

## Prankster interrupts Blatter

AFP, Zurich

A British comedian on Monday interrupted a press conference by Sepp Blatter in Zurich throwing paper money in front of the bemused FIFA president just as he was about to speak.

The 79-year-old Blatter was about to give details of a special election for a new president when he was interrupted by Simon Brodkin, who was immediately taken away by security guards.

The press conference was halted for a few minutes while the paper was cleaned up before Blatter returned and blamed the incident on "a lack of education".

On his way out, Brodkin -- stage name Lee Nelson -- threw another bundle of notes at a clearly shaken Blatter, saying "here you go

# Potential title-decider today

## Sk Jamal, Sk Russel square off; Abahani take on Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER



While the Eid-ul-Fitr brought a much-needed break from the hectic life for most city dwellers, it was business as usual as the Bangladesh Premier League clubs. Mohammedan Sporting Club were involved in a late fixture against Farashganj FC on the night before the Eid, and the Black and Whites made most of their delayed holiday with an emphatic 6-1 win to consolidate their fifth position in the 11-team table.

However it was Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra, Abahani Krira Chakra and Brothers Union -- the top four clubs in the league -- who had to spend the eid day getting prepared for big matches scheduled for today. Defending champions Sheikh Jamal will take on third-placed Sheikh Russel KC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today in a crucial fixture which could very well decide the eventual league

winners. With 36 points from 15 matches, and only five matches left to play, Sheikh Jamal are six points clear at the top. The two-time champions have won four matches and drawn just once in the second, which corresponded with the appointment of Nigerian coach Joseph Afusi. The Dhanmondi giants have scored a staggering 26 goals against seven in those five matches.

The Nigerian, who is in his second stint with the club, informed that except for a couple of injuries, the team is in good shape and the players are raring to challenge Sheikh Russel, who are in third position with 29 points, having played a game less.

Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque, who is still smarting from a shock 0-5 defeat against Abahani in their previous match, conceded that a defeat against Sheikh Jamal giants would definitely throw them out of the title race.

"We will have to win this match in order to stay in the hunt. Sheikh Jamal are a very good side, but they are not unbeatable," said the veteran tactician,

who informed that defender Bojan Petric and forward Paul Emile will miss out today's fixture and will be replaced by Damir Ibric and Kingsley Chigozie.

However, one thing that Sheikh Russel do have in their favour is the fact that they will have taken on all the top six clubs after today's match while the other title-challengers still have some big games remaining.

Meanwhile in the second match of the day, Abahani will try to continue their impressive run as they take on Brothers Union. The four-time champions have collected 13 points from their last five matches including a morale-boosting 5-0 win over Sheikh Russel in their latest match. However Abahani, who are in second position with 30 points, will have to do without Austrian coach George Kottan, who left for his new job three days ago. Veteran coach Amalesh Sen will take over at the Sky Blues dug-out. Brothers Union, on the other hand, lie in fourth position with 28 points, and would try to continue the momentum they gathered from their 3-2 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad five days ago.

## Pep to stand for Catalan independence

AFP, Barcelona

Bayern Munich coach and Barcelona hero Pep Guardiola will make a symbolic stand for election to the Catalan parliament in a campaign for his native region to be independent from Spain, media reported Monday.

Spanish newspaper El Pais said Guardiola, 44, would stand as the last candidate on the electoral list for the pro-independence alliance planning to run in the election in September.

Being the last name on the list would make him unable to win a seat in the regional parliament, El Pais said -- but the former player and coach would be a powerful talisman for the independence movement.

He led Barcelona to domestic and Champions League glory as coach of the club.

## EID-TIME SCORES

### OZ LEVEL AT 1-1

Australia thrashed England by 405 runs to win the second Ashes Test at Lord's on Sunday and level the five-match series at 1-1.

England, set what would have been a new fourth innings record of 509 to win a Test after Australia declared, collapsed to 64 for seven either side of tea on the fourth day.

They were eventually dismissed for 103 all out in just 37 overs.

Australia's victory was only the ninth time in the 138-year history of Test cricket that a side had won by more than 400 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 566-8 dec (Smith 215, Rogers 173; Broad 4-83)

ENGLAND: First innings 312 (Cook 96, Stokes 87; Johnson 3-53, Hazlewood 3-68)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 203 for 2 decl (Rogers 48 retired hurt, Warner 83, Smith 58; Moeen 2-78)

ENGLAND: Second innings 103 all out (Root 17, Broad 25; Hazlewood 2-20, Johnson 3-27, Lyon 2-27)

Result: Australia won by 405 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Steven Smith.

## CONSOLATION WIN FOR ZIM

Zimbabwe ended a disappointing run of defeats by beating India by 10 runs in the second Twenty20 international at Harare Sports Club to earn a share of the series.

After Chamu Chibhabha hit a career-best 67 to steer Zimbabwe to 145 for seven, an improved fielding performance under stand-in captain Sikandar Raza Butt allowed Zimbabwe to limit India to 135 for nine.

Graeme Cremer claimed three crucial wickets in the Indian

## PAKISTAN TAKE 2-1 LEAD

Sarfraz Ahmed scored 77 and Yasir Shah grabbed four wickets as Pakistan thrashed Sri Lanka by 135 runs in the violence-hit third one-day international and take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series in Colombo on Sunday.

All-rounder Mohammad Hafeez made up for a year-long ban on bowling due to a suspect action with a polished 54 as Pakistan piled up 316-4 after electing to bat in the day-night match.

Leg-spinner Yasir then shone with the ball as Sri Lanka were bundled out for 181 in 41.1 overs on a slow pitch at the Premadasa Stadium.

## DIBABA'S FEAT

Ethiopian Genzebe Dibaba set a new world record in the women's 1500m at the Monaco Diamond League meet on Friday.

Dibaba, 24, clocked 3min 50.07sec to shatter one of the most controversial records held in recent times -- 3:50.46 run by China's Yunxia Qu in Beijing in 1993.

The two-time world indoor champion's victory never looked in doubt, aided by two pace-setters in perfect running conditions.

## 1950 WC GREAT GHIGGIA NO MORE

Alcides Ghiggia, the former Uruguay striker who scored the goal which won the 1950 World Cup against hosts Brazil, died Thursday -- 65 years to the day after his famous strike in the Maracana Stadium that traumatized a nation.

Ghiggia, who was 88, died from a heart attack, his wife Beatriz confirmed to AFP.

He was the last surviving member of Uruguay's 1950 World Cup-winning team.

Speaking about his match-winning goal, Ghiggia once famously told Brazilian television in an interview: "Only three men have ever silenced the Maracana -- the Pope, Frank Sinatra, and me!"

His second-half goal in front of 200,000 spectators in Rio de Janeiro gave Uruguay a 2-1 victory which has passed into football folklore.

## BIANCHI LOSES BATTLE FOR LIFE

French Formula One driver Jules Bianchi died Friday night from head injuries he suffered in a crash at last October's Japanese Grand Prix, his family said.

Bianchi, who would have been 26 next month, had been in a coma fighting for his life under controlled medical conditions in the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire hospital in his home city of Nice, southern France.

## BARTOMEU RE-ELECTED

Josep Maria Bartomeu was re-elected as president of European and Spanish champions Barcelona after seeing off rival Joan Laporta.

Bartomeu, 52, polled 25,823 votes (54.63%) with Laporta, a former president, winning 15,615 votes (33.03%).

Other contenders were businessman Agusti Benedicto 3,386 votes (7.16%) and lawyer Toni Freixa with 1,750 (3.70%).

With 47,720 votes counted, the election had the third highest turnout in Barcelona history -- only 2010 with 57,088 votes and 2003 with 51,618 have been greater.

Bartomeu, who took over as president early last year after his predecessor Sandro Rosell stepped down, will lead Barcelona for the next six years.

## DREAM DEBUT FOR GERRARD

Steven Gerrard made a dream start to his Major League Soccer career on Friday, scoring on his full debut as the Los Angeles Galaxy came from behind to beat the San Jose Earthquakes 5-2 in the California Clasico.

Liverpool legend Gerrard, who had played 45 minutes of a friendly for the Galaxy last weekend and appeared as a substitute in a midweek cup match, helped trigger a remarkable fightback after San Jose raced into an early 2-0 lead.

Gerrard's former Liverpool teammate Robbie Keane was the star, scoring a hattrick as the Galaxy romped home.

# FIFA election on Feb 26

AFP, Zurich



FIFA will hold a special election on February 26 to replace president Sepp Blatter, football's scandal-tainted world body said Monday as French football great Michel Platini moved closer to launching a campaign.

The FIFA executive, including rivals Blatter and Platini, agreed the date at a meeting in Zurich where the "extraordinary elective FIFA congress" will be held.

Blatter announced on June 2, four days after winning a fifth term as president that he would stand down as a major corruption storm hit world football's ruling body.

The decision was a victory for Blatter who had wanted the vote pushed back until 2016. UEFA and some other regional bodies had sought a December election.

Blatter was to announce at a later press conference whether the executive committee agreed to first reform measures for the multi-billion dollar body.

FIFA is still reeling from the arrest of seven officials at a Zurich congress two days before Blatter won re-election on May 29.

The seven are among 14 people -- soccer officials and sports business executives -- accused by US authorities over more than \$150 million in bribes paid to secure television and marketing contracts for football tournaments.

Former FIFA vice president Jeffrey Webb appeared in a New York court on Saturday after being extradited from Switzerland last week. He denied bribery charges but was only released on \$10 million bail.

Swiss authorities are in parallel investigating the award of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar respectively.

Candidates for the FIFA presidency have until October 26 to put their names forward.

So far only Brazilian football great Zico has officially declared himself. But Platini is considered the favourite to take over if he decides to stand.

Platini will decide in the next two weeks whether to run, a source close to the UEFA leadership said.

The 60-year-old Frenchman is closing on a campaign after getting verbal support from four of the six regional confederations that make up football's world body, the source told AFP.

Only the Confederation of African Football (CAF) -- led by Blatter ally Issa Hayatou -- and the Oceania confederation is not backing Platini.

The UEFA leader has made increasing calls for reform of the world body in recent months. These have been heightened since the raid on the Zurich hotel to detain the seven FIFA officials.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (C) linked up with Gabonese president Ali Bongo Ondimba (R) on Saturday to lay the first stone at the Port-Gentil Stadium which will host Africa Cup of Nations matches in 2017.

PHOTO: AFP

# 'Messi needs to rest'

AFP, Los Angeles



The logistics of Barcelona's North American tour are tough enough, coach Luis Enrique makes

apologies for letting stars including Lionel Messi skip the pre-season excursion.

The Spanish giants landed in Los Angeles on Sunday to begin preparations for a three-match tour that opens with a game against Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy at the Rose Bowl on Tuesday.

Enrique and captain Andres Iniesta were fresh off the bus from the airport when they met with the media, the team having been cheered upon arrival at their hotel by a gaggle

of Barcelona fans.

Asked if he owed those fans a chance to see players like Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi and Brazilian Neymar, Enrique said his first duty was to get those players some much-needed time off.

"That's simple to answer," he said. "We have to give a certain minimum number of days of vacation for players to recover from a season that is seemingly eternal," said Enrique, who has excused Messi, Neymar, goalkeeper Claudio Bravo, midfielder Javier Mascherano and fullback Dani Alvez from the tour after they competed in the Copa America.

"The bottom line is, these players need to rest."

After taking on the Galaxy, the Champions League winners will

travel north to take on Manchester United at the home of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers on Saturday.

They complete their US swing against English champions Chelsea on July 28 in suburban Washington DC.

They will play Fiorentina in Florence on August 2 as part of the same International Champions Cup exhibition tournament.

"As a trainer, the truth is I would rather not do tours," Enrique admitted.

Like many other managers, he finds the travel demands and other details take time away from training.

"Even though the countries can be great and it can be great to travel, things like the change of time zones can have repercussions and you can have fewer trainings and that can affect the team negatively."

# Sterling to get game time

AFP, Melbourne



Raheem Sterling, the most expensive English footballer in history, will play for his new club Manchester City against AS Roma in Melbourne, manager Manuel Pellegrini said Monday.

The 20-year-old completed his move to the 2014 Premier League champions from Liverpool last week in a five-year deal worth an initial £44million that could rise to £49 million (\$76 million).

Sterling will now be seen playing in Manchester City's sky blue shirt for the first time in the International Champions Cup at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

Pellegrini said it was important for his marquee signing, whom he rates as "one of the best attacking players in world football", to get some playing time for his new club ahead of the new English Premier League season next month.

"I think that Raheem worked with Liverpool for three days in the same way as the other international players, so he will play some minutes," Pellegrini told reporters.

"I know him because he played against us for the last two seasons but I think that it is important for him to try to have some minutes with our



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City midfielder Raheem Sterling (R) is challenged by teammate Aleksandar Kolarov during a training session in Melbourne yesterday.

team as soon as he can.

"I know the way he has played at Liverpool. It's different, of course, when he's working with our squad, but he's a very young player with a lot of ambition and for me that's very important."

The Jamaican-born Londoner assumes the most expensive English footballer mantle from Andy Carroll, who moved from Newcastle to Liverpool for £35 million but never lived up to the tag.

Pellegrini is also expected to give some game time to the club's other new signings, midfielder Fabian Delph, Turkish striker Enes Unal and former England youth international Patrick Roberts either on Tuesday or against Real Madrid in the Melbourne tournament on Friday.

Manchester City warmed up for the ICC tournament with a 1-0 win over Australian sister club Melbourne City with Frenchman Samir Nasri getting a late winner on the Gold Coast on Saturday.

Roma beat Real Madrid 7-6 on penalties after the opening ICC game finished scoreless at the MCG on Saturday.

Pellegrini, echoed the concerns of Real Madrid manager Rafael Benitez about the state of the MCG pitch which has been heavily used by the Australian Football League for their club matches this season.

"Yes, I am concerned ... we know it is not in the best shape," he said.