

RENATO BREAKS RONALDO'S RECORD

Renato Sanches has broken Cristiano Ronaldo's 12-year record by becoming the youngest player to be called up by Portugal for a major tournament. Sanches only made his first-team debut for Benfica in October but quickly cemented his place as a key figure at the heart of their midfield as the club won the Portuguese Primeira Liga. The 18-year-old's performances attracted interest from a host of top European sides but Bayern Munich won the race for the midfielder confirming that a 35 million euro deal, plus add-ons, had been finalised earlier this month. And at the age of 18 years and ten months, Sanches has surpassed Ronaldo's record to become the youngest player to be part of Portugal's squad for a senior international tournament. Ronaldo set the record ahead of Euro 2004 when he was named in Portugal's squad at the age of 19 years and four months. --AGENCIES



Bolt sets his sights on 9.8

Legend to race in Golden Spike event today

AFP, Prague

Usain Bolt said Wednesday he was fit to run at the Czech Golden Spike event on Friday after a hamstring scare, looking at 9.8 seconds for the 100 metres.

The event in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava will be the Jamaican sprint star's second race this season in the run-up to the Rio Olympics in August, where he will defend his 100m, 200m and 4x100m titles from 2012.

Bolt, who owns the 100m world record at 9.58 seconds and the world 200m record of 19.19, clocked a modest 10.05 seconds on the 100m track in his season debut at the Cayman Invitational Meet last week.

Now the 29-year-old six-time Olympic gold medalist wants more.

"I'd be very happy with 9.8," he told reporters in the Czech capital Prague.

After the Caymans race, Bolt had a tight hamstring that forced him to see his doctor in Munich, Germany, but he dismissed all concerns about his fitness ahead of Ostrava.

"I'm feeling pretty good, I trained yesterday and everything was better," he said.

Bolt took a break from racing following

the Beijing World Championships last August, where he won the 100m and 200m races in addition to helping Jamaica dominate the 4x100m relay.

He is seeking an unprecedented third gold medal in a row in all three events in what he has said before will be his final Olympics.

But in Prague he was more cautious about ending his career.

"I was always thinking it would be after the world championship next year but my coach keeps saying that I should stop saying that," Bolt said.

"If you could figure out a way to train less and still run fast, I would stay very long."

"Travelling the world and racing, it's the same fun, I really enjoy that -- but training, it's only getting worse."

He added he still wanted to "go under 9.10" on the 100-metre track and "to run sub-19s" on 200 metres.

"I think anything is possible, that's my motto. I go there every day with that mindset," said Bolt. "I'm just trying to close it out as best as possible."

Other stars due to compete at Ostrava include French pole vaulter Renaud Lavillenie and US decathlon star Ashton Eaton who will take part in the long jump competition before taking on Bolt in the 100m race.



Usain Bolt (R) made time for some fun in Prague yesterday -- where he is scheduled to race today -- as he fired the starter pistol for a short race between local children.

PHOTO: AFP

Federer out of French Open

AFP, Paris

Roger Federer withdrew from the French Open on Thursday after failing to recover from a back injury, bringing to an end the 17-time major winner's run of 65 consecutive Grand Slams.

"I regret to announce that I have made the decision not to play in this year's French Open," he wrote on his Facebook page.

"I have been making steady progress with my overall fitness, but I am not 100% and feel I might be taking an unnecessary risk by playing in this event before I am ready."

"This decision was not easy to make, but I took it to ensure I could play the remainder of the season and help to extend the rest of my career," the Swiss veteran added in his statement.

"I remain as motivated and excited as ever and my plan is to achieve the highest level of fitness before returning to the ATP World Tour for the upcoming grass court season."

"I am sorry for my fans in Paris but I very much look forward to returning to Roland Garros in 2017."

Federer's withdrawal from the French Open, which starts on Sunday, means that Rafael Nadal will be promoted to fourth seed in Friday's draw behind Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and defending champion Stan Wawrinka.



Sevilla's third on the trot

AFP, Basel



Sevilla midfielder Coke popped up with two second-half goals to break Liverpool hearts in a controversy-filled 3-1 victory that secured a record third consecutive Europa League title on Wednesday.

Liverpool travelled to St Jakob-Park confident in their chances of a first Europa League trophy since 2001 after an impressive campaign in Europe's second-tier competition.

But Jurgen Klopp's men failed to build on Daniel Sturridge's superb 35th-minute opener, and when Kevin Gameiro found Liverpool asleep to level seconds after half-time, it opened the floodgates.

Liverpool's heads went down and, as they began to sit back, Coke struck twice in six second-half minutes to give Unai Emery's men a 3-1 lead by the 70th minute.

Coke looked offside for his second goal, but after angry scenes that saw Klopp sprint down the touchline to confront the linesman, Swedish referee Jonas Eriksson pointed to the centre circle after consulting with his official.

An emotional Klopp, losing his fifth consecutive final, admitted Gameiro's leveller had taken the wind out of Liverpool's sails -- although the German hoped defeat

will serve as a lesson in the long run.

"Their first goal was a big influence on our game. We lost faith in our style of play, we lost our formation, but we've had this problem before," said Klopp.

With the winners earning a place in next season's Champions League, and the losers nothing, Klopp added: "We are disappointed, we are frustrated. Now it's clear, we're not in an international tournament next year. It means we have time to train, to work harder."

"The boys showed what they are capable of, many of them are still young and this was the first big final, and we will use this experience together."

"Some day everybody will say defeat to Sevilla was the turning point in the success of Liverpool FC."

Emery had demanded a last push from some of the experienced players who had helped the Spaniards to four Europa League crowns since 2006, and they came good in a stunning second half.

"This is our competition, but now we get to play in the Champions League," he said.

He claimed his half-time pep talk amounted to little: "I said we just had to believe in ourselves and remember what we feel when we play at our home stadium."

"I'm very happy for all the Sevilla fans, they were absolutely amazing. They were our 12th man."

France extends state of emergency to cover Euros

AFP, Paris



France's parliament confirmed Thursday a two-month extension of the state of emergency that has been in place since November's jihadist attacks

to cover the Euro 2016 football tournament and Tour de France.

Already approved by a large majority in the upper house Senate last week, the lower house National Assembly confirmed the measure on Thursday by 46 votes to 20.

"The terrorist threat remains at a high level and France, like the EU, is a target," said Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve ahead of the vote.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls had earlier said there was no question of cancelling the Euro 2016 football tournament, which is expected to draw two million fans to the country between June 10 and July 10.

Millions of spectators are also expected for the Tour de France cycling race, which is set for July 2-24 and this year covers a route of 3,519 kilometres (2,247 miles).

"Giving up on sporting events and cultural events is precisely to give in to the

terrorist threat," he told RTL radio, vowing that everything had been done to limit the chance of attacks.

The state of emergency was imposed following the November 13 attacks that left 130 people dead in the French capital, and was already extended by three months in February until May 26.

It allows police to hold people under house arrest whose behaviour is considered "a threat to security and public order".

But under the latest extension, police will no longer have the power to raid homes without a court order, as they have since November.

Since the measures were imposed in November, some 3,500 searches have been carried out, at least 56 suspects taken into custody and 69 people placed under house arrest, the government said in mid-April.

The French Human Rights League (LDH) has criticised the extension, saying the government was becoming "hooked on the state of emergency".

"It reflects... a desire to condition us to living under this regime, hoping that the women and men of this country will forget that the defence of our freedoms is another essential way of fighting terrorism," the LDH said in a statement last month.

Foxes jerseys in high demand

REUTERS, Berlin

German sportswear firm Puma has seen sales of Leicester City soccer jerseys rise fifteen-fold as a result of its winning the English Premier League title, chief executive Bjorn Gulden told a German paper.

Puma has provided the kits for Leicester, who were 5,000-1 outsiders at the start of the season, since 2012.

"The fans love such stories - the underdog coming from behind and pulling off something unlikely," Sueddeutsche Zeitung quoted Gulden as saying in its Thursday edition.

"The demand for jerseys has risen fifteen-fold," he said. Gulden did not say, however, whether Puma would pay more money to Leicester as a result of the title win.

"Our contract runs for another two years. Of course we're talking to them about how we can be more successful together."

Gulden also told the paper Puma was not interested in competing to provide the kit for the German national team, saying the price would be too high.



Sevilla midfielder Coke scored twice in the second-half to deny Liverpool a victory in their UEFA Europa League final at the St. Jakob Park on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo, James to miss out

ESPN



Real Madrid duo Cristiano Ronaldo and James Rodriguez are both set to miss August's Olympic Games football tournament in Brazil.

Portugal captain Ronaldo and Colombia midfielder James are both eligible to be selected as overage players for the tournament in Rio de Janeiro, but the duo will also be representing their countries earlier in the summer, with the former at Euro 2016 in France and the latter at the Copa America Centenario in the United States.

Portugal Olympic team coach Rui Jorge has said that, although the final decision on Ronaldo has yet to be made, he is not making plans around the 31-year-old.

"We do not yet know exactly about the three players over 23, we will wait, but I don't believe Ronaldo will be there," he said.

Colombian FA president Ramon Jesurun indicated to ESPN Deportes that James has already made his decision in conjunction with management.

"James spoke privately with coaches from the Colombia senior team and the decision was taken for him to go to the Copa America," Jesurun said. "It is understandable. It was very difficult for him to go to both tournaments, you must understand that."

It has already been confirmed that Brazil star Neymar will miss the Copa America to take part in the Olympics on home soil.

The Olympic football tournament in Rio is being played between Aug. 3-20.

BD set to host U-16 women's qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-16 Women's football team have been placed in Group C of the 2017 AFC U-16 Women's Championship qualifiers, with the country also likely to host its group's matches, according to a Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) press release.

The official draw was concluded in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday. Group C includes Iran, Chinese Taipei, United Arab Emirates, Kyrgyzstan and Singapore, other than likely hosts Bangladesh.

BFF secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that at the FIFA conference in Mexico a week ago, Bangladesh were told verbally by the AFC that they would host the Group C -- in which they were seeded third -- matches after they expressed interest in hosting, but an official announcement is yet to be made.

The top four teams from the last edition -- North Korea, Japan, China and Thailand -- have directly qualified for the finals. Each of the four groups will play a one-round league with the winner qualifying for the finals.

Bid team VC denies knowledge of 'bribe'

AFP, Tokyo



A top official of Tokyo's successful bid to host the 2020 Olympics said Thursday he knew nothing about a 2 million dollar payment to a Singaporean consulting firm under investigation over alleged bribery suspicions.

In an interview with Kyodo News, Masato Mizuno, who was vice president of the bid team, said he was tasked with interviewing other consulting companies and drawing up contracts but said he had no knowledge of one with the Black Tidings consultancy company, or even its existence.

"I was not involved with that contract," he said. "This is the first time for me to have any knowledge of it."

Japanese officials, while acknowledging the money was paid by the now disbanded bid committee, have denied wrongdoing and stress that it was for consulting services.

The comments came a day after the Japanese Olympic Committee announced its own probe of the payments.

Mizuno also made similar comments to private broadcaster Fuji Television network Thursday, saying he "has never met" with nor even known Ian Tan Tong Han, the consultant who headed Black Tidings.

Separately, Nobumoto Higuchi, another bid committee official, told Fuji Television that his team "did not interview" the consultant, but that he and Tsunekazu Takeda, the JOC president who led the bidding team, approved the payments decision.

ধানমন্ডির বিখ্যাত
Chilis
Restaurant & Banquet
 এখন
উত্তরায়
 সেক্টর ৭, রবীন্দ্র স্মরণী
 Uttara- 01869516549, 01869514668
 Dhanmondi- 02-9121235, 01865444037

Chilis Thai & Chinese Restaurant