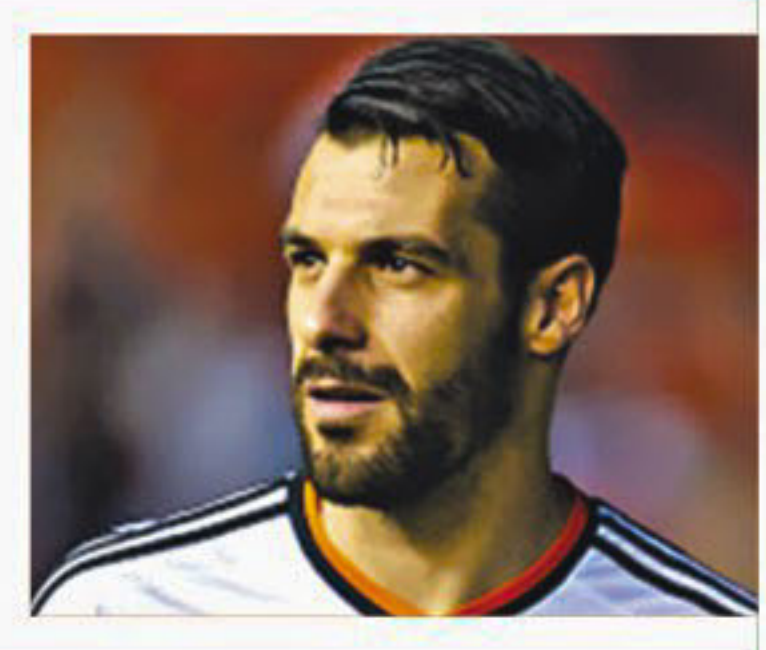


NEGREDO STAYING PUT

Valencia striker Alvaro Negredo has quashed reports linking him with an exit this summer - insisting he is happy at the club. The 29-year-old joined the Spanish club on a permanent deal worth £20million on July 1 after completing the previous season on loan there from Manchester City. Valencia striker Alvaro Negredo insists he's fully focused on playing the upcoming season with the club. Valencia are keen to sell the 29-year-old in order to raise funds for the £20m they owe Manchester City. The Premier League side are due £10m (£14m) this September from Valencia and another £10m in



SAFF U-16 CHAMPIONSHIP
Hosts BD get
India, Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh were pitted in Group A alongside defending champions India and Sri Lanka when the draw ceremony for the third edition of the SAFF Under-16 Football Championship was held at the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

The draw pitted defending runners-up Nepal against Afghanistan and Maldives in Group B. The championship will be hosted in Sylhet from August 9 to 18.

Pakistan have opted to withdraw from the competition at the eleventh hour, allegedly due to troubles in their football federation, while Bhutan did not show interest in taking part in the competition. The participating teams will receive 5,000 dollars each while Bangladesh, as hosts of the event, will receive 50,000 dollars from the South Asian Football Federation, informed speakers at the draw ceremony.

Bangladesh, guided by Rene Koster, beat Sri Lanka in the opening match before losing against India and qualified for the semifinals as group runners-up. The boys in red and green were then handed a 5-1 thrashing by hosts Nepal in the semifinal before they salvaged some pride with a 1-0 victory over Afghanistan in the third-place deciding match.

Group A: India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka.
 Group B: Nepal, Afghanistan, Maldives.



BLISS IN THE RAIN: There are times when all one needs in life is a football and an open field to rediscover love. The nonstop rain yesterday might have brought plight to many, but it gave just that love to these tiny tots at the Suhrawardy Udyan. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
BD grab two
more gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh grabbed a clean sweep of medals in the women's long jump event in the Special Olympics in Los Angeles, USA yesterday. Sharnali Akter Sweety won gold while Choity Akter grabbed silver and Kanij Fatema won bronze medal in the event. The Bangladesh badminton doubles team, comprising Abdul Kader Soron and Rezwanul Haque - won gold while Mahmuda Akter won a bronze medal in 25m freestyle swimming event.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh 11-a-side football teams reached final of their events.

Russel-F'ganj
tie called off
once again

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League match between Sheikh Russel KC and Farashganj SC has been abandoned for the second successive day due to heavy rainfall.

This fixture, which was initially scheduled for Friday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, but was abandoned after only four minutes of play due to heavy downpour, was later rescheduled for a 4:30pm start on Saturday. But continuous rainfall yesterday, and the resulting poor state of the playing surface, forced the match referee to abandon the match at around 6:00pm, half-an-hour after the cut-off time.

The match has been rescheduled for 4:15pm start tomorrow at the same venue.

Wasim finds
future bright

AFP, Karachi

Pace legend Wasim Akram said Saturday he was confident Pakistan's pool of young fast bowling talent would secure their future as he prepared to train a group of budding bowlers.

"Pakistan has enormous talent," said Wasim at the launch of the 13-day camp under the Pakistan Cricket Board.

"Talent keeps coming because there is a passion for bowling fast in Pakistan so we need to nurture the talent and I am confident that the future is secure."

The 49-year-old, regarded as one of the best left-arm pacemen to have played the game, will train around 20 young bowlers from across the country.

"I am happy that bowlers from remote areas have come to the camp and even though the 13-day period is short but I am sure these bowlers will learn the basics, like I did when I was young," he said.

Himself plucked from nowhere during a talent hunt camp in 1984, Wasim rose to enormous heights at international level, taking 414 Test and 502 one-day wickets during an illustrious career.

'You can't leave
Madrid now'

MAIL ONLINE

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez told Sergio Ramos he couldn't let him leave the club and sign for Manchester United because if he did, he would be the next one through the door.

Sources close to Ramos suggest that in heated talks held at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Guangzhou, China, last weekend the president admitted he would be forced to resign by angry supporters if he sold the club captain.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez told defender Sergio Ramos he could not let him leave.

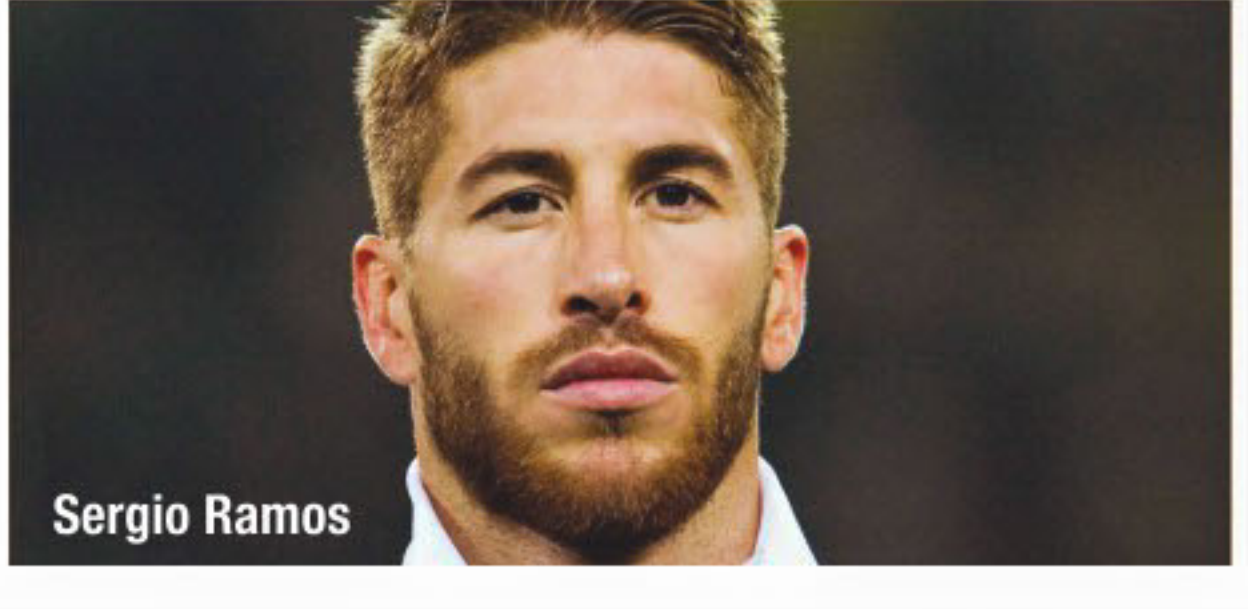
Perez feared he would be shown the exit at the Bernabeu immediately after if he did let Ramos leave.

Perez told Ramos he would not let him leave unless his 180 million euro buy-out clause was met.

Real have offered the player a deal until 2020 worth around 9 million euro a season although contrary to reports in Marca the player is yet to agree to the terms offered.

The Spain defender is still holding out for 10 million euro net and talks will be on-going between now and the start of the new season. Ramos' camp are unhappy at the way Marca, they believe on behalf of the club, have insisted the deal is done as this puts extra pressure on the player to reach an agreement.

Real Madrid are confident that the player will sign before the start of the new season but Ramos still has the option of running down his contract which will end in 2017.



COMMUNITY SHIELD
Arsenal seek to defeat
Mourinho's Chelsea

AFP, London

Arsenal's readiness to mount a sustained title challenge in 2015-16 will be tested at Wembley on Sunday when they face Premier League champions Chelsea in the Community Shield.

Arsene Wenger's team finished last season at a gallop, winning 20 of their final 26 games in all competitions and retaining the FA Cup by swamping Aston Villa 4-0 in a one-sided final.

They have carried that momentum into pre-season, winning all four of their matches, and having finally addressed their longstanding goalkeeper problem by signing Petr Cech from Chelsea, optimism is abundant.

"We want to win the league, of course we do," midfielder Jack Wilshere told the Arsenal website ahead of the English football season's traditional opening fixture.

"We feel we've been together a few years now, we've brought in world-class players who have had time to settle, we've added a world-class 'keeper with all of his experience -- he's been there and he's done it; he's won everything -- so we really feel we're in a strong position."

But Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho appears to consider them

RECENT COMMUNITY SHIELD WINNERS

2014	: Arsenal
2013	: Manchester United
2012	: Manchester City
2011	: Manchester United
2010	: Manchester United
2009	: Chelsea
2008	: Manchester United
2007	: Manchester United

genuine contenders, if the comments he has launched in the direction of the Emirates Stadium in recent weeks are anything to go by.

Citing the arrivals of Mesut Ozil and Alexis Sanchez, Mourinho claimed that anyone who touted up Arsenal's transfer expenditure over the past few years would be in for a "surprise" and

With the experienced Cech between the posts, Arsenal look much more robust defensively, the Czech international having been allowed to join a major rival due to his close relationship with Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich.

"I hope they will give respect to him because he deserves it," the Serbian defender told the Evening Standard newspaper.

"For 90 minutes the fans will support us. For sure, they will be on our side. Before and after the game, I hope and I'm sure they will give Petr respect."

To date, Cech is the only new player that Arsenal have signed, but they announced on Friday that forward Theo Walcott and midfielder Santi Cazorla have penned new contracts.

Arsenal's supporters will hope for glimpses of young attacking trio Alex Iwobi, Jeff Reine-Adelaide and Chuba Akpom, all of whom have impressed in warm-up matches.

Mourinho revealed on Friday that centre-back Gary Cahill and last season's top scorer Diego Costa will be fit to play despite sustaining injuries on the club's pre-season tour of the United States.

Radamel Falcao is expected to make his first domestic appearance for Chelsea since signing on loan from Monaco following a torrid season at Manchester United that saw him score

M'Vila ransacks
own house

AFP, Moscow

Troubled French international midfielder Yann M'Vila trashed his rented house before seeking refuge at the home of a team-mate due to an ongoing conflict with his club Dynamo Moscow, reports in Russia said on Friday.

The website LifeNews cited the owner of the house and a cleaner who claimed the midfielder ransacked his lodgings in the Moscow suburbs before leaving, with his agent saying he had gone to stay with his French colleague William Vainqueur.

The owner of the house contacted the police before accusing M'Vila of causing material damage and not paying his rent.

LifeNews added that the incident was connected to a row between the player and the Moscow club -- M'Vila, who has been playing for another Russian club, Rubin Kazan, was supposed to sign a contract with Dynamo but the deal is still to be finalised.

Dynamo's decision to reintegrate the Russian international midfielder Igor Denisov, who had been transfer listed after a row with the coach, has not helped M'Vila's case.

The coach in question, Stanislav Cherchesov, was recently sacked, being replaced by Andrei Kobolev.

Meanwhile, Dynamo's French translator recently claimed that the club's security chief, Pavel Kononov, had been extorting money from the team's foreign players.

The translator added that M'Vila kept an axe in his house as a form of protection.

He has been capped 22 times by France but has not played for his country since Euro 2012.

In late 2012 he was handed an 18-month ban from representing his country by the French Football Federation after taking part in an unauthorised night out while on under-21 duty.

Jovetic joins
Inter on loan

AFP, London

Manchester City striker Stevan Jovetic has joined Italian side Inter Milan on an 18-month loan, the Premier League club confirmed on Friday.

Jovetic struggled to make an impact at City following his move from Fiorentina in 2013 and the Montenegro international has been allowed to return to Serie A with a view to a permanent transfer.

The 25-year-old passed a medical with Inter earlier in the week and later sent a message to City's fans on Instagram which read "thank you and farewell".

"Stevan Jovetic has signed for Inter Milan on a year-and-a-half loan with a view to a permanent transfer," a statement on City's website read.

"The 25-year-old Montenegro joined City from Fiorentina in summer 2013, but injury has consistently upset his progress for Manuel Pellegrini's side.

"He will now go on loan to the Nerazzurri for a season and a half, with a view to a permanent stay.

Jose pokes at
rival Wenger

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho has taken another swipe at old rival Arsene Wenger by claiming the Arsenal manager has only himself to blame for failing to find a solution to his dismal record against the Chelsea boss.

Wenger has failed to record a single victory over Mourinho in their 13 meetings and ahead of their latest showdown in the Community Shield at Wembley on Sunday, the Blues chief mischievously suggested the Frenchman needed to work harder to come up with an answer.

Asked what he would be thinking if the roles were reversed and he hadn't beaten Wenger for so long, Mourinho said: "I think I would ask myself why. I would try to answer but not because of a mental block but because I would want to try to find solutions to help my team to do it."

Former Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Porto manager Mourinho says he has never been on the wrong end of such a wretched run against a manager, referencing only successive defeats against the same boss but different teams and in different seasons.

Wenger and Mourinho have exchanged barbs through the media for years and their antagonistic relationship turned physical last year when the Arsenal boss pushed his Chelsea counterpart during a touchline row.

Yet, after leading Chelsea to the Premier League title last season, Mourinho insisted extending his fine run against Wenger isn't his main concern in Sunday's annual curtain raiser to the English season.

"I don't think about what happened before, I just think about the game," Mourinho said.

It's not a friendly game but it's not a statement for the season. Arsenal last season won the Community Shield against the champions (Manchester City) and finished third.

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