the Republic of Ireland yesterday, but they could have snatched a win if Wayne Rooney (R) had scored from a great chance.

PHOTO: AFP

RESULTS

Republic of Ireland 0 England 0
Argentina 5 (di Maria 25, 55, Aguero 29, 31, 51) Bolivia 0
Uruguay 5 (Rolan 3, Cavani 18, 31, Arrascaeta 55, Hernandez 57)
 Guatemala 1 (Lalin 79)
Colombia 1 (Falcao 47) Costa Rica 0
Ecuador 4 (Bolanos 27, Martinez 31,

Barcelona basking in glory

AGENCIES, Berlin



Luis Enrique says Barcelona aim to become the first team to defend the Champions League title as the head coach considers his future despite steering them to an historic treble.

Enrique capped his first season as Barcelona's head coach by matching Pep Guardiola's feat from the 2008/09 season when the Catalans captured the European, Spanish league and cup titles.

Barcelona have now won five European titles, four of which came in the last decade after their 2006, 2009 and 2011 triumphs.

"This is our 60th match (this season) with six defeats and four draws," said the 45-year-old.

"Those figures show that this has been one of Barcelona's best campaigns. In the last ten years, this has been the most successful club in Europe.

"These players have shown hunger for victories and they've shown they enjoy it so much, we have to nourish them with more titles."

Enrique is yet to commit to a second season ahead of the club's presidential elections as he has had a tense relationship with current incumbent Josep Maria Bartomeu.

"I want to celebrate the win, but the time will come when decisions must be made," said Enrique.

"It's been a difficult year with lots of transition, but I have to thank all those who have trusted me to lead Barcelona."

ALLEGRI UPBEAT

Juventus may have become the only club to lose six European Cup finals but they took heart from pushing Barcelona to the limit in Saturday's riveting final and restoring the honour of Italian football, coach Massimiliano Allegri said.

"More than anything else we come out of this final with greater self-esteem, greater confidence and greater awareness of what we can do," a remarkably upbeat Allegri said after Juve lost 3-1 in their first Champions league final since 2003.

"I can't say that I'm disappointed with the performance of my team," he added.

In his first season coaching Juventus, Allegri led his side to the domestic double,

winning the scudetto and Coppa Italia.

"We're sorry that we didn't win but I'm proud of what the boys did," said Allegri. "We can come away from this having played in European competition with personality. That was apparent on the pitch tonight."

"We can further improve the quality of our game," he said. "Not necessarily the results because that would mean winning the Champions League as well as the league and cup."

"We can improve upon what we already have and try to stay among the top eight teams in Europe on a stable basis. That's the most important objective of the team," he said.

"The enthusiasm that the people in Turin had, and the enthusiasm for the team from the whole football world, is only due to these boys who played here in Berlin," added Allegri. "I'm proud of what they did."

Juventus hailed the achievement of Allegri in getting the team to the final during his first season in charge, and beating 2014 winners Real Madrid in the semis.

"You gave us a dream. Thanks, mister," said Juventus's official Twitter account.



BUFFON NOT GIVING UP

Juventus' evergreen goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon says he is ready to keep playing for another three seasons to achieve some remaining "dreams" even though he will then be past 40.

Buffon put in an outstanding performance but could do nothing to stop the goals.

"Barcelona are the best team in the world in my opinion, but we have proved that we could compete," said Buffon.

Asked about his own future, Buffon, now 37, said he still wanted to win a first Champions League title.

"I want three more years at this level to reach a few more dreams," said the player who has also won six Italian titles.



XAVI'S PERFECT END

Xavi brought his glittering Barcelona career to a fitting and emotional end when he hoisted aloft the European Cup following a 3-1 victory over Juventus.

Considered one of the finest midfielders of all time, Xavi announced last month he was leaving after more than two decades with the club he joined at the age of 11 during which he has won 25 trophies including four Champions Leagues and eight La Liga titles.

He was welcomed with a huge roar by the Barca fans thronging one end of Berlin's Olympic Stadium when he replaced Andres Iniesta in the 78th minute of his 767th and final outing for Barca before he joins Qatari club Al Sadd.

Pulling on the captain's armband for the last time, the 35-year-old set a record of 151 appearances in Europe's elite club competition, one more than Real Madrid goalkeeper and close friend Iker Casillas.

"Not even in the best possible dream could I be so happy," Xavi told Spanish television. "There are no words, I can't ask for any more, to leave this way is perfect."

"There is already a feeling of nostalgia. Knowing that you won't play for this team again is tough."

"This is amazing," said the Spain international.

SUAREZ'S REDEMPTION

For Suarez it was a triumphant end to a first season with the Spanish champions after his ignominious biting ban at the World Cup.

"It's incredible, it's something unique," he said.

"The best thing about this side is the spirit and the fact we've been united since the start of the season."

One-third of the deadly MNS trio, Suarez scored seven goals in the Champions League this campaign, while Messi and Neymar notched up 10 each.

Who will wear the gloves?

SPORTS REPORTER



With the Joint Qualifiers for the World Cup and the Asian Cup only three days away, the jury is still out on who will stand underneath the sticks for the Bangladesh team. Two of the three goalkeepers in the squad -- Sheikh Jamal shot-stopper Mazharul Islam Himel and Sheikh Russel custodian Rasel Mahmud Liton -- are the clear frontrunners as first-time called-up Ashraful Islam Rana hasn't yet earned a cap with the national team. But it is close call between Liton and Himel, both of whom have been handed the gloves and have seen taken them off quite a few times in the past one year.

Goalkeeping coach Christian Schweichler, who has been working with the goalkeeper in phases since the middle of March, did not give any clear indication as to whether there is a clear favourite, but outlined some criteria as regards to the job.

"We have seen both positive and negative signs from Liton and Himel. I won't name any name as to who might play in these two matches, but I can say that we will go for a goalkeeper who is confident and aggressive and who can sense danger and doesn't hesitate to come out of his blocks," said the German after the team's practice session on Saturday.

Himel, who wore the national jersey for the first time during the Bangabandhu Gold after an excellent campaign with Sheikh Jamal DC last year, recently played in the May 30 friendly against Singapore. His performance was not

entirely convincing and he was partly blamed for one of the two goals Bangladesh conceded in that match.

Liton, on the other hand, has earned more caps since his debut with the under-23 team against Nepal last year. But his place came under heavy scrutiny after the opening match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup against Malaysia under-23 team, and has since been used sparingly.

However, his performance in the most-recent friendly against Afghanistan on June 2 may provide some hope for the think-tank.

Schweichler says he was impressed with the way Liton kept against Afghanistan,

especially the way he charged down and gripped a corner kick under pressure from the Afghanistan forwards during the fag end of the match. But the German also thinks there are areas that need to be worked on for both the keepers.

"What I have seen with these goalkeepers is that during set-piece situations they commit too early, even before the free-kick taker takes the kick, which is why they often go the wrong way. I'm trying to get this thing into their mind that they need to observe which way the free-kick taker picks and then commit," said Schweichler.

The German goalkeeper also feels that whoever stands under the bar should have the respect of the fellow outfield players.


"I think the outfield players don't show much respect to goalkeepers here. But inside and around the penalty box, the goalkeeper should always be the boss and the defenders should always listen to his instructions which unfortunately does not happen here," added the German.




LITON



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