

'I DON'T CARE'

Arsene Wenger insisted he was not bothered by Arsenal fans holding up a banner asking for the Frenchman to quit during the Gunners' 4-0 win over Hull City in the FA Cup. Supporters were seen with a banner reading: 'Arsene thanks for the memories but it's time to say goodbye' on Monday night. "There's nothing disappointing for me -- you know, I do my job," Wenger told reporters. "Look at the history of the club, since the club exists, and you will see that I have nothing to be scared of. I don't care. I do not want to speak about



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) celebrates the opening goal against AS Roma -- his 13th goal of current Champions League campaign -- as 10-time champions Real Madrid won 2-0 at the Bernabeu on Tuesday night to book their spot in the quarterfinals.

PHOTO: AFP

Messi back, Tevez out

AFP, Buenos Aires



Lionel Messi is set to make his first appearance in Argentina's 2018 World Cup qualification campaign, after being named in the squad on Tuesday for upcoming games with Chile and Bolivia.

But Former Manchester United forward Carlos Tevez misses out after a difficult start to the season with his club Boca Juniors, although he is also struggling with a knee problem.

Manager Gerardo Martino had to do without five-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi for the first four qualifying matches because of injury, and Argentina struggled in his absence as they picked up only five points.

That tally leaves them outside of the qualification spots in the fledgling campaign, so Messi's return comes at the perfect time.

The 28-year-old is seven goals away from equalling Gabriel Batistuta's record of 56 international goals for the two-time world champions.

Messi will line up alongside the in-form trio of Gonzalo Higuain, Angel Di Maria and Sergio Aguero, but Tevez misses out.

The 32-year-old played for Boca at the weekend, after which he complained of tiredness, while rumours abound that he could be on his way out of the club from the

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

Sergio Romero (Manchester United/ENG), Nahuel Guzman (Tigres/MEX), Geronimo Rulli (Real Sociedad/ESP)

DEFENDERS

Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City/ENG), Facundo Roncaglia (Fiorentina/ITA), Gabriel Mercado (River Plate/ARG), Nicolas Otamendi (Manchester City/ENG), Mateo Musacchio (Villareal/ESP), Ramiro Funes Mori (Everton/ENG), Marcos Rojo (Manchester United/ENG), Leonel Vangioni (River Plate/ARG), Javier Pinola (Rosario Central/ARG), Martin Demichelis (Manchester City/ENG)

MIDFIELDERS

Javier Mascherano (Barcelona/ESP), Matias Kranevitter (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Augusto Fernandez (Atletico Madrid/ESP) Enzo Perez (Valencia/ESP), Lucas Biglia (Lazio/ITA), Javier Pastore (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA) Ever Banega (Sevilla/ESP), Angel Di Maria (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA) Erik Lamela (Tottenham/ENG)

FORWARDS

Ezequiel Lavezzi (Hebei Fortune/CHN), Lionel Messi (Barcelona/ESP), Nicolas Gaitan (Benfica/POR), Sergio Aguero (Manchester City/ENG), Gonzalo Higuain (Napoli/ITA), Paulo Dybala (Juventus/ITA), Angel Correa (Atletico Madrid/ESP)

Argentine capital.

A 1-0 win at Colombia in November moved Argentina to within two points of the four automatic qualification places.

They take on Chile in Santiago on March 24, before hosting Bolivia on March 29.

Ronaldo makes Roma pay

AFP, Madrid



Goals from Cristiano Ronaldo and James Rodriguez left Roma ruing a host of missed chances as Real Madrid moved into the quarter-finals of the Champions League 4-0 on aggregate with a 2-0 win on Tuesday.

Edin Dzeko and Mohamed Salah were the culprits in front of goal for the visitors before two goals in four second-half minutes ensured Madrid's first win in a two-legged tie over Italian opposition in Europe for 29 years.

Ronaldo swept home Lucas Vazquez's cross 26 minutes from time before turning provider for Rodriguez to smash home the second.

"I am happy with the way we attacked and I think defensively we improved a lot in the second-half," said Real boss Zinedine Zidane.

"Everyone dreams of winning the Champions League and we are in the hunt."

It was Roma who enjoyed the best of the chances before half-time to get back into the tie.

Former Manchester City striker Dzeko failed to repay Spalletti's faith by handing him a start up front when he fired into the side-netting after Salah's pace tore through the Madrid defence.

Salah had a great chance himself but he too could only find the side-netting when clean through on Keylor Navas just before the half-hour mark.

Yet, the hosts could also easily have been ahead by the break as former Arsenal keeper Wojciech Szczesny was put to work in the Roma goal.

The Polish international's palms were stung by Luka Modric's long-range drive before Szczesny got down well to turn Ronaldo's low shot to safety.

Ronaldo then had Madrid's best chance of the half when he was played in by Bale, but Szczesny again scurried from his line to block the three-time World

Player of the Year's effort.

Szczesny was forced into action once more at the start of the second period to parry Rodriguez's volley.

However, the pattern of the first half was repeated as the Italians then passed up a host of chances to put themselves ahead on the night.

Salah again failed to hit the target with just Navas to beat as the Egyptian continued to find acres of space in behind the Madrid defence.

Navas then had to make two smart saves from Alessandro Florenzi and Kostas Manolas as Roma finally at least hit the target.

Bale was replaced on the hour mark by Vazquez and the Spanish winger made an instant impact to tee up Ronaldo's

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13th Champions League goal of the season.

Vazquez got to the byline and Ronaldo beat his marker and Szczesny to his cross to fire into the roof of the net.

Four minutes later it was 2-0 as Ronaldo led a Madrid counter-attack and teed up Rodriguez to lash between Szczesny's legs.

Spalletti then put his recent spat with club legend Francesco Totti behind him to introduce the 39-year-old for the closing stages to a standing ovation by the home fans.

And Roma were denied at least the goal their performance deserved when Navas flew to his right to claw away Diego Perotti's effort and ensure he still hasn't conceded a goal in the Champions League this season.

Schuerrle sends Wolfsburg thru'

AFP, Wolfsburg



Andre Schuerrle fired Wolfsburg into the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time to seal Tuesday's 1-0 victory and a 4-2 aggregate win over Gent.

Having lost the first-leg 3-2 at home, Gent arrived in Germany needing to score at least twice but Schuerrle ended their hopes with a goal 16 minutes from time.

It was his Germany teammate Julian Draxler, who scored twice in the first-leg, who danced around Gent defender Nana Asare to provide the cross which Schuerrle drilled home.

It capped a fine seven days for the Germany winger after Schuerrle hit his first Bundesliga hat-trick the previous Tuesday in a 4-0 romp over Hanover.

Hitting the winner against Gent will further raise his stock at Wolfsburg, who are now seventh -- four points from a Champions League place next season -- in Germany's top flight.

"We did it," Klaus Allofs told Sky, but Wolfsburg's relieved sports director admitted the Germans will need to improve if they are to reach the semi-finals.

"Let's wait and see who else qualifies," he added.

"There are probably some cases where it would be very difficult, but there are also some teams against whom we have a chance, as long as we keep improving."

Wolfsburg effectively closed the game down in the first-half by restricting Gent to only a series of half chances.

Schuerrle deserved his goal and had a great chance approaching the hour mark but his shot was blocked by Gent midfielder Renato Neto.

Gent centre-back Rami Gershon then blocked a Schuerrle shot, which had been heading for the back of the net, on 70 minutes.

Soon after, Vanhaezebrouck brought on Mali forward Kalifa Coulibaly, who scored Gent's second goal in the first leg, to try and break the deadlock.

It was Wolfsburg who finally opened the scoring, though, when Draxler, who had scored in both of Wolfsburg's previous games, turned provider.

The attacking midfielder picked out Schuerrle's arrival in the box for his teammate to rifle home to the delight of the home fans.

In the dying stages, Gent midfielder Brecht Dejaegere fired over, but it was too little, too late.

INDEPENDENCE CUP HOCKEY

Navy off to a flier

SPORTS REPORTER

Star-studded Bangladesh Navy got off to a flying start in the Independence Cup with a 10-1 win over Bangladesh Police at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

National striker Krishna Kumar and Moinul Islam struck three goals each while Rasel Mahmud Jimmy scored twice, Roman Sarkar and Deen Islam netted one goal each for Navy. Meanwhile, holders Bangladesh Army blanked Ajax SC 7-0, with Milon Hossain, Abdul Malek and Shuvo Kumar scoring two goals each and Sirajul Islam getting one goal.

Shafique lifts Mukul Fouz

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Bewtha Mukul Fouz's 17-year-old pacer Shafique Islam claimed a seven-wicket haul as his team romped to a 37-run win against defending champions Bondhu Ekdash in the Col Malek Smriti Premier Division Cricket League in Manikganj yesterday.

United, Liverpool renew rivalry

AFP, Paris



Eternal rivals Manchester United travel to Liverpool in the Europa League last 16, first leg on Thursday in a battle of English football's two most successful sides.

United have won the English title a record 20 times, twice more than Liverpool, but the Reds have the edge abroad, having been crowned European champions on five occasions to United's three.

The Anfield encounter will mark the first time the teams have faced off in European competition, with the two Premier League giants combining to lift 17 continental trophies.

"This is why I signed for such a big club, to look forward to nights like this," Liverpool defender Nathaniel Clyne told the club's website.

"Everyone's excited. Everyone loves to play European football so it's going to be exciting up against our rivals United."

"I think we owe them from the Premier League games, which we probably should have got more out of. We need to take it to them, especially in the first leg when we're at home."

The Red Devils won both Premier League meetings this season, following up a 3-1 win at Old Trafford in September with a 1-0 victory on Merseyside in the reverse fixture.

However, United's 1-0 defeat at West Brom on Sunday snapped a four-game winning run in all competitions for Louis van Gaal's side, and Michael Carrick said they can't afford to let that derail them ahead of the Liverpool showdown.

"It is a setback but there are some massive games around the corner. Things were looking good (last) week; we were on the up, everyone was so positive. This is a blow for us but we need to get back, ready for Thursday," he said.

In contrast, Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool have bounced back impressively from the heartache of their League Cup final defeat to Manchester City on penalties by thrashing the same opponents 3-0 three days later in the league before rallying to claim a 2-1 win at Crystal Palace on Sunday despite playing the last half-hour a man down.

Liverpool won the last of their three titles in this competition in its previous guise as the UEFA Cup in 2001, but United have never been beyond the quarter-finals of this tournament.

Tottenham Hotspur, winners in 1972 and 1984, take on Bundesliga giants Borussia Dortmund in another intriguing last-16 tie that pits together two more genuine contenders.

Faizul Haque passes away

STAR SPORT DESK

Sports organiser Fazlul Haque Khan, a former general secretary of Mohammedan Sporting Club, passed away yesterday morning due to old-age complications at the capital's Apollo Hospitals. He was 80.

Khan left behind his wife, three sons, one daughter and a host of well-wishers.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Mohammedan club premises this morning.

Independence Day Triathlon on March 25

SPORTS REPORTER

The 2016 Independence Day Triathlon will be held in Brahmanbaria on March 25.

The race will start 9:00am at the Shabbajpur Bridge. From there the entrants will have to swim 1km along the Titas River until they reach Shabbajpur Moulvibazar. The participants will then run a further 6km till the conclusion of the race at the Kutrapara field.

North, South face similar challenge

SPORTS REPORTER



East Zone's bowlers continued their hunt on the third day of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) fifth round match as they sensed an outright victory against North Zone at the Academy ground of the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket stadium yesterday.

Mohammad Saifuddin added two wickets to his tally to return with a five-for while Kamrul Islam Rabbi claimed the other scalp and finished with a four-wicket haul. North Zone could add only 25 runs to their overnight score of 148 for seven as they conceded the follow-on.

North Zone showed much improved batting in the second innings but they were still trailing by 11 runs with six wickets in hand when stumps were drawn for the day.

North Zone also made a disastrous start to the second innings, losing two wickets for ten runs. However, Farhad Hossain and Myshukur Rahman's 160-run third-wicket stand helped them rebuild. Alok Kapali dismissed Farhad for 75, but Myshukur showed a lot of patience and remained not out on 87. During his above five-hour stay, Myshukur struck eleven boundaries.

Nazmul Hossain Shanto also got off to a start, but Kapali sent him back for 23.

Naem Islam (8) was the other unbeaten batsman.

In the other match, Central Zone tightened their grip on South Zone as they stretched their overall lead to 225 runs with eight wickets in hand before stumps were drawn for the day.

Resuming the day at 131 for three, South Zone were bundled out for 312 runs, giving their opponents a 113-run first innings lead.

Shamsur Rahman hit 61 and Marshall Ayub remained not out on 42 as Central Zone scored 112 for 2 in their second innings. It will be fantastic to see whether North Zone and South Zone can come up with some good batting in their second innings to save their matches on the final day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

EAST ZONE: 392 v
NORTH ZONE: 173 all out in 65.4 overs (Naem 45, Sajib 32 not out; Saifuddin 5-41, Kamrul 4-52) and 208-4 in 78 overs (Myshukur 87 not out, Farhad 75; Jayed 1-20, Kapali 2-22)
CENTRAL ZONE: 425 and 112-2 in 32 overs (Shamsur 61, Marshall 42 not out; Farhad 1-22, Razzak 1-27) v
SOUTH ZONE: 312 all out in 95.4 overs (Anamul 22, Farhad 61, Mosaddek 48, Taibur 58, Razzak 46; Sharif 3-77, Shuvagata 2-82, Mosharraf 2-55)