

'SCHWEINI SHOULD QUIT'

Michael Ballack has encouraged Germany captain Bastian Schweinsteiger to retire from international football. Ballack has reflected on a disappointing tournament for Schweinsteiger and believes the 31-year-old should bring an end to his international career. "I think it is now a good time for him to withdraw," he wrote in his column for German publication Express. "I know that he is brutally ambitious. But I'm worried about his physical condition. Therefore, I do not know if he would do himself a favour by calling the World Cup in Russia his next personal goal. "I would advise him to think carefully about this step. I'm afraid he might get into a vortex. Other players could use the situation to put his status in the team in question. Schweinsteiger would not deserve that."

—AGEN—



Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo breaks down in tears as he realises that he will play no further part in the final of Euro 2016 against France after an injury forced him off within just 25 minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Isinbayeva's application rejected by IAAF

AFP, Moscow



The IAAF on Sunday cleared only long jumper Darya Klishina to compete at the Rio Olympics, meaning the last remaining hope for pole vault star Yelena Isinbayeva and other Russian athletes now rests on an impending court decision.

Athletics' governing body, which has suspended the Russian track and field team over state-sponsored doping that has cast a dark shadow over next month's Games, said it had given the go ahead for Klishina to take part in international competition.

"The IAAF Doping Review Board has today agreed that Russian long jump athlete Darya Klishina meets the exceptional eligibility criteria to compete in international competition as a neutral athlete," the IAAF said in a statement.

"The Doping Review Board received a total of 136 applications from Russian athletes seeking exceptional eligibility to compete in an individual capacity," added the statement, which drew fresh condemnation in Moscow.

Klishina's participation at Rio is still subject to acceptance by the International Olympic Committee, which is battling doping on multiple fronts ahead of the Games.

"Rejections have come for everyone,

except for Klishina," Alexandra Brilliantova, the head of the Russian Olympic Committee's legal department, told state-run TASS news agency.

Among those rejected were gold medalist pole vaulter Isinbayeva and world champion hurdler Sergey Shubenkov, trainers for the two athletes -- who are both based in Russia -- confirmed.

Russia's tainted athletics federation slammed the decision to reject all but Klishina.

"The federation is fighting for the rights of clean sportsmen and is waiting for the CAS decision," it said in a statement.

Sixty-eight Russian track and field stars, including Isinbayeva and Shubenkov, still hoping to go to Rio now hope that the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) will overturn the blanket ban as a last resort.

CAS will make its decision by July 21, two



Tragic end to Ronaldo's Euro journey

AFP, Paris

Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo was forced off injured in tears just 25 minutes into Sunday's Euro 2016 final against France in Paris.

The Real Madrid forward had attempted to play on with a heavily bandaged knee after hurting himself in an eighth-minute collision with France's Dimitri Payet.

As Ronaldo attempted to maneuver the ball away from two Frenchmen closing in on him, Payet crashed into Ronaldo's knee -- which has been prone to injury over Ronaldo's career.

Ronaldo was first received treatment on the field, before going off to seek further treatment.

But after one acceleration midway through the first half Ronaldo signalled to the bench that he could not carry on, handing his captain's armband to Nani, and Ronaldo failed to hide his despair as he was replaced by Ricardo Quaresma with the game still goalless.

King Eric puts Zlatan in his place

AGENCIES, London

In light of Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic joining Manchester United on a one-year deal, United legend Eric Cantona had a special message for the Swede, warning him that he could only hope to be the 'prince of Manchester' rather than king.

"I have a personal message for Zlatan: You decided to go red. It is the best choice you ever made," Cantona said.

"When you walk into the Theatre of Dreams. When you feel the ghosts of the legends that have been here before. When you score that first goal right in front of Stretford End. When you hear the crowd chanting your name.

"When your heart beats so strong that it bursts out of your chest. When you feel that you will love them as much as they will love you. "You will know, my friend, that you finally made it home.

"One last thing. There can only be one king in Manchester. You can be prince if you want to. The king is gone! Long live the prince!"

Jose to sack 8 players to make room for Pogba?

Real Madrid pull out of race for star

AGENCIES, Manchester



Manchester United's new chief coach Jose Mourinho will reportedly axe eight footballers as he tries to land Juventus' French midfield sensation Paul Pogba, who has a nearly \$130 million buy-out clause.

The Manchester United boss wants to work with 22 core men and the squad will also be trimmed with loans and sales.

The Sun quoted a source as saying on Sunday: "Jose has made it clear he wants to work with 22 key players.

"It means up to eight players heading out."

Argentine defender Marcos Rojo, French midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin and German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger are most at risk after poor seasons.

Adnan Januzaj was loaned last season and there are doubts over Memphis Depay, Daley Blind and Juan Mata's futures.

Mourinho will go head-to-head with former club, Champions League holders Real Madrid to try to sign Pogba.

United have already done business with Pogba's agent Mino Raiola this summer for Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

And it appears that Manchester United's path to sign Pogba is clearing further after Real Madrid reportedly ended their interest in the midfielder for economic reasons.

According to sources close to the deal, United's superior financial strength has given them a huge advantage in negotiations Raiola and forced Real to admit defeat in their pursuit of the player.

With United willing to pay a world record fee, Real decided to stop pursuing the player, despite an impending transfer ban which will see them fail to strengthen their team in the coming days.

At this point in negotiations, the basic transfer fee for Pogba is understood to start at around 85 million pounds. However, when taking into account add-ons and bonuses related to the success of the player and the club -- as well as Raiola's fee -- the total amount United pay for Pogba's transfer could reach over 105 million pounds.

This is not including the player's contract, which is expected to comfortably exceed 65 million pounds, were the club to pay him a basic salary of 250,000 pounds per week on a five-year contract.

Reports abound that United have agreed terms with the player and his agent, with only Juventus yet to settle the issue.



Pele getting married for third time

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazil football legend Pele is getting married Tuesday for the third time, tying the knot with his girlfriend of six years Marcia Cibebe Aoki.

Pele, 75, told O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper that this time, he has found "love forever."

Pele and Aoki met in New York in the 1980s but only started seeing each other in 2010, when they crossed paths in an elevator in Sao Paulo.

Aoki, a 42-year-old businesswoman, has been by the three-time world champion's side for nearly all his public appearances since 2012, as well as during his repeated hospital visits in recent years.

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pele is held by many as being the greatest footballer in history.

He scored 1,281 goals in 1,363 matches, appeared 91 times for Brazil between 1957 and 1971 and played his club football for Brazil's FC Santos as well as the New York Cosmos.

Barca ask fans to stand by Messi

REUTERS, Madrid



Barcelona have launched a campaign in support of Lionel Messi and his father Jorge after the Argentine pair were sentenced to prison terms this week over tax fraud.

The campaign, under the hashtag #WeAreAllLeoMessi, asks Barcelona fans to "express their sympathy for the greatest footballer in the world by voicing their unconditional support on social networks."

Messi, 29, has played his entire club career for Barcelona. "We want Leo to know that he is not alone," the club said on their website (www.fcbarcelona.com). "All members, supporters clubs, fans, athletes, media and everyone else are invited to participate."

Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu also tweeted: "Leo, those who attack you are attacking Barca and its history. We'll defend you to the end. Together forever!"

A Barcelona city court sentenced Messi and his father on Wednesday to prison terms of 21 months after they were found guilty of three counts of tax fraud, although it is unlikely they will spend time behind bars.

Spanish law is such that any sentence under two years for a non-violent crime rarely requires a defendant without previous convictions to serve jail time and a spokeswoman for the court confirmed Messi was unlikely to be imprisoned.

It is the second campaign in support of Messi in the last two weeks.

Argentines have called on him to reverse his retirement from international football, a decision he took after his country's loss on penalties to Chile in the Copa America Centenario final in the United States on June 26.

It was the fourth final in a major international tournament and third as Argentina captain that Messi has been on the losing side, including the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Wales charged for celebrating with children

SKY SPORTS

Wales have been charged by UEFA for allowing their players to bring their children onto the pitch to celebrate during their impressive run to the Euro 2016 semifinals.

After their knockout round wins over Northern Ireland and Belgium, many of the Welsh players including Gareth Bale celebrated with their families.

But UEFA officials expressed their disquiet with the players' actions ahead of the semifinal against Portugal, and it has now emerged that the Welsh FA were charged by the Euro 2016 organisers.

The case was concluded in France on Thursday, and Wales have been issued with a warning over their conduct at future matches.

FAW Trust chief executive Neil Ward said: "We were disappointed. I think we understand security issues around all games.

"In fact the FAW has been charged by UEFA on that but we put in a lot of mitigation around this because obviously it is about that future generation and that inclusivity."

Football without Messi is hard to imagine: Neymar

AGENCIES, Barcelona



FC Barcelona's star striker Neymar believes it is impossible not to admire his team-mate Lionel Messi, and added that the sport would be completely different without the Argentine icon.

Messi brought an end to his international career this summer after suffering a third consecutive final defeat in as many years with Argentina -- this time losing out on penalties to Chile at the Copa America Centenario, sending his own spot kick sailing over the bar.

While his nine years with the national team have failed to live up to expectations, Messi's club career has been nothing short of phenomenal, with the five-time Ballon d'Or winner claiming four Champions League titles, three Club World Cups and eight Liga crowns.

Messi's summer got worse this week when he was handed a 21-month prison sentence after he was convicted of tax evasion.

And his Barca team-mate believes that, despite his troubles this year, he has changed football.

"I respect his decision to retire, but football without Messi isn't football, it's hard to imagine it without him," Neymar was quoted as saying by Spanish newspaper Marca on Saturday.

"If you like football at all, then you can't help but admire Messi and everything he's achieved for Argentina and Barcelona," the Brazilian international said.

Messi scored 55 goals in 113 appearances for Argentina and scored 41 goals in 49 appearances in all competitions for Barca last season.

Bremen player assaulted

AGENCIES, Munich

Melvyn Lorenzen will miss the first three weeks of Werder Bremen's pre-season training after being attacked on his own doorstep on Saturday night.

The Bundesliga club released a statement on Sunday confirming the attack by unidentified individuals on the 21-year-old outside his own home, which left the winger with facial injuries. Lorenzen was taken to hospital and has been told he will be unable to train for three weeks. His attackers escaped before the police arrived. "Of course we are shocked by such an incident and we hope it gets resolved quickly," said Bremen's director of sport Frank Baumann. "We are going to give Melvyn our full support. We hope that he makes a full recovery from this incident very quickly and joins us back in the team."

Lorenzen made his debut in a 2-0 friendly defeat to Zimbabwe, joined Bremen in 2013 from Holstein Kiel. He made his first-team debut in October 2013 and has made 14 appearances for the Bundesliga outfit.

Hamilton reigns in Silverstone

AFP, Silverstone



Lewis Hamilton completed a hatrick of home wins on Sunday when he triumphed ahead of Nico Rosberg in the British Grand Prix to cut his Mercedes team-mate's championship lead to just four points.

Defending three-time champion Hamilton reeled off his fourth win in five races as he steams up behind Rosberg in the title race, with the German also subject to a post-race inquiry into radio dialogue with the team when he had a gearbox problem.

Dutch teenager Max Verstappen finished third -- pushing Rosberg all the way -- ahead of his Red Bull team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, with Finn Kimi Raikkonen coming home fifth for Ferrari.

In a reversal of the scenes at Spielberg following last Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix, where Hamilton and Rosberg collided on the final lap, Rosberg was booed by fans during the podium ceremony at Silverstone.

"A great job and thank you so much guys for your efforts back at the factory," said Hamilton on his victory lap.

From the podium, he added: "We've got the best fans here so thank you so much... I am not sure you can be as happy as I am."

A downpour shortly before the race

created some havoc and an immediate call for "full wet" tyres and a plodding safety car start.

Hamilton led the way for six laps before the real thing began, grumbling on lap four that "this safety car is just really slow."

On lap five, he made it more obvious: "We can go, Charlie!" he said, a message directed at the race director Charlie Whiting.

And so racing began on lap six, Hamilton throwing up a high plume of spray ahead of Rosberg as most of the rest -- bar the top four -- rushed to the

pits for intermediate tyres.

In the pit lane, there were two near collisions before the race resumed and settled with Hamilton pulling 3.6 seconds clear by lap seven.

Both Mercedes men pitted for their intermediates on lap eight, ahead of the Red Bulls, as the Virtual Safety Car (VSC) was deployed when Pascal Wehrlein spun off at Abbey curve.

As the track improved, Verstappen and then Rosberg picked up the pace before Hamilton responded. By lap 12, he was 5.2 seconds clear with Rosberg



Lewis Hamilton again triumphed at home and inched closer to Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg in the championship race.

PHOTO: AFP