

GOAL DEDICATED TO GRANNY

Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson dedicated his first goal of the season to his family in memory of his grandmother who died last week. "It has been a difficult time for my family of late on a personal level so that was for them really," said Henderson who has been unable to play till now due to foot injuries. "It is nice to be playing, being on the pitch and contributing to the team. "It was disappointing it wasn't a win but I thought the performance was good at times. "We started really well but we should be finishing games off and that is what we have to improve on. - AGENCIES



Foxes back on top

AFP, Leicester



Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez fired Leicester back to the top of the Premier League and extended Chelsea's miserable season with a 2-1 victory on Monday that heaped renewed pressure on Jose Mourinho.

Mahrez created Vardy's 15th goal of the season with a wonderful cross on 34 minutes.

Then the Algeria winger scored superbly on 48 minutes to take his own tally to 12 and double the Foxes' lead as their fairytale season continued.

Claudio Ranieri's side have lost just once all season and, although Chelsea substitute Loic Remy got one back in the closing stages, the hosts held on for a win that put them two points clear of second-placed Arsenal and condemned beleaguered Blues boss Mourinho to a ninth defeat in 16 league games.

Mourinho's men remarkably sit just one point above the relegation zone and, a week after their shock home loss to Bournemouth, inevitably there will be more speculation that the Portuguese coach faces the sack.

To add to Mourinho's problems, Chelsea midfielder Eden Hazard limped down the tunnel looking frustrated after his manager had asked him to continue following an injury.

In contrast, Vardy's amazing season continued as the England striker netted just one game after his record-breaking run of 11 successive league matches with a goal came to an end.

Leicester started brightly and Mahrez tricked his way past Cesar Azpilicueta early on to create a shooting chance.

He side-stepped John Terry on the edge of the area but his effort gave Thibaut Courtois a comfortable save.

There was another scare for the reigning champions when Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois dropped an inswinging free-kick by Christian Fuchs, but Robert Huth could not react quickly enough to pounce on the loose ball.

Then Leicester captain Wes Morgan had to make a brave block from a shot by Hazard after Chelsea caught the home side napping in defence.

Leicester suffered a blow when influential midfielder Danny Drinkwater was forced to limp off on 17 minutes to be replaced by Andy King, but the hosts continued to make the running.



Leicester City's Algerian midfielder Riyad Mahrez (C) scores the second goal against Chelsea during their Premier League encounter at the King Power Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gorkhalis in town

SPORTS REPORTER



The Nepal national football team arrived here last night to take on their Bangladesh counterparts in a friendly match in Dhaka on Thursday as both teams look to fine-tune their respective sides ahead of next week's SAFF Suzuki Cup.

Nepal coach Patrick Aussems brought a 20-member final squad with the satisfaction over his forwards, who had according to a Nepalese web portal, struck 27 goals in six practice matches against local teams. The Belgian, however, wants to test his defenders during the match against Bangladesh.

"We had hard work in physical and

tactical aspects in the first week of the training camp and played some matches against Nepal Police and Nepal Army.

"I don't have problems with the attacking line-up, but could not check the defence. I will get to test it in the Bangladesh friendly," Aussems was quoted as saying by the goalnepal.com on Monday.

Aussems' counterpart, Maruful Haque, will get his only opportunity to test his charges through this fixture and will surely have an idea about which 20 players he should pick out of 26 available at the moment.

Any result other than a defeat can be considered a positive one for Maruful, even though the coach is hardly concerned about the outcome.

"A defeat or a win is not a big issue for me; rather I want to see how the

players apply the gameplan we have developed in the training sessions.

"I will be pleased if they implement the things I taught them," Maruful said yesterday.

"I am confident with this squad as the players have been toiling hard and really doing well in practice sessions. I hope they will perform well on the pitch," said the 46-year-old coach who has recently earned a UEFA A license.

With experienced striker Zahid Hasan Emily sidelined due to meniscus injury, the Bangladesh coach will have to rely on relatively inexperienced forwards like Nabib Newaj Jibon, Aminur Rahman Sajib and Shakhawat Hossain Rony.

Maruful will also miss the services of influential midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan, who will likely need a week to regain match fitness.



Nepal footballers spending time upon arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last night.

PHOTO: BFF

Gayle hopeful of Test return

REUTERS, Melbourne

Former West Indies captain Chris Gayle is hopeful he can return to Test cricket next year but said he was simply not fit enough to take part in the ongoing series against Australia.

The explosive opener arrived in Australia to play in the domestic Twenty20 Big Bash League a few days after the struggling West Indies team were beaten by an innings and 212 runs in the first Test in Hobart.

Gayle said his recent back injury meant it was too early for him to be playing the longest form of the game.

"There's no way I could have actually been part of that Test team, I'm just coming back from injury," the 36-year-old, who made his comeback from injury in the Bangladesh Premier League, told reporters in Melbourne.

"I haven't retired from the game. Next year hopefully Test cricket is on the agenda.

"I haven't batted for such a long time. I scored 92 in a game [for Barisal] and the next day felt like I'd been hit by a bus," he added.

"The body will take time to build up gradually."

Pune fetch Dhoni, Rajkot rope in Baz

AFP, New Delhi



Indian and New Zealand skippers Mahendra Singh Dhoni and

Brendon McCullum were drafted for more than one million dollars into new cricket teams on Tuesday for the Indian Premier League following a graft scandal.

A new team from the western city of Pune paid 125 million rupees (US \$ 1.8 million) for limited overs captain Dhoni for the next edition of the lucrative Twenty20 tournament.

Dhoni joins Australian captain Steven Smith who was sold for 55 million rupees (\$820,000) and South African Twenty20 captain Faf du Plessis who went for 40 million rupees (\$597,000) on the same team.

The other franchise from the western city of Rajkot chose McCullum for 75 million rupees (\$1.1 million), James Faulkner for 55 million rupees (\$820,000) and West Indian Dwayne Bravo for 40 million rupees (\$597,000).

The franchises have replaced Chennai Super Kings and the Rajasthan Royals -- teams banned from the glitzy tournament for two years on the recommendation of a Supreme Court-appointed panel, after a corruption scandal.

They were allowed to choose five stars from each of the banned teams, while the

rest were released into a pool for auction.

Australia's Shane Watson and Mike Hussey, South Africa's Chris Morris and the West Indies' Dwayne Smith remain unsold and will now be auctioned in Bangalore in February.

The 2013 IPL season was mired in controversy after police launched legal proceedings against several officials from the teams



and three Rajasthan Royals' players for illegal betting and spot-fixing.

Suresh Raina, who played for the Chennai Super Kings alongside Dhoni, fetched 125 million rupees from Rajkot which also chose all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja.

"Excited to play for the beautiful vibrant city- Rajkot in @IPL. Looking forward to have new teammates and support from the people of Gujarat," Raina tweeted.

Indian batsman Ajinkya Rahane and spinner R Ashwin were picked by Pune for 95 million and 75 million rupees.

BPL snub irks Pakistanis

PTI, Karachi

Many of the Pakistani players who went to Bangladesh to appear in the Bangladesh Premier League return home with bitter memories of being sidelined by the team owners and management.

Foremost among them is Pakistan's test captain Misbah-ul-Haq, who was sidelined by the Rangpur Riders for his team's last seven matches while preference was given to other foreign signings including Afghanistan's little known Muhammad Nabi.

"I can't say much about this but I guess the team owners and coaches know what is required. But it is not easy sitting on the bench for so long," Misbah said.

Misbah clearly looked upset at his continued exclusion. His omission surprised many in Pakistan cricket circles while others like Kamran Akmal, Saeed Ajmal, Umar Akmal and Wahab Riaz also returned home unhappy at being given the cold shoulder treatment.

"I had made it clear to my franchise owners and management that I wanted to open in the BPL but after just two matches I didn't get any proper response," Kamran said.

"I didn't go there only for the money I went there as I thought the BPL would allow me to further remind the selectors I am doing well," he said.

Pakistan's fast bowler Wahab also decided it was better to return home midway through the BPL than sit and waste his time in Dhaka.

Boy suffers flare burns

AFP, Berlin

A seven-year-old boy suffered a burnt back after his jacket caught fire due to a lit flare at a third division German league match, police said on Tuesday.

The boy's 11-year-old friend had to also be treated by paramedics for dizziness from smoke inhalation at Rot-Weiss Erfurt's 2-0 defeat at home to Magdeburg on Monday.

Neither youth was taken to hospital, but two police officers were injured in clashes at the stadium between rival fans after the game.

"The seven-year-old boy had his jacket set on fire by a pyrotechnic," a police spokesman told SID.

An investigation has begun to find those responsible for lighting the flares, which are a common problem in football grounds across Germany, with RW Erfurt offering 2,000 euros (\$2,200) for information leading to a conviction.

Jose feels betrayed

AFP, Leicester



Jose Mourinho insists he will fight to stay as Chelsea manager after accusing his players of betraying him in their 2-1 defeat at Premier League leaders Leicester City.

Mourinho told Chelsea's underachieving stars to be humble as they look to turn around their dismal defence of the English title and claimed he wants to remain in charge.

Chelsea have lost nine of their 16 league games so far this season and sit just one point above the relegation zone, while Leicester climbed back to the top thanks to goals from Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez at the King Power Stadium on Monday.

"I feel like my work was betrayed," said Mourinho.

"I worked four days on this match and prepared everything relating to the opponents.

"I identified four movements where they score almost all their goals. "My players got all that information but we still conceded the first and the second goals from those movements."

Mourinho claimed his team's hopes of a top-four finish are over after they fell 20 points behind Leicester, despite substitute Loic Remy scoring to give them hope with 13 minutes remaining.

Chelsea's latest flop is certain to bring renewed reports that Mourinho is on the verge of being sacked, but he is determined to oversee a turnaround and urged his players to show humility as they look to change their fortunes.

"The players who are not performing well must for sure feel attacked in their pride and their self esteem," he said.

"They have to do everything to get results in a humble way.

"The players at this minute cannot feel top players or they are superstars.

"They have to feel 'I am not the player of the season, not the World champion, not the Premier League champion'.

"The players have to put their feet on the

ground and be humble.

"They have to look to the Leicester players and feel these are the top players.

"They have to look to Sunderland and Watford and say we are at the same level as you are."

Asked whether he believed he would remain in charge, the 52-year-old said: "I want to be, clearly.

"I have no doubt and I am not afraid of a big challenge. I want to stay.

"I hope Mr (owner Roman) Abramovich and the board want me to stay because I want to stay.

"I accept we are around the relegation zone, I don't accept we are in a relegation battle."

Mourinho gave a more cryptic response to questions about Eden Hazard, who appeared to ignore his manager's request to continue when the Belgium midfielder limped off with a first-half injury.

"He made the decision in a few seconds, he was on the floor, he came off, when he went on to try he immediately decided to go back," said Mourinho.

"I have to believe he is injured."

In contrast to Chelsea's troubled title defence, Leicester have lost just once all season in the league and sit two points clear of Arsenal at the summit.

But manager Claudio Ranieri insists reaching 40 points to ensure another season in the top flight remains his only objective.

"For our fans we are top of the league but for my players we need another five points," he said.

"Now we have Everton and Liverpool away and Manchester City and Bournemouth, who are a fantastic team, at home.

"These are very tough matches. Let me achieve 40 points and then I will think about the next goal."

And Ranieri dismissed fears that Vardy and Mahrez could leave in January after their superb seasons.

"Nobody can buy them," he said. "They don't have the money to buy them."

"I don't want to put a price on them. For me they don't have a price."

