

ZLATAN DOES IT AGAIN

Paris Saint-Germain striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic was voted France's Ligue 1 player of the year for a record third time on Sunday. Ibrahimovic won the award ahead of PSG teammate Angel Di Maria, Nice forward Hatem Ben Arfa and Marseille midfielder Lassana Diarra after scoring 35 goals in the capital club's romp to a fourth straight French title. Ibrahimovic's future in Paris remains uncertain however, with the 34-year-old out of contract at the end of the season. PSG coach Laurent Blanc claimed the Ligue 1 coach of the year prize for the second straight season, while 18-year-old Rennes striker Ousmane Dembele was named France's young player of the year after netting 12 goals in a remarkable debut campaign.



—AGENCIES

Rome next for Djokovic

AFP, Rome

Novak Djokovic heads for Rome this week crediting an unscheduled pause in his claycourt season with helping him clinch a record 29th Masters title.

The world number one defeated long-time rival Andy Murray 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 on Sunday to win the Madrid Masters for a second time.

Djokovic, 28, was forced to rest after losing his first clay outing of the season, going down in Monte Carlo to Czech Jiri Vesely.

But he credited the pause with actually helping his game as he decompressed after winning four early-season titles -- Doha, the Australian Open and Indian Wells and Miami Masters.

"I had an amazing opening four months of the season. The early exit in Monte Carlo happened for a reason -- I needed some time to really recharge my batteries," said Djokovic.

The Serb called his three-week stoppage "more than enough to get some freshness and new breath, on the court and get ready for Madrid."

"I came to Madrid early, got used to the conditions, and played a really fantastic tournament that will definitely serve as a great confidence boost before Rome and of course the French Open, where I want to arrive in the best possible shape."

Cameroon goalkeeper dies

BBC SPORT

The goalkeeper of a Cameroonian women's side has died after collapsing during a warm-up session, the Cameroon Football Federation has said.

Jeanine Christelle Djomnang, 26, became ill before a Femina Stars Ebolowa match in southern Cameroon on Sunday, and died on her way to hospital.

The federation says initial reports suggest she died of a heart attack but it is now awaiting a medical report.

It comes days after Cameroon player Patrick Ekeng died in Romania.

Djomnang complained of chest pains as she prepared to take on Louves MINPROFF Yaounde in the Cameroon elite league and was taken to hospital.

Women's African Cup of Nations winner of the Year Gaelle Enganamouit, who now plays in Sweden, was one of the first to react to the news.

"It's with sadness that I have learnt of the death of my team-mate Djomnang Jeanine Christelle of Femina Stars Ebolowa, may her soul rest in peace," she wrote on social media.

Barca to play Leicester in Aug friendlies

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona will play friendlies against newly-crowned English Premier League champions Leicester and Liverpool in August, the Spanish giants announced Monday.

The current La Liga leaders will play Leicester at Stockholm's Friends Arena on August 3 and Liverpool three days later at a venue to be decided, Barca said.

Barcelona will play a first pre-season game on July 30 against Celtic in Dublin as part of the International Champions Cup.

The Catalan giants will also have a July 25-30 training camp at St George's Park, the English Football Association's national football centre in the central English town of Burton-upon-Trent.



Abahani players take a lap of honour after dispatching holders Usha Krira Chakra with a 5-1 victory in the Marcel Club Cup final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani regain club cup title

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani regained the title of club cup hockey after eight years by thrashing holders Usha Krira Chakra 5-1 in the final of 11th edition of the season's curtain-raising tournament at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today.

It was the third club cup title and the first one since 2008 for Abahani, who also exacted revenge for defeats in the final of the last two editions against Usha. Had Usha won the title, it would have been a record fifth title in this club competition, but the final proved to be a one-way affair.

Both teams had shown inspired performances in the semifinals, giving an indication of a mouth-watering battle in the grand finale, which was conducted by Omani umpires Thani Shaheen Al Wahidi and Ibrahim Khatar Al Noufali.

The initial movements of the game also promised an enthralling encounter in front of some hundred spectators as Abahani cancelled out Usha's seventh-minute lead just

<b>ABAHANI 5 - 1 USHA</b>	
(Toushique 9, 56, Irfan 28, Abbasi 41, Rasul 48)	(Faizal 7)

ROLL OF HONOUR

Year	Champions	Runners-up
2016	Abahani	Usha
2014	Usha	Abahani
2012	Usha	Abahani
2010	Mohammedan	Usha
2008	Abahani	Sonali Bank
2006	Mohammedan	Abahani
2004	Abahani	Mariner Youngs
2003	Mohammedan	Abahani
2002	Mohammedan	Usha
2000	Usha	Mohammedan

two minutes later. Malaysian recruit Faisal Bin Saari had put Usha ahead by pushing home compatriot Ismail Bin Abu's scoop from inside the circle.

But Abahani hit back just two minutes later when Toushique Arshad converted a penalty corner. After which the match turned into a

one-way affair, with Mohammad Irfan giving the Sky Blues the lead in the 28th minute.

Abahani adopted a counter-attacking strategy after restart and added three more goals, with Pakistani forwards Shakeel Abbasi and Shafiq Rasul making the difference. Abbasi made it 3-1 in the 41st minute, somewhat against the run of play. Rasul scored seven minutes later availing a long-pass from compatriot Qasir Ali before Toushique completed the rout in the 56th minute by converting a penalty corner.

The Dhanmondi giants dedicated their victory to their late legend Jummon Lusai.

"Actually the foreign players made the difference with perfect assistance from local players," Abahani's advisory coach Mahbub Harun said. "The players were determined to prove themselves as people said Abahani players are not as good as those of other big clubs."

Usha coach Mamunur Rashid tried to find reasons for such a heavy defeat.

"We got off to a good start by taking an early lead but since then we kept going down as the match progressed. There were some defensive lapses and the players could not play according to the game plan," said Rashid.

'You'd regret leaving'

AFP, London



Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri has warned his freshly crowned Premier League champions that they would regret leaving the club, in comments published by British newspapers on Monday.

Leicester were presented with the Premier League trophy following Saturday's 3-1 home win over Everton, having overcome odds of 5,000-1 to win the first top-flight title in their 132-year history.

They now face a challenge to hold onto players such as Jamie Vardy, Riyad Mahrez and N'Golo Kante, but with a Champions League campaign on the horizon, Ranieri is confident that they will stay put.

"I want to enjoy, but I feel it is possible maybe to keep all the players," said the Italian. "It is important for us, but it is important also for them because they don't know the Champions League."

"If they go away, it is not good for them. It is much better if they improve another year here and then go wherever they want."

"But I have said so many times if one player comes to me and says, 'Gaffer, I want to go', then I leave him to go because it is OK."

Leicester's surge to glory was aided by the fact that they made early exits in both the FA Cup and League Cup, allowing Ranieri to plough all his resources into their league campaign.

Next season he will have to contend with the Champions League, in addition to the three domestic competitions, but he believes Leicester can ruffle the feathers of the European elite as well.

"I am confident because this team two years ago won the Championship and the Championship is very, very tough," Ranieri said.

"They run all the year and then I hope we can find good players and make some replacements because next season there will be three cups and the Premier League."

"It will be very important to be able to make good changes and give some rest to the players."

"I believe when there will be the draw for the (Champions League) group, other teams will want to play against us because we are in Europe for the first time and they think we are underdogs."

Arbeloa given huge send-off

AGENCIES, Madrid



Barcelona defender Gerard Pique says Alvaro Arbeloa deserved his Real Madrid send-off after playing his last game for the Spanish giants at Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

Arbeloa was afforded a huge reception from the Madrid faithful and a warm send-off from his teammates after their 3-2 win over Valencia, with other football icons also chiming in.

At full-time a host of fans stayed behind as Arbeloa was hoisted into the air by his team-mates and a tribute video played out on the stadium screens along with banners from the club's ultras.

The former Liverpool man will

leave Madrid at the end of the season after making almost 250 appearances for the club across a seven-year spell.

Pique, who has been involved in wars of words with Arbeloa in the past, put their rivalry to one side to wish his former Spain international team-mate luck for the future.

"I wish him the best wherever he goes next," Pique said of 33-year-old Arbeloa.

"If they have given him a send-off like that, it is because he has deserved it."

"Sometimes the tone has been a bit too much and we shouldn't have done it."

"But he's had a great career with some big trophies, including the World Cup, and for wherever he goes I wish him well."

Pique mocked Arbeloa earlier in the campaign after the Madrid defender took to Twitter to com-

ment on Barcelona's surprise 1-0 loss to Real Sociedad in April.

The ex-Manchester United man told Arbeloa "a player who has started once in 32 games doesn't deserve a response".

The emotions at the Bernabeu follow a gushing open letter about Arbeloa from Jose Mourinho.

The Spaniard has enjoyed seven fine seasons with Los Blancos and Arbeloa spoke to Spanish paper Marca in an interview to commemorate the end of his time at his boyhood club describing "my admired and beloved Mou" with the former Chelsea boss responding with a glowing open letter.

"Arbeloa is a friend, not just a player for me," it began.

"How does a player turn into a friend? By being an example of passion for his profession, of love for his club, of dedication to the group and their aims."

Platini set to quit UEFA presidency

AFP, Lausanne



Michel Platini will quit as the head of European football after a sports tribunal on Monday rejected his final appeal against his ban from football over a suspect \$2.0 million payment he received from FIFA.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), where Platini appealed against his sanction, reduced his suspension from six years to four, saying the penalty initially imposed by FIFA's ethics committee was "too severe".

But the court said it was "not convinced" that the \$2.0 million (1.8 million euros) payment Platini received from FIFA in 2011 was legitimate.

FIFA's tough punishment of the French football legend was "justified in view of the superior functions carried out by Mr. Platini... the absence of any repentance and the impact that this matter has had on FIFA's reputation".

The payment was ordered by world football's disgraced ex-president Sepp Blatter, who was also brought down over the infamous transaction.

The pair are the highest-profile casualties in an unprece-



dent set of corruption scandals within world football, which has seen dozens of long-serving FIFA executives arrested and charged with corruption.

Platini, once the front-runner to succeed Blatter as the most powerful man in the sport, said in a statement that following the ruling he had no choice but to resign from UEFA.

"As agreed with the national associations, I resign as president of UEFA to pursue my fight before the Swiss courts to prove my probity in this case," he said.

He called the CAS ruling "a profound injustice".

UEFA's executive committee is to meet in Basel on May 18, before the Europa League final, when it will set a date for an election to replace Platini.

In a statement noting the CAS ruling, UEFA said it will not appoint an interim president.

The head of the Dutch football association Michael van Praag, a possible contender to replace Platini, declined to comment on the ruling but called on Europe "to show unity", the ANP news agency said.

The ruling means Platini will be barred from presiding over the Euro 2016 that opens in his native France on June 10, a tournament which he helped organise until he was provisionally suspended by FIFA in December.

RCB win thriller

STAR SPORTS DESK

Royal Challengers Bangalore survived a last over scare to beat Kings XI Punjab at Chandigarh yesterday. Chasing 175, Bangalore required 17 runs off the last over.

Farhan Behardien took a single off the first ball and gave the strike to Marcus Stoinis. With 16 required off five balls, Stoinis smashed the first ball he faced for a four through extra cover. He then cleared the long-off boundary and smacked a six off the next all.

With six required off three balls, it seemed as though the tides had shifted and that Punjab were on their way home. However, the very next ball from Chris Jordan produced a dot. It was a wide delivery which left Stoinis in two minds.

He wanted to scoop it but his shot was half-hearted. At the end all he could do was watch the ball go towards the keeper. He hoped for a wide, but the umpire didn't get it. With five runs required off two balls, the tides changed again. The next ball was a full-toss which Stoinis could only carve through the off-side for a double.

He needed to hit a boundary off the last ball but managed just two runs again. At the end of it all Bangalore won by one run.

Earlier a 35-ball 64 from AB de Villiers helped Bangalore post 175. Punjab began the chase well with their skipper Murali Vijay smacking 89 off 57 with 12 fours and a six. Unfortunately though, they fell one run short.



Real Madrid defender Alvaro Arbeloa (up) is hoisted by his teammates at the end of his last match for his team against Valencia at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP