

## PACHECO SHOT DEAD

Former El Salvador international defender Alfredo Pacheco, who was banned for life for match-fixing in 2013, was shot and killed on Sunday as he left a petrol station, police said. Two friends who were travelling with the 33-year-old were hurt in the attack which took place in Santa Ana, 66km west of the capital San Salvador, the police spokesman added. "The former international was killed by a group of unknown assailants as he left a petrol station with friends," said the official. Pacheco, who made 86 appearances for El Salvador, was banned for life in September. Thirteen of his teammates in the national



# Blues hold Man Utd

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United bought beleaguered manager Louis van Gaal some much-needed respite with an improved display in Monday's 0-0 draw at home to underperforming Premier League champions Chelsea. In a performance that will give United's board reason to hope the Dutchman may yet steer the club out of their dip, the home side played with greater enterprise than of late and hit the woodwork through Juan Mata and Anthony Martial.

But Chelsea had their moments, too, and might have given Guus Hiddink the first win of his second spell as interim manager had David de Gea not saved smartly from John Terry, Pedro Rodriguez and Cesar Azpilicueta or Nemanja Matic not blazed over when clean through in the second half.

The result left Chelsea, unbeaten against United in nine encounters, three points above the relegation zone, while their opponents are five points off the top four in sixth place.

Meanwhile, the spectre of Jose Mourinho, sacked by Chelsea 11 days ago, continues to haunt Van Gaal, whose future remains uncertain.

His face and 'Special One' nickname adorned scarves sold outside Old Trafford by opportunistic stallholders, while his name was chanted by the away fans inside the ground.

Rested for the 2-0 defeat at Stoke City, Wayne

Rooney was one of four players brought in by Van Gaal -- Matteo Darmian, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Morgan Schneiderlin the others -- and the captain set the tone for the hosts in the first half with his confident probing and crisp passing.

Playing up front, with Martial exiled to the left, the England captain set up two early chances for Mata and Schneiderlin, the Spaniard slamming a shot against the bar, the Frenchman drilling wide.

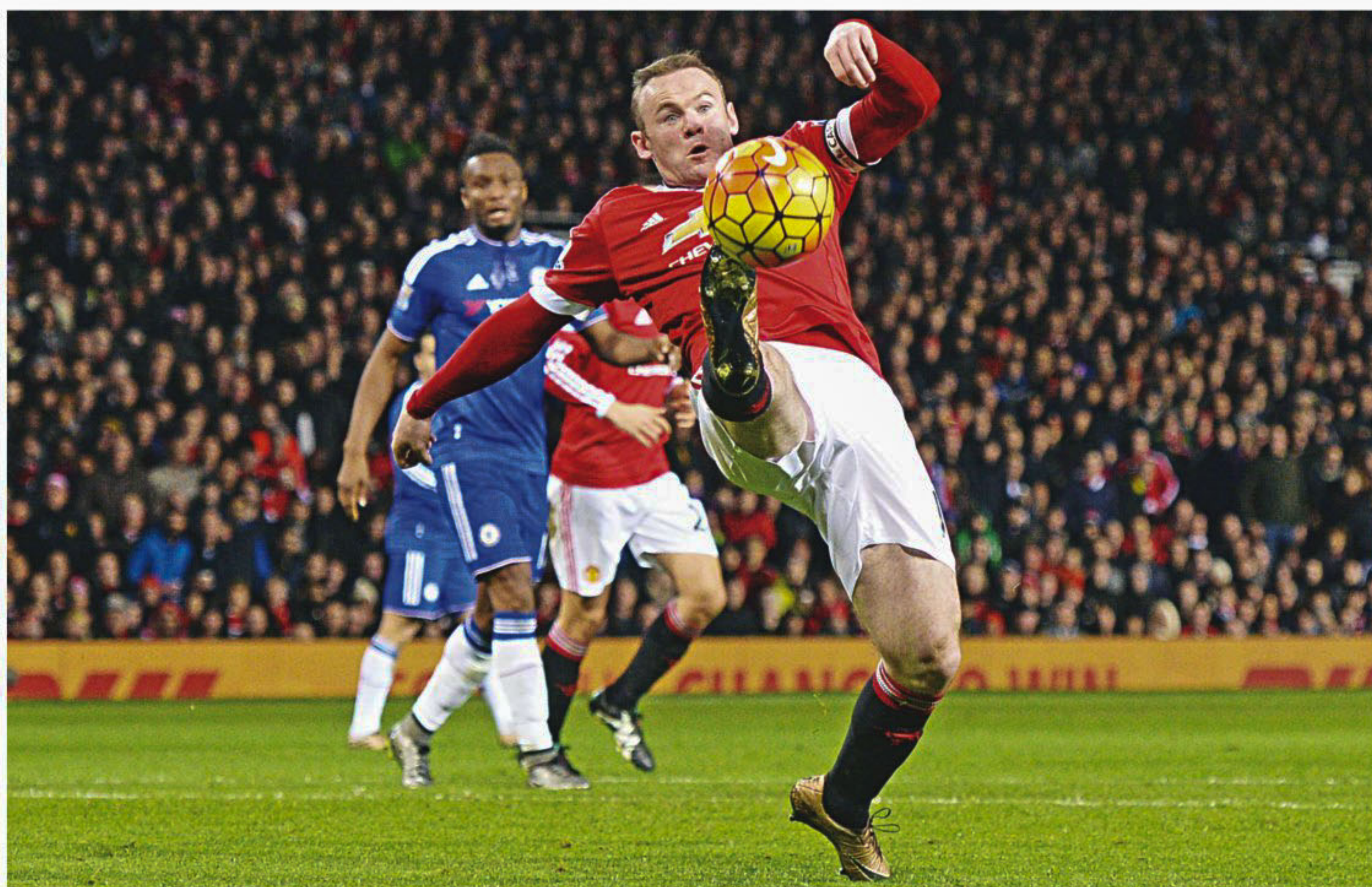
Martial was a menace with his relentless desire to get the ball down and run, driving a shot against the left-hand post after skinning Branislav Ivanovic and drawing a booking for John Mikel Obi -- preferred to Cesc Fabregas by Hiddink -- with a burst from halfway.

Shortly before the half-hour, Rooney picked up a loose ball and took aim from 30 yards with a shot that was arrowing into the top-left corner until the flying Thibaut Courtois pushed it behind.

The final chance fell to Rooney, picked out at the back post by substitute Cameron Borthwick-Jackson, but from inside the six-yard area the United number 10 volleyed well over.

Frustrated, Rooney planted his studs into Oscar's calf shortly after and was lucky to escape with a booking.

Meanwhile, in the day's other encounter, Marko Arnautovic scored a last-gasp penalty as Stoke City beat Everton 4-3 in a thrilling game at Goodison Park.



Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney stretches himself and desperately tries to receive the ball during his side's frustrating draw against Chelsea at Old Trafford yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Messi, Barca win big

OMNISPORT

Lionel Messi and Barcelona were the big winners at the 2015 Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai.

The Argentina captain beat off competition from last year's winner Cristiano Ronaldo and Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon to be named Best Player of the Year.

"Obviously I am very happy to be here and delighted to win this award but as always, the most important thing is the collective, the team," Messi said after receiving the award on Sunday.

"It is difficult to pick out one moment from what has been an extraordinary year for Barca. The whole year has been wonderful."

Following the victory, Messi will also be up against Ronaldo and his Barcelona teammate Neymar for the FIFA Ballon d'Or on January 11.

Barcelona, who won an historic treble in 2014-15, were named Best Club of the Year, while their chief Josep Maria Bartomeu was awarded the Best President of the Year accolade.

"I am just one of Barcelona's 140,000 club members and I am extremely proud to be their president," said Bartomeu.

"But this award really belongs to our

club members and the 39 presidents before me during the club's 116-year history. I would also like to give special thanks to the players for all of the efforts they made this year."

Belgium boss Marc Wilmots was named as Best Coach of the Year ahead of Barca's Luis Enrique and Italy's Antonio Conte after leading his country to top spot in the FIFA world rankings.

Elsewhere, New York City pair Andrea Pirlo and Frank Lampard were recognised and given Player Career Awards.

Jorge Mendes was handed the award for Best Agent of the Year, while Portuguese club Benfica were named as the Best Academy of the Year.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (L) receives the best player of the year trophy during the Dubai Globe Soccer award ceremony in Dubai on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Guardiola exit disappoints Robben

OMNISPORT

Arjen Robben has voiced his disappointment with Pep Guardiola's decision to leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season.

The Bundesliga champions announced last week that Guardiola will not extend his contract at the Allianz Arena, with Carlo Ancelotti to take his place in June.

Robben is sad to see Guardiola move on, but is determined to give him a fitting farewell present as Bayern chase the treble.

"It is a real shame that Guardiola is leaving," Robben told NOS.

"Yes, I am bit disappointed to see him leave.

"We will have to wait and see how things pan out with Ancelotti. It's always like that with a new coach. You have to start all over again.

"But it is obviously still very early to say anything about it. It has just been formally announced, but we are only halfway through the season and there is still plenty to win.

"We can focus on football again once the winter break is over."

Robben missed Bayern's final games of 2015 due to injury but is eagerly anticipating the re-start of the Bundesliga.

"I expect to be fully match fit again for our first game after the winter break," he added.

## Leicester aim to bounce back

AFP, Leicester



Leicester City winger Marc Albrighton reckons the Premier League leaders can bounce back after defeat to Liverpool against title rivals Manchester City at the King Power Stadium on Tuesday night.

While Leicester's 15-goal top scorer Jamie Vardy is expected to be fully fit after a virus City will be without injured captain Vincent Kompany.

Albrighton has warned City that Leicester are not about to implode after suffering only their second defeat of the season on Boxing Day.

"We see this as a test," the winger said on Monday.

"There will probably be a lot of pundits and media that might think now we are going to lie down and relax with our 30-something points.

"We're not a side to do that. We've got Manchester City on Tuesday and we look forward to bouncing back against them.

"We've got ourselves in a brilliant situation and we are doing fantastic. Everyone was tipping us to be down there at the start of the season, but we're right in the mix and we deserve to be where we are."

Vardy's understanding with Algeria playmaker Riyad Mahrez has been crucial to the Foxes' success this season - between them, they have scored 29 of Leicester's 37 goals.

The fact that neither of them looked fully fit against Liverpool will be of concern to manager Claudio Ranieri ahead of another key fixture.

"Mahrez was very, very tired," said Ranieri.

"The spirit in the camp now is not so good, but that is a good thing, because the players always want to try to win.

"Now we have to clean our minds and think towards the next match. It will be another big test, but we are ready."

Ranieri is unlikely to make significant changes, as long as Vardy and Mahrez are both declared fit, and will look for his side to show the stamina he talked so positively about in the lead-up to the Christmas fixtures.

Kompany meanwhile was making his first appearance for seven weeks when he entered the field as a second-half substitute during City's 4-1 win over Sunderland on Friday, but lasted only nine minutes before hobbling off again.

The bad news for manager Manuel Pellegrini is that the central defender has suffered a recurrence of the calf injury that has troubled him for much of the season, and the fear is that he will be out for several weeks.

## Jose keeping options open

OMNISPORT

Jose Mourinho is keeping his options open when it comes to finding a new club following his Chelsea departure.

The Portuguese manager was relieved of his duties at Stamford Bridge this month following a dismal start to the defence of Chelsea's Premier League title.

Mourinho is thought to be resisting a return to former club Real Madrid as speculation mounts that he could be the man to replace Louis van Gaal at Manchester United should the under-fire Dutchman make his Old Trafford exit in the near future.

But agent Jorge Mendes insists his client is yet to make a decision over his future, with a return to Italy having also been mooted.

## Schaaf takes over at Hannover

AFP, Berlin

Thomas Schaaf was on Monday named as the new coach of Bundesliga strugglers Hannover, the 54-year-old former Frankfurt boss succeeding Michael Frontzeck, who resigned last week.

"I'm aware of the scale of the task, nevertheless I'm delighted to tackle with the team the great challenge of staying up," said Schaaf with Hannover one off the foot of the table.

# ধৈর্য্য যত, দূর তত!

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(noun) a state of perplexity or uncertainty over what to do in a difficult situation.

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