

## GARCIA'S HEART TROUBLE AN ISSUE

Raul Garcia has been ordered to decrease the intensity and the volume of his training after a heart issue was detected by the Athletic Club doctor. The player, who turned 30 on Monday, underwent the routine medical examination for the start of pre-season training and found that he had a mild electrocardiogram abnormality. It is nothing too serious, but Garcia, who has never had a heart condition before, has been warned to take it easy for the next three to four weeks. He will continue to attend Athletic's Lezama training ground, but will work away from the rest of the group. As a result, the start of his La Liga season will likely be pushed back as his physical preparation will be almost a month behind that of his teammates. Garcia will also miss all of the club's July pre-season friendlies, while he would only be able to play in the August ones if he makes a full recovery in three weeks - the earliest possible date at which he could return to full intensity.

—AGENCIES



## Bangladesh lose ground

Portugal rise above Spain

AGENCIES



Bangladesh have dropped down two positions to 183rd place in the latest Fifa rankings released on Thursday after losing both the games which were in consideration.

Bangladesh failed to pick up a single point after suffering a 5-0 loss on June 2 before losing the reverse fixture 0-1 on June 7.

Portugal have climbed above Spain into sixth place.

A shock win at Euro 2016 has taken Fernando Santos's side up two places, while the previous European champions are now down to eighth.

### TOP TEN

1. Argentina	6. Portugal (+2)
2. Belgium	7. France (+10)
3. Colombia	8. Spain (-2)
4. Germany	9. Brazil (-2)
5. Chile	10. Italy (+2)

Argentina remain top despite losing the final of the Copa America Centenario in June. The four teams behind them - Belgium, Colombia, Germany and Chile - remain

unchanged.

France, who were beaten by Portugal in the Euro 2016 final last Sunday, have jumped 10 places into seventh, while Italy are back in the top 10 after their run to the quarter-finals.

Surprise semifinalists Wales are up 15 places to 11th, two ahead of England. Iceland, who knocked them out of the Euros, are up 12 places to 22nd - their best ever position - while Croatia and Poland enjoyed big climbs to 15th and 16th place respectively.

New Zealand are the biggest movers, with their triumph at the OFC Nations Cup lifting them 54 places to 93rd.



Chelsea's newly appointed Italian manager Antonio Conte holds a team shirt during a press conference at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## US Open increases prize money

AFP, New York

The 2016 US Open, the fourth and final Grand Slam of the year, will dish out a record \$46.3 million in prize money, including \$3.5 million for the men's and women's singles champions.

The bumped-up new purse, announced by the US Tennis Association, will make for an increase of about 10 percent per round for players, with the singles runners-up commanding \$1.75 million.

The numbers outstrip those paid at the other Grand Slam events. This year's Wimbledon champions, Andy Murray and Serena Williams, earned two million pounds (about \$2.6 million) apiece out of a prize money pool of 28.1 million pounds.

"We are proud that this year's US Open will offer the richest purse in tennis history," said USTA president Katrina Adams.

This year's edition of the US Open will begin August 23 and feature a new retractable roof over Arthur Ashe Stadium Court as well as a new Grandstand Stadium.

## PSG labour to a win

AFP, Schladming

French champions Paris Saint Germain laboured to a 2-1 win over West Brom in their first pre-season friendly on Wednesday with mercurial midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa making his debut.

Not helped by torrential rain and a soggy pitch in Austria, PSG defender David Luiz managed to give the English Premier League club the lead after 15 minutes, putting the ball past his own keeper Kevin Trapp off a cross from Saïdo Berahino.

However, second-half substitutes Adrien Rabiot (62nd minute) and Lucas (79th minute) gave PSG the win.

## Pogba open to Man Utd move

AGENCIES, Los Angeles

Paul Pogba teased Manchester United supporters over a possible transfer after he received a United shirt from broadcasters ESPN in Los Angeles.

Pogba was in attendance for the ESPYs 2016 awards after suffering defeat in the Euro 2016 final with France on Sunday and ESPN unfurled United, Juventus and Real Madrid replicas in front of the midfielder.

The 23-year-old described United as his 'first family' and, when pressed on a possible return to Manchester, smiled and replied: "I don't know. We'll see, we'll see."

Pogba was also asked what he would do if Mourinho called.

"I don't know. Let's see. For the moment I'm at Juve and I'm happy. I don't know where I want to go," he said.

The France international described Juve as "my team, my family, where I am playing. I am very comfortable" and added Real were a 'great club' before he was asked which of the three replicas he would prefer to wear.

"I'll take [all] three," he diplomatically replied.

The flames were further stoked as Pogba was later photographed sitting alongside Manchester United's newest signing, Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Bobby Chinn, the chef and owner of an LA restaurant, posted two separate pictures of himself with Pogba and Ibrahimovic.

## Rizzoli feels justified

ESPNFC



Italian referee Nicola Rizzoli feels vindicated about his decision to award France a penalty in the semifinal of Euro 2016, even if not everybody on the field and off it shared his view.

Rizzoli hesitated for a few seconds before pointing to the spot after Germany's Bastian Schweinsteiger appeared to handle the ball inside the penalty area in the closing stages of the first half. Antoine Griezmann tucked away the spot kick and France went on to win 2-0.

There has been much debate about whether Rizzoli made the right decision, but he explained to Gazzetta dello Sport why he knew he had got the decision spot on.

"It takes a combination of your gut feeling and concentration following the dynamics of an action," the Bologna-based official said. "Our position for a corner is standard, while it is you who decides where to look based on the groups of players which form."

"I had a perfect view of [Patrice] Evra and Schweinsteiger and I knew straight away that the ball was heading towards them and so I focused on their movements. A handball happens in an instant and I took a mental photograph of it and made up my mind in that instant."

It nevertheless took Rizzoli several seconds before he actually pointed to the spot, and few on the field were expecting that call to be made.

"We're talking about the semifinal of a European Championship and I have a colleague behind the goal who has a different view to me," Rizzoli said. "It's normal that I ask him for confirmation, but in this case [Antonio] Damato's view was blocked, as you can see from the TV images. At that point, I followed my own conviction and gave the penalty."

"It comes from your gut feeling. I had recorded the penalty with a clear image in my mind and I cannot let anything after that influence me. It's true, many of the players didn't realise straight away what was happening apart from [Olivier] Giroud."

"The Germans were asking me for an explanation and when I told them it was Schweinsteiger, they looked at him and saw he had his hands over his face, disconsolate. They realised then that I had got it right. The best thing of all was when I watched it again on TV that night and I saw that the action went precisely the way I had remembered it."

Rizzoli said he was not disappointed not to have been awarded the final, adding he sent Mark Clattenburg a text message to congratulate him on his appointment.

The 45-year-old has already reached the age of retirement for international referees, but there is still a chance he will be permitted to continue officiating at the highest level for a few more years to come.

"I'm still in good shape physically and psychologically and I want to carry on refereeing," he said. "I'll carry on for as long as I feel this way. I want to earn an extension to be able to carry on refereeing internationally. For that, I need to do well between now and December in the games I am awarded, starting off in Serie A. So let's see."

## La Liga chief happy for Messi to stay

AFP, Madrid

Spanish League president Javier Tebas said Wednesday he does not consider Lionel Messi to be a criminal and was happy for the Barcelona star to remain in La Liga.

"About Messi, I have said I do not consider him a criminal and I am happy for him to continue in the league," Tebas said in Madrid at a sponsor's presentation.

Tebas also reminded critics that Messi is appealing against the decision of a Spanish court which sentenced him to 21 months in prison for tax fraud.

His comments came two days after Barcelona defended a campaign on social media in support of Messi.

"We are involved in a controversy in which there is the feeling that FC Barcelona has committed a tax crime whereas that is not the case," said club spokesman Josep Vives on Monday.

The Spanish giants were only "defending someone who has been and is still being treated unjustly," he added.

Last Friday Barcelona took to social

media following Messi and his father's conviction for avoiding paying taxes on 4.16 million euros of the player's income earned from his image rights from 2007-09.

"Using the hashtag #WeAreAllLeoMessi while posting a photo or message with both hands open, the campaign is encouraging all Barça fans to express their sympathy for the greatest footballer in the world by voicing their unconditional support on social networks," a statement on the club's website explained.

"By making it clear that #WeAreAllMessi, we want Leo to know that he is not alone. All members, supporters clubs, fans, athletes, media and everyone else are invited to participate."

The prison sentences handed out to Messi and his father are likely to be suspended as is normal in Spain for first offences for non-violent crimes carrying a sentence of less than two years.

The four-day trial also fined the 29-year-old five-time world player of the year 2.09 million euros while his father was fined 1.6 million euros.



Barcelona's latest signing, French defender Lucas Digne (L), shakes hands with club president Josep Maria Bartomeu during his official presentation at the Nou Camp yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Milan wish Tabarez well

GOAL.COM

AC Milan has posted a message in support of former head coach Oscar Tabarez, who is battling ill health.

The Uruguay boss was forced to use a mobility scooter and a walking stick during the Copa America Centenario last month, though he refused to discuss his ailment publicly.

Reports in his homeland state that the 69-year-old has been diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a serious condition in which the body's immune system attacks the central nervous system, usually after a viral or bacterial infection.

Tabarez, who was head coach of Milan for a short spell in the 1995-96 season, has now been sent some words of encouragement by the club.

"Tabarez was only with us for a few months, but Milan have not forgotten his expertise and his professionalism," a message posted via Milan's official website read.

"While we await medical insight about the syndrome which struck him during the Copa America, we send him loving and supportive thoughts. Forza Maestro!"

The Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) has yet to comment on Tabarez's condition.

## Total Russia ban unlikely

REUTERS, London



Athletes from one sport should not be punished for the sins of those from another, the IOC president said on Wednesday, cooling speculation that Russia could be banned from the Olympics altogether for systematic doping.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is due to issue a report on Monday covering its investigation into allegations that a Russian state-run system helped doped athletes escape detection at the Sochi Winter Olympics of 2014.

Travis Tygart, head of the United States' Anti-Doping Agency, is one of several people who have said that if the report does confirm the allegations of systematic doping are true then Russia should be banned from the Rio Olympics.

Russia's track and field athletes are already banned as a result of state-sponsored doping.

However, Thomas Bach, head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), said: "It is obvious you cannot sanction a badminton player for an infringement of the rules by an official or a lab director at the Winter Games."

"In the same way we would not consider sanctioning all athletes from a particular sport if there is manipulation of the rules by the leadership of a federation."

"What we have to do is take decisions based on facts and to find the right balance between a collective responsibility and individual justice."

Speaking on a conference call with international news agencies, Bach said he did not want to speculate about what measures could be taken until there is evidence of any proven infringement.

He added that the IOC was aware that several federations had already begun carrying out extra targeted tests on Russian athletes and made sure that their samples are tested outside the country in a bid to build confidence in the results.

One Russian athlete who could be competing in Rio is long jumper Darya Klshina, but it remains unclear which kit she will be wearing.

Due to being based, and tested, in the United States, she was declared eligible by the IAAF, who suggested she be allowed to compete as a neutral athlete.

## Ronaldo, Messi cross paths in Ibiza

AS

Whatever they do, wherever they are, it's always been very hard to separate Cristiano and Messi - two legends of the modern game, it's as simple as that.

So it didn't come as a huge surprise to discover that both have chosen similar resorts to unwind and rest with their families before they are both due back with their respective clubs for the start of their pre-seasons.

Both players are in Ibiza; the Real Madrid forward has moored his luxury yacht in the fashionable Cala Jondal resort -- popular with well-heeled holidaymakers.

The Barça ace meanwhile is lounging just a few kilometres away on the silky, golden sands of Las Salinas. His yacht 'Seven C', in true maritime tradition, flies the Spain flag on the stern and onboard, a bearded Messi relaxes by drinking Argentinean mate with his family.

Cristiano and Messi aren't the only players who have chosen to holiday in Ibiza this year - Paolo Maldini, Javier Mascherano, Alessandro Del Piero, Alvaro Morata and Roberto Soldado are just a few of the footballers past and present who have been lured by the Mediterranean relaxing powers to recharge their batteries.

## Trio handed lifelines

AGENCIES, London



Jose Mourinho is ready to keep Juan Mata and Marouane Fellaini at Manchester United - and hand Daley Blind a chance to prove himself.

The Portuguese is keen to give the fringe trio a pre-season opportunity to impress, in a move that may come as a surprise to many.

When Mourinho was Chelsea manager he sanctioned playmaker Mata's move to Old Trafford in 2014.

Mourinho favoured Oscar, believing that the Brazilian could carry out defensive duties more effectively while remaining an attacking threat - something he thought the Spaniard may struggle with.

And while Mata may not be the multi-functional footballer Mourinho treasures,

he is expected to remain at the club - for the time being at least.

The news will delight Mata, who sought assurances about his future after Mourinho's appointment.

He has settled well in Manchester and has immersed himself in the city. In May he was at the opening of a tapas restaurant in which both he and his father hold a stake.

While Mourinho believes he can bring out the best in the attacking midfielder, the lack of a suitable club for Mata to move to is also a factor.

The 28-year-old received a hefty salary increase when he moved to Old Trafford and potential suitors in his homeland, including Barcelona and Real Madrid, currently have a wealth of options in the No 10 position.

Instead, Mata is likely to remain at United, albeit in a rotational role rather than as a first-team regular.