

MESSI BROKE REAL FAN'S WRIST!

A Real Madrid fan says she is the woman who was struck by Lionel Messi's shot on Sunday, breaking her wrist as Barcelona were held to a 2-2 draw by Villarreal in La Liga. Television cameras caught Messi's wayward first half strike being palmed away by a woman sat in the home end at El Madrigal. Medics soon assisted her inside the stadium and she appeared to be dizzy, too. The person in question, who goes by the name of Raquel, happens to be a huge Madrid and Cristiano Ronaldo supporter. She joked that Messi had done it on "purpose" because of her Madrid and Ronaldo tendencies. -GOAL.COM



STAR ECONOMICAL BOWLER: Mohammad Sami gave away only 23 runs for his two wickets as Pakistan restricted New Zealand to 180, but that total eventually proved too much for their batsmen in their Super 10 match in Mohali yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Guptill powers New Zealand into semis

AFP, Mohali



New Zealand stormed into the semifinals of the World Twenty20 Tuesday after opener Martin Guptill smacked 80 off 48 balls to set up a 22-run win against a wayward Pakistan.

The Black Caps posted a strong 180 for five before restricting Pakistan to 158-5 off 20 overs on a sporting wicket at the Punjab Cricket Association ground in Mohali.

The win extended the Kiwis' unbeaten streak in the tournament and also ensured them a place in the last four.

Pakistan opener Sharjeel Khan had threatened to run away with the game after a blistering 25-ball 47 but his dismissal in the sixth over helped the Black Caps claw back on the back of some disciplined bowling and fielding.

Sharjeel gave Pakistan a flying start, hitting nine fours and a six, but the rest of the batsmen failed to rise up to the task.

His sparkling innings came to an end when he holed to Guptill off Adam Milne, and it was all downhill thereafter

for Pakistan.

Guptill was the star of the show, smacking three sixes and 10 fours in his match-winning knock after skipper Kane Williamson won the toss and elected to bat.

Ross Taylor chipped in with an unbeaten 23-ball 36 to help his side put up a strong total on the board.

The Kiwis raced to 62-0 off eight overs before Williamson was caught off Irfan for 17.

Pakistan struck again soon with captain Shahid Afridi (2-40) sending back new batsman Colin Munro (seven) in the first over that he bowled.

Guptill appeared unruffled as he raced to his 10th half-century in T20 internationals with a couple off Afridi, prompting a standing ovation from his teammates in the dressing room.

But just as Guptill looked set for a bigger score, he chopped on to his stumps off Mohammad Sami, who was most impressive among the bowlers with figures of 2-23.

Pakistan's chances of advancing in the tournament now appear slim with their second defeat in a row.

Fazlur Rahman Arzu no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Former footballer and national awardee Fazlur Rahman Arzu passed away yesterday morning at his Haliashor residence in Chittagong from old-age complications. He was 89.

Arzu, who played as a winger, was a household name in the '60s. He started his football career at Wari Club in 1951-52 and played the IFA Shield in Kolkata for Wari Club the same season. The winger also played for Dhaka Wanderers Club from 1953 to 1955 and secured a place in the then Pakistan national team in 1955 to take part in a four-nation tournament in Dhaka.



He also captained Dhaka Mohammedan and helped them finish runners-up in the league. Arzu called time on his career in 1958. Later he coached Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, BKSP and Foudjarhat Cadet College.

Verratti sent back to Paris

AFP, Rome

Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti has been allowed return to France after Italian team doctors declared him unfit to play upcoming friendlies with Spain and Germany.

The supremely talented PSG number six missed the Champions League clincher against Chelsea two weeks ago after first picking up a groin strain in mid-January, and has not played since.

So eyebrows were raised when he was called up for games against Spain on Thursday and Germany next Tuesday.

The Italian federation revealed via their Twitter account that the 23-year-old with the tough tackle and the pin-point pass had been sent home.

A key player in PSG's French and European title charge this season, Verratti had previously been linked to moves to Barcelona, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich, but recently signed an extension with the French champions until 2020.

'Suarez cannot bite again'

GOAL.COM



Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez expects no repeat of the biting incident that led to Luis Suarez's international ban as the forward nears a return.

Suarez was suspended for nine internationals after biting Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini at the 2014 World Cup, as well as being fined and banned from taking part in football-related activities for four months.

The Barcelona star is set for a return when his nation face Brazil on Friday and Peru four days later in World Cup qualifiers.

Speaking at a news conference, Tabarez said the least he expected was that Suarez would avoid another biting incident.

"He must have feelings and one of the targets we have is to try to get him to only think about football. Nothing else, nothing that may bother him," he said. "We will get rid of anything that may disturb a sense of calm. Of course, that would be always speaking with him. That's the idea we have."

"This is not the right moment, but some serious things have happened, the least we can expect is that they won't happen again."

Just that.

"I recognise how important he is as a player, the symbol he represents for this country, but he arrives to join a team."

"He'll face teams that know how valuable he is and they'll do everything they can to limit him, and he has to be fresh, beyond what's mature and everything else, he needs help and I know that for sure."

Even without Suarez, Uruguay have started qualifying well - winning three of their four games to sit second in the table.

But the return of a player who has scored 43 goals for his club this season is sure to come as a boost.

"Luis arrives having conquered many things," Tabarez said.

"And being in a club like Barcelona, a club that has made something of an institution out of a way of playing football, he has become a part of things."

"I know that a lot of people said, 'How can he go to Barcelona? He's a Real Madrid kind of player. He can't play that way.'"

"Perhaps they were right about their comments, but Luis showed once again that he overcomes challenges."

"Obviously I think that the numbers show what he's done. He's conquered challenges."



Cech in 8th heaven

AFP, Prague

Czech Republic international goalkeeper Petr Cech was named Czech player of the year for the eighth time on Monday, in a vote by coaches, players and club officials.

The 33-year-old Arsenal player - capped 118 times since making his international debut in 2002 - beat fellow internationals David Lafata, a striker with Sparta Prague, and Hertha Berlin midfielder Vladimir Darida.

Cech joined Arsenal from Premier League champions Chelsea last June after making over 400 appearances during 11 years at Stamford Bridge.

The Czech Republic have qualified for Euro 2016 in France where they play Spain, Croatia and Turkey in Group D.

Sweden saving Ibra's legs

AFP, Stockholm

Zlatan Ibrahimovic will sit out Sweden's upcoming friendly with Turkey as his coach Erik Hamren wants to save the 34-year-old's energies for the Euro 2016 finals.

"I've been thinking how best to preserve his energies for the summer. I have no say over his playing time in Paris so I've proposed to him that he sits out the Turkey game," said Hamren ahead of the Thursday away tie.

The giant superstar striker however is likely to play the March 29 friendly against the Czech Republic.

"That would be good for him and good for the team," said the Sweden boss.



Harry Redknapp (R), who was nominated as the new manager of Jordan national football team, speaks next to Prince Ali bin al-Hussein, the president of the Jordanian Football Association during a press conference in Amman on Tuesday. The former Tottenham boss will guide the Jordanians in their final World Cup qualifier against Bangladesh tomorrow.

PHOTO: AFP

'Not underestimating Bangladesh'

AFP, Amman



Harry Redknapp on Tuesday told Jordan's players only their best shot would do as the English coach took over as interim manager for two upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Bangladesh and Australia.

"It's a tough task for these two matches," said the 69-year-old former West Ham and Tottenham boss in his first job as a national manager.

Jordan are second in their Asia zone second round qualifying group just two points adrift of leaders Australia who they play at the Sydney football stadium on March 29 after tackling Bangladesh at home on Thursday.

Jordan need to finish either first or as one of the best second placed teams and will still face a final qualifying round of ten teams split into two groups of five and a potential

play off after that. South Korea and Qatar are the first two Asia zone teams through to the final qualifying round.

"I don't underestimate anybody, we have to beat Bangladesh first, then play Australia. The players have to focus, if they don't, then you find yourself in trouble. Application must be the same for the two games," he said.

"Do I think we will reach the finals? I hope so," said an upbeat Redknapp.

"We will try everything in our power to do that. We will give everything we have to do that. So you can't do any more, you can only do your best and I will be doing my best and if the players do their best we have a good chance."

"My message to the players, give everything they have in these two games," insisted the Londoner.

"I am very proud to accept this chance to come and manage the Jordan national team, I met the Prince (Ali bin Al Hussein) in London and when I was asked to do it, I had no hesitation in accepting the offer to come here."

Italian media's unique protest

AFP, Milan



Television journalists in Italy have gone to extraordinary lengths to protest poor refereeing in Serie A -- by appearing on air with their mouths covered by scarves.

The 'silent protest' followed the Torino v Juventus derby on Sunday, when match referee Nicola Rizzoli made several glaring blunders in a hotly-contested fixture won 4-1 by Serie A champions Juventus.

Rizzoli, who officiated the 2014 World Cup final between victors Germany and

Argentina, was not the only culprit, according to Gazzetta dello Sport, whose Monday report claimed it was "the worst Sunday (of refereeing)" this season.

But after Sunday's game, Rizzoli is perhaps looking forward to the international break than his colleagues.

Torino had reduced the arrears to 2-1 with a 48th minute penalty that stopped Gianluigi Buffon's unbeaten run in the Juventus net at a new record of 973 minutes.

The hosts then scored through Maxi Lopez to level the match, although his goal was chalked off, as television replays confirmed, for an in-existent offside.

Torino were then denied a possible penalty when Alex Sandro slid in late to challenge Bruno Fernandes to the right of the Juve goal.

And when both Juventus defender Leonardo Bonucci and Torino's Kamel Glik should have been cautioned for a second time and sent off, Rizzoli kept his hand in his pocket.

Rizzoli's performance prompted claims from irate Torino fans that Juventus, who a decade ago were sent to Serie B for their role in a huge match-fixing affair implicating football officials and referees, continue to curry favour from officialdom.

2006 WC BIDDING FIFA opens probe

AFP, Geneva

FIFA's ethics committee on Tuesday opened an investigation targeting six people over their roles in the bidding process that awarded the 2006 World Cup to Germany, with the probe partly focused on alleged bribery.

Those targeted include, Wolfgang Niersbach, former German federation (DFB) president and Franz Beckenbauer, the ex-German international and DFB vice president.



Finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith hands over cash awards to medal-winners of the 12th South Asian Games during a programme at a city hotel yesterday. The ceremony, which was organised by the Bangladesh Olympic Association and also attended by sports ministers, saw Tk 1.21 crore disbursed. PHOTO: STAR

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