

MORGAN GRACES FIFA 16

US women's soccer star Alex Morgan has scored a rare goal by being chosen to grace the cover of EA Sports' FIFA 16 video game, appearing alongside Argentine superstar Lionel Messi, the company announced Monday. Morgan was one of two women players chosen for the covers of the latest version of the game in North America, with Canadian skipper Christine Sinclair picked for the Canadian market. The decision to have a female presence on the cover comes as the best-selling game introduces



Kolkata to host World T20 final

AFP, New Delhi
 The iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata will host the World Twenty20 final in April next year, the Indian board said on Tuesday as it announced the venues for the tournament.

The 16-nation men's tournament will be played alongside the women's event across various venues in India from March 11 to April 3.

The other cities selected to host matches in the two-yearly tournament are Bangalore, Chennai, Dharamsala, Mohali, Mumbai, Nagpur and New Delhi, a statement from the home board said.

The final schedule will be announced in consultation with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The 2016 event will be the sixth edition of the popular tournament that began in 2007. The last tournament was won by Sri Lanka in Bangladesh in 2014.

Putin to meet Blatter at '18 WC draw

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet outgoing FIFA head Sepp Blatter on the sidelines of a 2018 World Cup draw, the Kremlin said, amid a corruption scandal that threatened to hit Russia's hosting of the event. "A meeting with Blatter is expected, it is on the agenda" at the event in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian news agencies on Tuesday.

Russia is set to host the 2018 World Cup, but the bidding process for the tournament, as well as that of Qatar's 2024 World Cup, has come under scrutiny as part of twin Swiss and US corruption investigations into FIFA's practices.



Sheikh Jamal players (from L) Wedson Anselme, Sohel Rana and Emeka Darlington celebrate one of their goals with hush signs during their 4-3 win over Sheikh Russel at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Title Sheikh Jamal's to lose

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal took a giant step toward confirming their third Bangladesh Premier League title after overcoming title-contenders Sheikh Russel with a 4-3 win in a topsy-turvy encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Dhanmondi giants twice took the lead in the first half, only to find themselves trailing at the death as Sheikh Russel produced a counter-punch in the second half. But the two-time champions dusted themselves up and scored twice in the last four minutes to snatch a vital win, which took them eight points clear at the top. The defending champions have now 39 points from 16 matches and will need at most seven points from the remaining four matches to retain the title. Second-placed Abahani could only secure a draw against Brothers Union in the second match of the day while 2012-13 champions Sheikh Russel all but slipped out of title race as they lie in fourth position with 29 points from 15 matches.

In the post-match press conference, Sheikh Jamal coach Joseph Afusi produced a cheeky smile while claiming that his proposal of postponement of the match due to an 'unplayable playing surface' following heavy rainfall was squarely declined by the opposition camp earlier in the day. He was clearly the winner as his charges looked more resilient, more in synch and more apt in dealing with the conditions. His counterpart Maruful Haque, who was terminated by Sheikh Jamal after the first leg before being appointed by his current club, lamented the dreadful performance of his defence, which contributed to a promis-

SHEIKH JAMAL	4 - 3	SHEIKH RUSSEL
ABAHANI	0 - 0	BROTHERS

Sterling steals the show

AFP, Melbourne

Record signing Raheem Sterling took just over two minutes to score his debut goal as Manchester City downed AS Roma on penalties in the International Champions Cup in Melbourne on Tuesday.

England goalkeeper Joe Hart made two late saves as Manchester City won 5-4 after the penalty shootout at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Sterling, the most expensive English footballer in history, took just two minutes and 17 seconds to open his account for the big-spending English club.

He showed his explosive pace to swoop on a defence-splitting pass from Kelechi Iheanacho to leave Roma goalkeeper Morgan De Sanctis flailing and slot the ball into the empty net.

While Sterling's much-anticipated first appearance in the sky blue was the major talking point, the 2014 English Premier League champions showed

plenty of attacking promise for the season ahead.

The 20-year-old Jamaican-born Londoner completed his move to Manchester City from Liverpool last week in a five-year deal worth an initial £44 million that could rise to £49 million (\$76 million).

The Italians equalised just five minutes after Sterling's strike in spectacular fashion. Bosnian midfielder Miralem Pjanic let fly with a 20-metre thunderbolt into the top right corner.

Sterling had a big shout for a penalty turned down when he was brought down by Alessandro Florenzi midway through the opening half, but Australian referee Jared Gillett waved play on.

Roma had three quickfire scoring chances minutes before the break, with Vincent Kompany lunging to deny Francesco Totti, Eliaquim Mangala clearing another and unmarked Daniele De Rossi putting a header over the bar.

Manager Manuel Pellegrini as

expected took Sterling off at halftime along with the influential David Silva in wholesale changes, introducing Samir Nasri, Aleksandar Kolarov and Yaya Toure into the game.

Nigerian teenager Iheanacho put Manchester City ahead again on 51 minutes when he zeroed in on an awful back pass by former England international Ashley Cole to coolly beat De Sanctis from close range.

But Serbian Adem Ljajic threw the Italians a lifeline when he beat Joe Hart with his free-kick over the wall in the 87th minute to send the match into penalties.

Hart proved Man City's hero, with saves off Seydou Doumbia and Seydou Keita to get the English club home.

Manchester City will attempt to go on and win the three-way ICC tournament when they take on ten-time European champions Real Madrid in the final match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday.

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

Lancs pair share record partnership

AFP, London

South African batsmen Alviro Petersen and Ashwell Prince shared the highest first-class partnership for Lancashire when they added 501 runs for the third wicket against Glamorgan at Colwyn Bay in a Second Division clash on Monday.

Their stand was the centrepiece of Lancashire's total of 698 for five, with Petersen extending his overnight 205 not out to 286 and Prince taking his unbeaten 154 on the first day into an innings of 261.

In the process they surpassed a Red Rose record that had stood for more than 80 years, topping the 371 added by Frank Watson and Ernest Tyldesley against Surrey at Old Trafford in 1928.

Pele leaves hospital

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazilian football legend Pele, 74, left hospital in Sao Paulo on Monday after successfully undergoing spinal surgery, doctors said.

Pele "was discharged today. The patient left the hospital at 4:00 pm," the Albert Einstein hospital in Brazil's financial capital said in a statement.

An undated photograph provided by the hospital showed the former star forward of all-conquering Brazilian sides smiling, with his arm around his companion Marcia Aoki, and wearing street clothes.

The hospital earlier said that Pele had undergone surgery for nerve root decompression in his back on July 14 and that he was recovering satisfactorily. The operation was "pre-programmed."

Pele was suffering from compression of two vertebrae which had made him lose the strength in his legs, especially in his right leg, according to Brazilian media reports.

The only player to have been in three World Cup-winning teams, Pele was reportedly due to undergo an operation on the problem last year but other health problems forced him to put off the surgery.

Known as "O Rei" ("The King"), Pele has been admitted to the same hospital several times going back to 2012.

In May, the global sporting icon was hospitalised for four days and had surgery for an enlarged prostate.

Last November, he underwent surgery for kidney stones and then came down with an infection that required treatment in a hospital intensive care unit for several days.

His one remaining kidney -- the other was removed following a rib injury during his playing days -- stopped working and had to be treated with dialysis.

He also had surgery on his femur in November 2012. Pele was named Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee in 1999.

The athlete, whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento, is widely regarded as one of the greatest footballers to have played.

Born on October 23, 1940, Pele won his first World Cup in Sweden in 1958 and was also part of the Brazil sides that triumphed in 1962 and 1970.



SL bans liquor for Pak ODI

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket authorities announced a ban on alcohol during Wednesday's fourth one-day international between Pakistan and the hosts following a drunken riot at the venue on Sunday.

Sri Lanka Cricket said unruly behaviour will be dealt with severely as a response to crowd unrest that held up play for 30 minutes at the Premadasa Stadium, delaying Pakistan's victory to lead the five-match series 2-1.

Items banned according to a cricket board statement include hooters, liquor, glass bottles, sharp objects, lighters and boxes of matches.

"Any unruly behaviour by any spectator will be severely dealt with and may even be subject to eviction from the grounds," the statement added.

Johnson wins thrilling Open

AFP, St Andrews

Zach Johnson won the British Open on Monday, emerging victorious from a gripping four-hole playoff against Louis Oosthuizen and Marc Leishman.

It was the 39-year-old American's second major title win after he triumphed at the 2007 Masters.

"It sounds beautiful. It still sounds extremely surreal. The tone to it is very humbling. I feel blessed to be the champion and honoured to be part of the history of this game," Johnson said.

Jordan Spieth, meanwhile, missed getting into the playoff by one shot and thus saw his hopes shattered of becoming just the second player to win the Masters, US and British Opens in the same year.

Johnson, Oosthuizen and Leishman all finished with totals of 15-under 273 after Johnson and Leishman had 66s and Oosthuizen a 69.

That forced the first British Open playoff since Stewart Cink defeated Tom Watson at Turnberry in 2009 and the first three-way playoff since 1999 when Paul Lawrie triumphed.

It was a gripping end to what had been an enthralling day that saw a packed leaderboard go hammer and tongs at grabbing enough birdies to take possession of golf's most coveted trophy on just the second occasion in its 155-year-long history when it concluded on a Monday.

Van Gaal salutes Rooney

AFP, San Jose

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal has saluted the leadership of Wayne Rooney as he prepares to reward the Red Devils captain by playing him in his preferred role of centre-forward.

Rooney was handed the captain's armband by van Gaal last August during his first season in charge at Old Trafford, and the England striker's performance in the role made a lasting impression on the Dutchman.

"I could not have expected more," van Gaal told reporters here Monday as United prepared for the second game of their US tour against San Jose Earthquakes.

"I think he's a great captain. Better than I had expected. He is fully accepted by the players and that's also very important because I can choose the captain -- but the players decide."

Rooney spent a frustrating season at United last year being deployed in various positions, from midfield, out wide or as a withdrawn striker.

Now however van Gaal plans to give Rooney an opportunity to nail down his favoured starting position as an out-and-out centre-forward.

"I've listened to you and that's why," van

Gaal joked to journalists on Monday when asked to explain his decision.

"I think you have more knowledge than I, so now Rooney is there."

Rooney, who led the line in a 4-2-3-1 formation for 45 minutes against Club America in Seattle on Friday, is relishing the chance to stake a claim to the striker's role.

"My best position, and I have always said it, is as a striker, getting into the box," Rooney told British media.

"And the two seasons I have really done that as a lone striker have been my two best goalscoring seasons."

"It is where the manager and myself see my best position."

"Hopefully I can get a good run of games and repay the manager and score goals for the team, but it is obviously on me to do that."

"I have no doubts that I can score 20 goals or more again and I am ready to take on that mantle and be the one who gets the goals for this team."

"If I play up there again this season, then I can get the goals. It is where I like and it is where I will play."

Rooney has set himself a target of scoring more than 20 goals for United this season after finding the net just 14 times last year in all competitions, his lowest return since

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