

DISAPPOINTED COSTA AT HOME

Chelsea and Spain striker Diego Costa has returned to Brazil as he gets over the disappointment of being left out of Vicente del Bosque's latest squad. The veteran manager insists, however, that Costa was omitted purely because he is still carrying a knock, though injury has not stopped the Brazil-born attacker from returning to his homeland. Costa shared an Instagram selfie while posing with a large group of friends and family in Lagarto City, the Brazilian municipality in the north of the country where he was born. The photo was captioned: "My beloved home! #lagarto city" Eagle-eyed readers might notice that the building in the background appears to be painted in the Spanish colours, the nation for whom Costa



Messi irked by Ronaldo comparisons

GOAL.COM  
Barcelona star Lionel Messi has reiterated that he does not care about comparisons with Real Madrid counterpart Cristiano Ronaldo as he is only focused on his own performances.

The Argentina international's achievements are often contrasted to those of the Portuguese star, with the duo dominating individual awards such as the Ballon d'Or over the course of their careers.

But Messi remains unperturbed by such talk on who has enjoyed more personal success and says he is only thinking about helping his team to silverware.

"The press is always looking for comparisons and those kinds of things," the 28-year-old told MBC.

"The only thing I care about is helping my team and to keep on improving each season.

"I am not comparing myself to Cristiano Ronaldo or to anyone else. I am only thinking about myself and my teammates and winning games."

Barcelona take on Real Madrid in their first game after the international break and Messi expects a tight Clásico at Camp Nou, despite his side's 10-point advantage over their rivals.

"Real Madrid have some great players. They have always had some impressive stars and are one of the best teams in the world," he added.

Ronaldinho to go to MLS or China

GOAL.COM

Ronaldinho is likely to join Major League Soccer or the Chinese Super League, according to the Brazilian's brother and agent Roberto Assis.

The 36-year-old, who won two La Liga titles and the Champions League during his time at Barcelona, has been without a club since leaving Fluminense last September.

But it appears the forward now has two options for his next move, which is likely to be the last in his career.

"The probable destination for him is Major League Soccer in the US or the Chinese Super League," Assis told UOL.



England defender Eric Dier (2nd from R) runs for joy as Jamie Vardy (L) follows him to celebrate the stoppage time winner against Germany in their international friendly at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

England stun Germany

Dier's stoppage-time strike seals brilliant comeback victory

AFP, Paris

Eric Dier scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner as England rallied from two goals down to stun world champions Germany 3-2 in Saturday's international friendly in Berlin.

Russia and Poland stepped up their preparations for Euro 2016 with thumping victories over Lithuania and Finland, while Austria overcame tournament newcomers Albania 2-1.

In Berlin, a minute's silence was observed in memory of the victims of the Brussels terror attacks, with both sets of players wearing black armbands in honour of Dutch great Johan Cruyff who passed away on Thursday at the age of 68.

Toni Kroos gave Joachim Loew's men a 43rd-minute lead at the Olympic Stadium with a crisp left-footed drive that beat Jack Butland, who was then immediately stretchered off with a leg injury, at his near post.

After seeing a first-half effort incorrectly ruled out for offside, Mario Gomez doubled Germany's advantage on 57 minutes by heading home a Sami Khedira cross for his first international goal in almost four years.

But Harry Kane halved the deficit four minutes later as the Tottenham striker produced a piece of skill befitting the late Cruyff to fire beyond a helpless Manuel Neuer.

Substitute Jamie Vardy made an immediate impact after replacing Danny Welbeck, with the Leicester City forward superbly flicking home Nathaniel Clyne's right-wing cross on 74 minutes.

England should have gone ahead after Vardy pounced on a loose pass inside the Germany area, only for Dele Alli to blaze over with the goal gaping.

But Dier ensured Roy Hodgson's side weren't left to rue that miss as the Tottenham midfielder powered home a header from Jordan Henderson's corner in the 91st minute to complete a remarkable turnaround.

"We played brilliant today. I thought we fully

deserved the win," Kane told ITV.

"We had a lot of chances that on another day we probably could have scored two more. We're all buzzing. We never gave in and what a night."

Asked about the result raising expectation levels in France, Kane replied: "Everyone needs to stay calm, it's a friendly. It's a great night for England, it's a great night for our nation. 2-0 down away from home to the

world champions and coming back shows what kind of team we are.

"We just need to keep doing what we're doing, another important game on Tuesday (against the Netherlands) and we'll go from there."

Earlier Russia, who will face England in their opening match of the European Championship, cruised to a 3-0 victory over Lithuania in Moscow with goals from Fedor Smolov, Aleksandr Golovin and Denis Glushakov.

Poland have again been drawn alongside title frontrunners Germany at this summer's finals, having already faced them in qualifying, and strolled to a morale-boosting 5-0 demolition of Finland in Wroclaw.

Rennes midfielder Kamil Grosicki and Verona winger Pawel Wszolek both netted twice apiece with Filip Starzynski also on target as star striker Robert Lewandowski came on for the final 27 minutes.

Austria co-hosted the 2008 finals with Switzerland and booked their place at this year's edition after dropping just two points during qualifying in a group that also featured Sweden and Russia.

In Vienna, Marcel Koller's side defeated an Albania team heading to their first major tournament courtesy of early strikes from Marc Janko and Martin Harnik, with Ermir Lenjani pulling one back for the visitors.

Hungary will also travel to France in June after a 30-year finals absence, and Balazs Dzsudzsak struck 11 minutes from time in Budapest to cancel out Mario Mandzukic's first-half opener in a 1-1 draw with Croatia.

INDEPENDENCE CUP  
Arambagh KS drafted in

SPORTS REPORTER



Arambagh Krira Shangha have been included in the KFC Independence Cup after an emergency meeting of the of the professional football league committee unanimously decided to include the club in the season's curtain-raising tournament yesterday.

The club, which was initially left out of the draw on Thursday due to allegedly not registering its entry for the tournament, have been pitted in Group B alongside teams like Abahani and Sheikh Russel KC.

The club officials and supporters had staged a protest inside the Bangladesh Football Federation after being excluded from the draw of season's curtain-raising tournament on Thursday.

The decision came in the face of pressure from the club officials, who taken staged a protest inside the Bangladesh Football Federation House on the night of the draw.

"Arambagh KS have been included unanimously at the meeting after they expressed their desire to take part in the tournament and as we all want to ensure participation of all clubs," said BFF's senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshed, who apparently evaded the question whether they took the decision under pressure from Arambagh.

The league committee also decided that Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, which also did not register its entry, would be placed in Group A along with the teams like Mohammedan SC and Chittagong Abahani if they do agree to take part in the tournament.

Loew left in the lurch

AFP, Berlin



Germany's head coach Joachim Loew admitted he was annoyed to see the world champions squander a two-goal lead in their 3-2 defeat at home to England in Berlin.

Toni Kroos and Mario Gomez had put the World Cup holders 2-0 up at Berlin's Olympic Stadium on Saturday with an hour gone before the Three Lions roared back.

Harry Kane and Jamie Vardy netted for England before Eric Dier headed the winner a minute into stoppage time as Germany were punished for a sloppy defending and failing to create chances in attack.

"It's annoying as a coach when we lose after being 2-0 up,



but you can't say we didn't deserve it," admitted Loew.

"Even when we were 2-0 up, we weren't in control.

"We had problems in our build-up and struggled up front."

Germany host Italy in Munich on Tuesday and Loew knows there is plenty of work to be done in his final international friendly before naming his squad for Euro 2016.

"We know the areas we have to work on, some of the combinations didn't work and left a lot to be desired," said Loew.

"In the second-half, we gave away a crazy amount of space.

"We didn't stand compact in defence, we lost balls on the counter and the English had more and more space for their

Dizzy Nadal opts out

AFP, Miami



Britain's Andy Murray moved into the third round of the ATP and WTA Miami Open on Saturday but Rafael Nadal, dizzy as he struggled to cope with heat and humidity, retired from his match.

World number two Murray, twice a Grand Slam champion, downed Uzbekistan's 76th-ranked Denis Istomin 6-3, 7-5 to reach the third

round in a night match.

"That second set was tight but I managed to get through it," said Murray, who next faces Bulgarian 26th seed Grigor Dimitrov in his quest for a third Miami crown.

Spanish fifth seed Nadal, a 14-time Grand Slam champion playing in the heat of the afternoon, feared for his safety and handed 94th-ranked Bosnian Damir Dzumhur a 2-6, 6-4, 3-0 triumph, stopping during a match for the first time in six years.

"Everything was fine until the end

of the first set and I started to feel not very good," Nadal said. "It was getting worse and worse and worse."

"I get a little bit scared to be too dizzy and to lose fluids. I called the doctor a couple of times. I decided I was not safe. I wanted to finish the match but I decided I would not."

"Hopefully it's nothing," Nadal said. "Hopefully it's just the extreme conditions out there, the beginning of a virus combined with the conditions."

Nadal, a four-time Miami finalist but never a champion, was also a first-match loser at the Australian Open, only the second Grand Slam opener defeat of his career.

Dzumhur, 23, won 22 of the last 29 points as Nadal, 29, repeatedly spoke with a trainer, asking for his blood pressure to be taken after two games of the third set.

"Can we not check the tension, if it is good or bad please?" he said. Told it was good, he said, "Continue."

After dropping the third game, he sat with his head down as a trainer told him, "If you're feeling bad, there's no point to continue."

Nadal battled through three more points and finally said he could not go on.



Rafael Nadal could not hide his emotions at the press conference after retiring from his Miami Open match against Damir Dzumhur following a spell of dizziness on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

French public wants Euro 2016 staged

AFP, Paris

The French public is strongly against any cancellation of this summer's Euro 2016 football championships due to the fear of further terrorist attacks, an opinion poll published Sunday has shown.

The poll was carried out by the Odoxa institute for RTL and Winamax two to three days after the bomb attacks in Brussels that killed 31 people and left 340 others wounded.

Asked whether, in the context of the terrorist threat, it would be better to cancel Euro 2016, due to be held in France from June 10 to July 10, 79% of those questioned replied no.

On the matter of fan-zones, special areas set up around the country in front of giant screens for match-viewing, 58% replied no to the question of whether they should be scrapped with 41% saying yes.



STAR ECONOMICAL BOWLER: Afghanistan left-arm spinner Amir Hamza (L) recorded the most economical figures of the World Twenty20 2016 so far, conceding just nine runs in his four overs and taking one wicket.

PHOTO: AFP

www.ssgbd.com

Let's illuminate the darkness

SSGbd Support Star Group

Future is bright