

HIGH HOPES FOR LITTLE XAVA

Wesley Sneijder has unveiled his new three-month-old son in the best way possible... by putting him inside the Champions League trophy! Xess Xava was the picture of happy and confused as his father filmed him sitting inside the most prized trophy in all club football, with Sneijder Snr. winning the silverware with Inter in 2010. "I'm such a proud father you my little boy Xess Xava! Inshallah one day you will hold this cup like I did," he wrote on Instagram. "I rather share my own baby with the world this way than letting paparazzi go



Milos stuns Stan

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Milos Raonic relies on a quiet head on his shoulders during times of trouble, as was the case when beating Stanislas Wawrinka in the Australian Open fourth round yesterday.

The Canadian 13th seed looked serene as he moved two sets ahead against the Swiss former champion but even when Stan Wawrinka roused himself to level the match, Milos Raonic called on his Zen-like inner peace and refused to panic.

Sitting tranquilly on his court-side chair staring into the middle distance, the 25-year-old re-focused on the task in hand and completed a 6-4 6-3 5-7 4-6 6-3 victory to book a quarter-final spot.

"I felt very clear in what I needed to do and I believed that I could do it," Raonic, who pounded down 24 aces and hit 82 clean winners, told reporters.

"The more I understand my game, what I need to do, the more I can keep a quiet head on my shoulders."

Later, second seed Andy Murray had his feathers ruffled but scrapped his way into the Australian Open quarter-finals with a 6-4 6-4 7-6(4) victory over local world number 17 Bernard Tomic.

Murray clinched the third set tiebreak when Tomic went long with a return after two and a half hours on Rod Laver Arena to set up a quarter-final meeting with Spanish eighth seed David Ferrer.

Johanna Konta mounted a stirring comeback to upset Ekaterina Makarova 4-6 6-4 8-6.

Konta was followed into the quarter-finals by men's world number two Andy Murray, to give Britain their first man and woman in the last eight at a grand slam in almost 40 years.

Although she wobbled while serving for the set at 5-4 in the decider, she made no mistake at the second opportunity after three hours, four minutes of graft in Margaret Court Arena and threw her arms skyward in jubilant relief.

"I really enjoyed the match for what it was," she said. "It was a very high-level



PHOTO: AFP

Milos Raonic exults after his victory in the men's singles fourth match of the Australian Open against Stanislas Wawrinka in Melbourne yesterday.

match against a very, very good player.

Lastly, Victoria Azarenka was plagued by anxiety about her beloved Denver Broncos in the NFL playoffs but the Belarusian had few nervous moments in a 6-2 6-4 win over Barbora Strycova that put her into a fifth Australian Open quarter-final.

After wrapping up victory over the unseeded Czech, twice champion Azarenka wasted little time in finding out if her favourite team had booked their place in the Super Bowl.

"I played smart, I played aggressive and I took my opportunities. Can someone tell me if the Broncos won?" she asked the crowd at Rod Laver Arena during a court-side interview.

"Yes!" she screamed after being told the Broncos had won.

'Cover your mouth when you curse'

AGENCIES, Rome

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti has defended Daniele De Rossi after he allegedly racially abused Mario Mandzukic in Sunday's Serie A encounter with Juventus.

De Rossi has been accused of calling the Croatia international a "gypsy" during Roma's 1-0 defeat in Turin.

However, rather than censor the midfielder, Spalletti says he will instead teach him to avoid being caught during future verbal disputes.

"De Rossi? He didn't cover his mouth [when talking to Mandzukic]. I will teach him to cover his mouth with his hand," Spalletti said at a news conference.

"I'm going to tell my players to do like him and to cover their mouths so you can't lip-read."

Barbs hurt Aubameyang

AFP, Paris

Borussia Dortmund and Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang admitted he was hurt by comments from Yaya Toure and Andre Ayew that he was undeserving of his African Player of the Year award.

Toure blasted Aubameyang's award as "indecent" and that it brought "shame" on the continent when it was made three weeks ago.

SOUTH ASIAN GAMES 2016

Boxing looks to trio

SPORTS REPORTER

Boxer Abdur Rahim had two laps at the Osmani Uddan the night before the final of the 64kg weight category of the 11th South Asian Games six years ago in a bid to pass the dope test as well as lose his overweight. He had a tense night before waking up the next day to pass the test successfully and wrote his name in history books to become a gold medal winner after beating Sri Lanka's Sisira Kumarasinghe.

Ahead of next month's 12th SA Games in India, the focus is still on Rahim, who will be competing in 69kg weight category this time while medal-hopeful Jewel Ahmed Jony belongs no more to his previous category of 60kg weight in which he won gold medal on home soil and he is set to compete in 75kg category.

Apart from Rahim and Jony, the focus is also on promising boxer Al Amin, who will be fighting in the 60kg weight category. Bangladesh will take part in four more categories of 49, 52, 56 and 64 in 12th edition of the regional games while women boxers will be competing in three categories - 52, 60 and 75 for the first time.

Winning two boxing gold medals at home in 2010 after the 19993 SA Games in Dhaka was the outcome of arrangement of long training facilities including two-month long practice abroad as well as the appointment of a Thai coach, but this time Bangladesh Amateur Boxing Federation has no such initiative to retain the gold medals.

The federation has only appointed eight coaches to take care of 11 men and three women boxers, who have hardly improved in the five-month training due to the lack of 'modern techniques' and the video footages on the internet are the only source of



Bangladesh boxers putting in a shift at the Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium in Paltan in preparation for the upcoming South Asian Games. PHOTO: STAR

acquiring the new technique.

"The amount of effort we are putting in training is enough compared to international standard but we are trailing in international experience, system and technique. I am confident of winning a medal but can't ensure of a gold," said Al Amin, who played his last international match in the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

"We are trying to learn modern techniques by watching the matches of different boxers on the internet but we can't apply it here because we are not given any practice matches like we were given against Thai boxer before the Dhaka SA Games," said Rahim, who played his last international match in the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India.

Chief coach Kazi Abdul Mannan, who obtained a diploma from Patiala

in 1981, can't provide good news with the existing facilities and blamed financial constraints for not being able to bring a foreign coach or send the squad abroad for training.

"Everyone in South Asia is going forward while Bangladesh is walking back. Under the foreign coaches, Nepal and Sri Lanka have been training in Thailand but our boxers are in the country," was the simple statement from coach Mannan, who has seemingly pinned his gold medal hopes only on Al Amin and Rahim.

However, history is against the Bangladeshi boxers, who have never won a gold medal in the SA Games outside Bangladesh as all four gold medals in boxing came from the three editions - 1985 SA Games, 1993 SA Games and 2010 SA Games - all held in Dhaka.

Ronaldinho's lucky escape

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Brazilian soccer legend Ronaldinho had a miraculous escape on Monday after a traffic signal post fell in front of the car carrying him seconds before it sped away in Kozhikode city of southern Indian state of Kerala.

The incident occurred when Ronaldinho was returning after attending a function at Nadakkavu where he interacted with young students of a local school, PTI news agency reported.

According to police, the traffic post, which was not in a working condition, fell down as excited fans rushed forward to catch a glimpse of their football hero. However, no one was injured in the incident, they said.

The former Barcelona and AC Milan player was in the north Kerala district to inaugurate the Sait Nagjee Cup football tournament, of which he is the brand ambassador, commencing from February 5.

Zizou proud despite draw

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane insisted he was proud of his side's display despite slipping further behind Barcelona in the La Liga title race with a 1-1 draw at Real Betis on Sunday.

Zidane had cruised to victory in his first two games in charge since replacing Rafael Benitez earlier this month, scoring five goals against Deportivo la Coruna and Sporting Gijon.

However, Los Blancos were stunned by Alvaro Cejudo's early opener and, despite dominating the majority of the match, could only reply through Karim Benzema's 21st goal of the season 19 minutes from time.

"I am very proud of what they did tonight, we're just missing two more points," said the Frenchman.

"We are on the right track and we need to take the positives.

"It is clear losing two points is the negative thing, but there were some very good things tonight and we need to take those positives forward and fight until the end."

Barcelona and Atletico Madrid now lead



Real by four points at the top of the table, whilst Barca also have a game in hand on both sides from the capital.

"The truth is I didn't expect (to drop two points) but football is like that, if you don't take your chances anything can happen," Zidane added.

"But given how we played, I can't reproach the players for anything."

Betis hadn't scored in their previous seven games as part of a 10-game winless streak, but needed just seven minutes to make the breakthrough in spectacular fashion.

Keylor Navas made a fine save to block Ruben Castro's first effort, but the ball eventually fell to Cejudo on the edge of the area, who unleashed a volley into the top corner which Zidane himself would have been proud of in his playing days.

Madrid responded well to going behind and Cristiano Ronaldo and Pepe both missed glorious chances to equalise before half-time, whilst Benzema also had a huge penalty claim waived away.

Benzema did finally level from James Rodriguez's cutback, but Antonio Adan made brilliant saves from Rodriguez and Benzema to salvage a point for Betis.

Barca also face both Atletico and Real at home in the title run with Atletico visiting

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Hosaf Open tees off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The First Hosaf Open, a professional golf tournament, got underway at the Savar Golf Club (SGC) on Sunday. A total of 79 golfers including 15 amateurs are taking part in the four-day event, according to speakers at a press conference held at the SGC yesterday.

This is the first professional golf tournament held at the SGC, situated on the outskirts of the capital, informed the speakers.

SGC vice-president, brigadier general ATM Anisuzzaman, addressed the press conference where group captain Lokman Farrukh, was among others, present.

HP maintains No. 1 in Bangladesh

The IDC's (International Data Corporation) PC market share for the third quarter of 2015 report* confirms that HP continues to dominate the Bangladeshi market in the consumer and commercial PC market. HP has consistently retained the No. 1 position in the commercial PC market for 5 quarters in a row since Q3 2014.

HP remains committed to delivering the latest and greatest technology to our customers in the Bangladeshi market. We continue to strive to bring you the best quality products and services catered to your needs and aim to achieve even bigger and better results with you for the future.

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