

# Soccer League shifts focus to BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Soccer League International UK, a football management company based in Britain, has shifted its focus from the proposed Bangladesh Super League (BSL) to work with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) after a meeting with Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

The company had initially come up with a proposal of holding a franchise football league in Bangladesh with a budget of 50 million pounds, where they had claimed that international corporations like the Hero Group and the Reliance Group are interested to invest.

However, after the meeting at the Gulshan house of the BFF president, the company has expressed its willingness to facilitate the top-tier professional football league in a bid to gather knowledge of local football infrastructure, sponsorship and marketing aspects of the game here before pursuing the franchise league.

"As they want to be part of development of Bangladesh football, they have been asked to work with the existing Bangladesh Premier League," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, adding that the company facilitate in roping sponsors, improving venues and marketing aspects of the BPL as well as trying to bring financial solvency to the participating clubs.

"The BPL has been part of our original proposal as we want to hold the BSL two years later. Now we will get an opportunity to work on the BPL and its clubs, which was also a priority for us. So the proposal from the BFF president was not unexpected," said Mohammad Abdul Kabir, chairman of the company.

The BFF general secretary informed that the two parties would sign a Memorandum of Understanding soon and that the Soccer League International, UK would come up with a comprehensive proposal within a couple of months.

# 'Losing Pedro unthinkable'

AFP, Tbilisi

Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta doesn't want to consider the possibility that Spanish international teammate Pedro Rodriguez could be entering his final days as a Barca player.

Pedro has been heavily linked with a move to Manchester United before the transfer window closes at the end of the month after seeing his first-team opportunities squeezed by the arrivals of Neymar and Luis Suarez in the past two summers.

Yet, the 28-year-old looks set to start as Barca attempt to add the UEFA Super Cup to their trophy haul of Champions League, La Liga and Copa del Rey from last season against Sevilla on Tuesday after Neymar was ruled out for two weeks after contracting the mumps.

"As of today we are not thinking that we could lose him," Iniesta said ahead of the match in the Georgian capital Tbilisi.

"He continues to be our teammate and he is here to win the first title (of the season). Hopefully, as a teammate and a player he can continue with us because he is a world class player."



Michael Phelps of USA competes in the men's 200-meter breaststroke final during the National Championships in San Antonio on Monday.

# Phelps sends a message

AFP, San Antonio

Olympic swim legend Michael Phelps completed an epic effort at the US national championships Monday, having served notice he has the speed and skill to star at the 2016 Olympics.

Phelps only finished fifth in Monday's 200-meter breaststroke final in 2mins 11.30 secs, well off winner Craig Benson's winning time of 2:09.68.

But Phelps seldom swims the event and was entered more as a challenge and training exercise rather than with a victory in mind, having won three events in the prior three days and beaten the winning time at the world championships in Russia in each.

"I'm in a great place, a place where I haven't been in a long time, a place where I have confidence," Phelps said. "I've seen the

work I've been doing, and done, has worked.

"I'm going into an Olympic year having something to build on and that hasn't happened in a while, probably since 2007. I'm excited to get back into it."

Phelps was supposed to be competing at the worlds but a drink driving incident led to him being dropped from the US team, instead having to be content with vying for national titles as the US meet being staged at the same time as the worlds.

Phelps met his self-imposed goal in the 200 breaststroke by breaking his former North Baltimore Aquatic Club record of 2:12.1.

"That's what I wanted to beat," Phelps said. "I'll take a 2:11.3 any day of the week. I was just spinning coming in. I had no legs."

Phelps, who won a record eight gold medals at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, still showed he can be a threat in certain events



Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany (R) heads in the third goal against West Bromwich Albion during their Premier League encounter at the Hawthorns on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Klopp rules out job at Marseille

AFP, Berlin

Highly-rated German coach Jurgen Klopp has ruled out taking over from Marcelo Bielsa at Marseille, his agent told Tuesday's edition of Bild.

"Marseille have shown great interest in him but, for Jurgen, the time has not yet come to return," said Marc Koscicke.

Klopp quit Borussia Dortmund at the end of last season following seven highly successful campaigns in which he won two Bundesliga titles, the German Cup once and guided Dortmund to the 2012/13 Champions League final.

French press have claimed Marseille want Klopp to succeed controversial Argentine Bielsa, who quit abruptly on Saturday following his side's opening day 1-0 defeat at home to minnows Caen.

# Impressive City stroll

AFP, West Bromwich

Raheem Sterling's Manchester City debut was overshadowed by the old guard as Yaya Toure and Vincent Kompany made the decisive contributions in an impressive 3-0 win at West Bromwich Albion on Monday.

Having seen rivals Chelsea and Arsenal both slip up over the weekend, Manuel Pellegrini's team took full advantage as they provided an early glimpse of their Premier League title credentials with a dominant display at the Hawthorns.

Toure and David Silva combined to hand City the initiative just nine minutes in, with the Spain international flicking home his teammate's shot with the aid of a deflection, although the Ivory Coast midfielder was credited with the goal.

Toure doubled City's advantage 15 minutes later and Belgium defender Kompany added the third after half-time to cap a confident opener for last year's runners-up, who sit top of the table after the first round of fixtures.

Sterling, signed in contentious circumstances from Liverpool for a club record £49 million (\$76 million)

over the close-season after his attempts to force a move from Anfield, should have joined his new team-mates on the scoresheet.

The England winger spurned a glorious opportunity during what was an encouraging, yet far from flawless, competitive bow for his new club which lasted 74 minutes before he was substituted.

Deployed on the left side of a three-pronged attack, Sterling's pace, trickery and movement posed problems for Albion, however he lacked the finishing touch in front of goal City would expect for their investment.

West Brom manager Tony Pulis will hope the arrival of their own record signing, £12 million Venezuela forward Salomon Rondon, will signal a marked improvement from them after his capture Zenit St Petersburg hours before what was a disappointing start to the season.

That his side lost the initiative so early on will have been of particular frustration to Pulis.

Jesus Navas' cutback was met by Toure, on the edge of the area, and his shot was, with typically textbook technique, flicked goalwards by Silva only to take a further deflection off

Craig Dawson and dribble over the line beyond the wrong-footed Boaz Myhill.

Given the speed at which the ball travelled, Myhill, who remained rooted to the spot, may feel he could have been quicker to react.

Albion were penned into their own half by City and looked bereft of attacking ideas.

That City doubled their advantage came as no surprise and it was a goal made in the Ivory Coast as Toure played a neat one-two with Wilfried Bony - handed a start with Sergio Aguero left on the bench following his Copa America exploits - before wrapping his foot around an superb curling shot that flashed into the top-right corner.

Sterling then fluffed his lines as he spurned a glorious chance of a debut goal just before the interval when played clean through by Toure, only to give Myhill a chance to block his shot.

Myhill foiled Sterling again from a tight angle soon after half-time.

Whatever Pulis said at half-time roused West Brom, though, and there was immediately more purpose to their game upon resumption.

One of Sterling's colleagues at Anfield last season, Rickie Lambert, almost marked his competitive Baggies bow in style with a brilliant free-kick

# Bielsa back in Argentina

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentine coach Marcelo Bielsa on Monday returned to his home country two days after his surprise resignation from French Ligue 1 side Marseille.

Bielsa, 60, who has been linked to the Mexico national team manager's role in recent weeks, arrived at Buenos Aires' Ezeiza airport and travelled immediately by road to his hometown of Rosario, 300km from the capital.

Bielsa, who had only been in charge at the Stade Velodrome since May 2014, announced he was quitting the French club immediately after their lacklustre 1-0 season-opening defeat to Caen on Saturday.

Bielsa insisted he was not leaving Marseille to sign another contract but blamed disagreements with club management.

# Hertha post win after gun attack

AFP, Berlin

Hertha Berlin cleared the German Cup first round hurdle on Monday 24 hours after a shot was fired at their team bus as a clash between lower league Osnabruck and RB Leipzig was suspended when the referee was struck on the head by a lighter.

A police inquiry is underway into Sunday's incident when a motorbike rider fired at the empty Hertha bus as it was being driven to pick up the team at Bielefeld train station.

A photo posted by the club on Twitter showed the impact of the bullet which smashed a hole in the windscreen at the level of the driver's head who escaped uninjured.

Hertha beat Bielefeld 2-0 with goals from Salomon Kalou and Vladimir Darida.

Referee Martin Petersen was wounded when he was struck on the head by a lighter during a tie between third division Osnabruck and second division RB Leipzig. The game was called off in the 71st minute

with hosts Osnabruck leading 1-0.

The seriousness of the injury has not yet been revealed but the German Football Federation (DFB) said that sanctions would be taken against the host club.

"The DFB control commission has already begun an inquiry," said DFB spokesman Ralf Koettker.

Television replays showed Petersen being hit by a lighter thrown by Osnabruck fans with the club's president taking the loudspeaker to ask supporters to "calmly leave the stadium".

Meanwhile, Borussia Moenchengladbach, third in the league last season, beat second division Sankt Pauli 4-1.

Bayern Munich got their Cup campaign off to a winning start on Sunday with a 3-1 defeat of fifth-division minnows Noettingen.

Holders Wolfsburg eased to a 4-1 win at Stuttgarter Kickers, as Borussia Dortmund, last season's runners-up, won 2-0 at Chemnitzer FC.

But Bundesliga rivals Hamburg were knocked out by fourth-division Carl Zeiss Jena 3-2 in extra time.

# MSC win, Russel held

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC notched up a single-goal win over Rahmatganj MFS in the Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League in Dhaka while Sheikh Russel KC were held to a goalless draw by Chittagong Abahani in the port city yesterday.

Guinean striker Ismail Bangoura scored the only goal of the game for Mohammedan in the 10th minute, heading home a cross from Arup Kumar Baidya. The win took the Black and Whites to third position in the league table with 37 points from 19 outings, two points behind second-placed Sheikh Russel KC.

With Sheikh Jamal already crowned champions, the race for the second place is still down to three teams - Sheikh Russel, Mohammedan and Abahani. Had Sheikh Russel won yesterday's match, they would have confirmed the runners-up spot with a match left.

Now Sheikh Russel will have to wait for their last match against Rahmatganj MFS. If they suffer a defeat in that last match, Mohammedan will have the chance of overtaking them, provided they beat archrivals Abahani in their last match on August 16. Abahani, with 34 points from 18 matches, have matches against Mohammedan and Sheikh Jamal DC left.

# Araf third in Hendon

SPORTS REPORTER

Araf Shadd, a UK-based professional golfer of Bangladeshi origin, finished tied for third place in the PGA Hendon Championship last week. The 20-year-old golfer racked up a score of 10-under-par (200), with scores of 67, 64, 69 in the three rounds. Englishmen James won the event with a score of 12-under-par (198). Araf withdrew after the first round of the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open in May and has missed out on the British Open qualifier by six shots before a T39-place finish at the Wychwood Professional

# Aranquiz set for Leverkusen

AFP, Berlin

Copa America winner Charles Aranguiz is on the verge of signing for Bayer Leverkusen, the Bundesliga side announced on Monday.

The 26-year-old Chilean international is moving to Germany after one season with Brazilian club Internacional of Porte Alegre.

"We've reached agreement with the president of Porte Alegre. There are only the final details to sort out," Leverkusen owner Michael Schade told German newspaper Express.

"Our perseverance has paid off," he added.

"Charles Aranguiz is a super player, I'm certain he's going to help the team."

According to reports, Aranguiz joins Leverkusen in a five-year deal worth an estimated 11.5 million euros (\$12.7 million, £8.1 million).



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