

Di Maria set for PSG

AFP, Charlotte



The stage appeared to be set Sunday for Manchester United midfielder Angel Di Maria to join Paris Saint Germain after spending just the one season at Old Trafford.

The future of unsettled Argentine star was thrown into further doubt after it emerged that he had failed to join up with the club's US tour as scheduled in California.

United manager Louis van Gaal told reporters after his side's 3-1 friendly victory over Barcelona that Di Maria had failed to board a flight to San Francisco.

"I have heard that he's not on the plane so I cannot say anything," van Gaal said. "I have heard that he was not on the plane," he reiterated.

Di Maria had been excused from the first part of United's tour after playing in the Copa America.

Shortly afterwards, PSG manager Laurent Blanc said in Charlotte, North Carolina where the French champions lost on penalties to Chelsea, that transfer talks were well under-way.

"It's a very long, drawn-out affair," Blanc said. "Two big clubs are having talks. Let's just wait for the moment and we will see the outcome very shortly.

"For the moment, he (Di Maria) is down to play for Manchester against PSG on Wednesday. For the moment, that is. I repeat that rumour has it that this player has every



possibility to join Paris Saint Germain, but ... at this moment in time nothing is official."

Di Maria joined United last year in a 59.7 million pound (\$92.6 million) British record transfer from Real Madrid but has failed to settle during a difficult first season with the Premier League giants.

L'Equipe newspaper on Sunday reported that a deal to bring Di Maria to Paris was imminent and that the transfer fee would be around 63million euros (\$69million, £45million).

Since the Qatar Sports Investments took over the running and financing of the club four years ago, a top player has been added to the squad each summer - Javier Pastore (43million euros) in 2011, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva (more than 60million euros) in 2012, Edinson Cavani (64million euros) in 2013 and David Luiz (50 million euros) in 2014.)

'I hope De Gea stays'

AFP, Santa Clara

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal heaped praise on unsettled goalkeeper David De Gea after the Spaniard returned from injury to thwart Barcelona here Saturday.

De Gea missed the first two matches of United's US tour with an undisclosed injury that fuelled speculation about his possible transfer to Real Madrid, who want him to replace Iker Casillas.

However De Gea returned to face Barcelona at the Levi's Stadium to play a key role in United's 3-1 friendly victory, pulling off a couple of important saves in a commanding display between the sticks.

Van Gaal expressed his admiration for De Gea's ability to return to form despite an injury lay-off.

Van Gaal admitted he was keen to keep De Gea but said ultimately the decision may be out of his hands.

"Yes of course I do hope De Gea shall stay, but in this world of football you never know," he said.

Van Gaal was also full of praise for the performance of United's de facto second string, who replaced his starting eleven just after the 60-minute mark.

Win for Sk Russel, Mohammedan

Three-horse race for 2nd place

SPORTS REPORTER



A late strike from Guinean forward Ismail Bangoura rescued all three points for Mohammedan Sporting Club as they edged Feni Soccer 2-1 in their Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With holders Sheikh Jamal DC only three points away from retaining the title, Mohammedan are in a tight battle with a host of clubs to grab the second position. And the win, their 10th in 17 matches, consolidated the Black and Whites' second position as they 34 points, two clear of Abahani and three ahead of Sheikh Russel KC. Feni Soccer remained in seventh position of the 11-team table with 15 points from 16 outings.

Having shrugged off a poor performance in a 1-1 draw against Muktijoddha Sangsad in the previous match, Mohammedan started the match strongly by taking an 11th-minute lead through Belinga Amabara, who placed home on the rebound from inside the six-yard box after Bangoura saw his powerful shot blocked by Feni Soccer goalkeeper Ahsan Habib Bipu.

The Motijheel-based outfit, though, faced some stiff resistance from Feni Soccer, who created a couple of scoring chances. Substitute Sohel Mia found the back of the net in third successive match with a clever chip in the 51st minute after a Jatta Mustafa corner fell on his feet inside the box. The striker then came close to giving Feni Soccer the lead with a dipping shot that beat goalkeeper Ashrafal Haque but went inches over the crosspiece in the

74th minute.

However Mohammedan grabbed control of the match once Feni Soccer midfielder Sharan Hawlader was sent off in the 82nd minute. The Black and Whites took full toll of their man advantage and Bangoura headed home a chip from Jewel Rana in the 84th minute to take the lead.

Feni Soccer found another chance to equalise in the 90th minute, but Abdullah Al Mamun's attempt was cleared off the goal line by Mohammedan defender Mintu Sheikh.

SHEIKH RUSSEL SNAP LOSING STREAK Sheikh Russel snapped a two-match losing streak by posting a 2-1 win over Team BJMC in the day's second match at the same venue.

Cameroonian midfielder Jean Jules I k a n g a g a v e S h e i k h Russel the lead with a spot kick in the 71th

minute after Team BJMC goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel had brought down Kingsley Chigozie inside the danger zone. The decision by referee Sujit Benarjee did not go down well with the Team BJMC players, who refrained from the game for five minutes.

However, once the game started it took Sheikh Russel only four minutes to double the lead. Bosnian midfielder Damir Ibric scored with an angular shot that embraced the far corner of the net before substitute Mehdi Hasan Tapu pulled one back for Team BJMC in the 85th minute.

The win lifted Sheikh Russel to third position with 32 points from 16 matches while BJMC were at ninth position with 12 points from 16 outings.

FENI SOCCER 1 - 2 MOHAMMEDAN
SHEIKH RUSSEL 2 - 1 TEAM BJMC



AFP, Santa Clara

There were a host of friendlies on Saturday, with some big-name ties in the International

Champions Cup. Manchester United downed Barcelona 3-1 while Chelsea drew 1-1 against Paris Saint Germain before going on to win in the penalty shootout. Arsenal, in the Emirates Cup, put six past French side Olympique Lyonnais.

Wayne Rooney got on the scoresheet as Manchester United scored a morale-boosting 3-1 friendly victory over European champions Barcelona here Saturday.

Rooney, Jesse Lingard and Adnan Januzaj got United's goals to settle an entertaining game in

front of 68,416 fans at the Levi's Stadium.

Rafinha scored a late consolation for Barcelona in the 90th minute, lashing home a shot before Januzaj netted United's third just 30 seconds later.

United made Barcelona pay for their early profligacy in the seventh minute when Rooney headed the Red Devils into the lead, punishing slack marking to power Ashley Young's corner into the net past Marc Andre Ter Stegen.

The goal boosted United and they grew in confidence, with Memphis Depay's movement and interplay again catching the eye for United.

United rang the changes on 63 minutes, removing their entire starting XI as van Gaal indicated he would do before the match.

The change yielded instant

REAL REJECT PSG'S RONALDO BID!

Real Madrid turned down a sensational £85m Paris Saint-Germain bid for Cristiano Ronaldo, according to the lead story in Spanish newspaper AS. Picturing the Portuguese star arriving in China for the latest leg of Real's pre-season tour, the paper quotes various Arab media outlets for their lead story. PSG, who have wealthy Qatari owners, are among the very few superpower clubs who could afford to buy Ronaldo in the unlikely event Real accept an offer. Indeed, £85m seems remarkably cheap for the world's best footballer, especially as his last transfer fee was £80m when he moved from Manchester United to



Barcelona forward Rafinha (12) volleys the ball past the hapless Manchester United goalkeeper into the back of the net to score a consolation for his side at the Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

United rout Barcelona

Chelsea held, Arsenal thrive

AFP, Santa Clara

results, with Tyler Blackett crossing low from the left for Lingard to tuck away the finish for 2-0.

Meanwhile in Charlotte, Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made the difference,

RESULTS

Barcelona 1 (Rafinha 90) **Manchester United 3** (Rooney 7, Lingard 65, Januzaj 90)
Paris St Germain 1 (Ibrahimovic 25) Chelsea 1 (Moses 65)
(Chelsea won 6-5 on penalties)
Arsenal 6 (Giroud 29, Chamberlain 34, Iwobi

making two shoot-out saves and firing home the winner as the Blues downed Paris Saint Germain on penalties.

Ninety minutes of action saw the teams level at 1-1 after a goal

from Zlatan Ibrahimovic in the first half and Victor Moses in the second.

However, Courtois saved the day for the Premier League champions, denying spot-kicks from Jean-Christophe Bahebeck and Thiago Silva before blasting the winner into the top corner for the 6-5 shoot-out triumph against the French champions.

It was a morale-boosting win for Chelsea, who fell 4-2 to Major League Soccer's New York Red Bulls to open their pre-season North American tour.

In London, Olivier Giroud opened the scoring before Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain doubled the lead.

Alex Iwobi and Aaron Ramsey continued the goal spree, with Mesut Ozil and Santi Cazorla netting after half-time to cap a

SA Games' prep starts in August

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh athletes will get a maximum of five months of preparation time for the South Asian Games as the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) yesterday decided to start preparation camp for the regional games from the first week of August.

The 11th edition of this multi-discipline event is scheduled to be held in Shillong and Guwahati in India from January 10 to 20, nearly six years since the 10th edition was held in Dhaka.

"We have just sat with the officials of different disciplines in a bid to run a smooth preparation camp, which will get underway in the first week of August," said Ashiqur Rahman Miku, chairman of the BOA training and development committee.

Miku informed that Bangladesh might take part in 20 out of a total of 22 disciplines even though there is still a chance to further increase the number of disciplines.

"The federation officials attended, who were present at the meeting, also demanded appointment of foreign coaches and we asked them to set up communication with their desired coaches and assured that BOA will provide all types of help," added Miku.

Onuching powers N'ganj

SPORTS REPORTER

A hat-trick from Onuching Marmapowered Narayanganj to a 5-0 win over Rajshahi in the JFA U-14 Women's National Football Championship at the BFF artificial turf yesterday. Onuching struck in the 9th, 19th, 45th, 61st and 65th minutes respectively.

Vettel wins for Bianchi & Ferrari

AFP, Budapest

German driver Sebastian Vettel delivered an emotional high-speed tribute to his late colleague Jules Bianchi on Sunday when he stormed to victory for Ferrari in a dramatic and incident-filled Hungarian Grand Prix.

The four-time world champion claimed his second victory of the season and 41st of his career -- drawing him level with the late Brazilian legend Ayrton Senna in equal third on the all-time list -- after leading from the start to dominate a thrilling and unpredictable contest.

The Red Bull pair of Russian Daniil Kvyat and Australian Daniel Ricciardo finished in second and third respectively.

The ferocity of the contest, lit up by Vettel's blazing speed and tenacity, served as an appropriate tribute to Frenchman Bianchi, who died on July 17 from injuries sustained when he collided with a recovery vehicle in torrential rain at last October's Japanese Grand Prix.

A minute's silence for Bianchi, a Ferrari academy protégé, before the race created an emotional atmosphere that was reflected in the action and in Vettel's speech.

"Merci Jules, c'est a toi," said the winner. "Thank you Jules, You will always be in our hearts... This win is for you."

It was Vettel's first victory in Hungary, and 21-year-old Kvyat's first career podium.

De Bruyne Germany's best

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Germany by a massive margin.

The Belgium international was the star of the league in 2014-15, guiding Wolfsburg to second place and success in the DFB-Pokal as they beat Borussia Dortmund in the final.

De Bruyne netted 10 league goals for Wolfsburg but topped the assist charts with an incredible 20 and created more chances

than any other player by some distance.

There was no contest for Kicker's Player of the Year award, which is voted for by journalists all over the country, as De Bruyne received 367 votes, while Robben clocked 94 and Neuer picked up 67.

"To be voted best player in a country abroad means a lot," De Bruyne told Kicker after hearing the news. "This is the reward for my season."

It was a good day for Wolfsburg all in, as trainer Dieter Hecking was made Coach of the Year with 203 votes, while Augsburg's Markus Weinzierl came in second ahead of Lucien Favre.

Conte pleased to avoid Germany

GOAL.COM



Italy coach Antonio Conte is looking forward to facing Spain in qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and is happy his side avoided Germany.

Conte's men were placed with Spain, Albania, Israel, Macedonia and Liechtenstein in Group G of the qualifiers and Italy's boss feels his side will rise to the occasion against Vicente del Bosque's team of champions.

"It is a tough group, however, I prefer to think that Spain could boost us," Conte said after the draw in St Petersburg. "I don't like the word 'difficult'. It will be a stimulating challenge against one of the strongest in the world. I am sure that we can do well and we can have good performances.

"Spain is not the best draw, but Germany would have been worse."

Having last tasted victory in a friendly against Albania in November last year, Italy started 2015 with three consecutive draws -- against Bulgaria, England and Croatia -- before losing 1-0 to Portugal in a friendly in June.

Those results leave Italy in 17th in FIFA's rankings and Conte admits that the group will be no walkthrough for his side.

"In theory, Italy and Spain are the favourite teams in the group," Conte said.

"However, Albania have started playing really well in the Euro qualifying, so they have chances to qualify.

"On paper, Italy and Spain are the best teams, however, it will be decided on the pitch."

Italy have not defeated Spain since 2011, while the Spaniards have won six of their past nine meetings stretching back to 2000.

DOPING ALLEGATION Mo Farah summoned

MAIL ONLINE

Mo Farah was questioned for five hours on Saturday by the anti-doping lawyer who brought down drugs cheat Lance Armstrong.

As predicted by The Mail On Sunday on June 28, Farah was quizzed over claims his coach Alberto Salazar gave some of his athletes performance-enhancing drugs.

At the meeting, held at London's Grange Tower Bridge Hotel, Farah told US Anti-Doping Agency investigator Bill Bock that he has never taken drugs.

Mo Farah was questioned for five hours by the anti-doping lawyer who brought down Lance Armstrong.

Farah, accompanied by his lawyers, faced Bock and categorically denied having ever doped and insisted he would split from Salazar immediately if it were ever proven the coach was involved in doping.