

SAKHO SENT HOME

Mamadou Sakho faces an uncertain future at Liverpool after the defender was sent back to England from the Premier League club's pre-season tour of America. According to British media reports, manager Jurgen Klopp was unhappy with the 26-year-old's attitude during their stay in California and ordered his return to Liverpool. Sakho angered the German manager by turning up late for Liverpool's flight to the United States while last weekend he interrupted Klopp while he was conducting an interview with the club website, the reports said. The France international, who was recently cleared by UEFA after allegations of a failed drugs test, is currently nursing an Achilles injury. He will continue receiving treatment at Melwood, the club's training ground, and is expected to miss the start of the Premier League season, which begins on Aug. 13.

—REUTERS



No end to stalemates

SPORTS REPORTER



The trend of minnows upending their superior rivals continues in the JB Bangladesh Premier League as Feni Soccer Club held Brothers Union to a 1-1 draw at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Sushanta Tripura put Feni Soccer ahead in the fourth minute of the game with a clever chip from outside the box, but Brothers salvaged the crucial point, with Haitian striker Augustine Walson striking the equaliser during the 27th minute.

The first five matches of the league have now yielded four draws, meaning that big names such as Sheikh Jamal DC, Mohammedan SC, Abahani and Chittagong Abahani have dropped points against minnows while title contenders Sheikh Russel KC lost to promoted Uttar Baridhara in their respective opening matches of the ninth edition of the professional football league.

The draw was not a surprise for Feni Soccer, who had earlier showed their potential in the season's curtain-raising Independence Cup by holding giants Abahani and Sheikh Russel KC to stalemates. The club from the south-eastern part of the country were however unlucky not to have secured all three points despite dominating the opposition throughout the game, courtesy of some sloppy efforts in front of goal by forwards Twum Frank and Akbar Hossain Ridon.

Feni Soccer, the 2014 Independence Cup runners-up went ahead in the fourth minute when Sushanta sped down the left flank and fired a looping shot over Brothers goalkeeper Uttam Barua who stood outside the box.

Brothers soon reacted with Mannaf Rabbi whipping in a fine cross from the right flank for Kawar Ali Rabbi who then drove the shot wide off target in the 17th minute before Walson ultimately levelled the margin after deftly receiving a long-ball from Ebayed Hossain Komol. The Haitian then danced past Feni goalkeeper Sujun Chowdhury and an opposition defender inside the box before calmly placing the ball through the near post.

After that, Feni soccer failed to restore the lead as Uche Felix and Ridon managed to squander four goal scoring opportunities.

Frank also failed to score despite getting Uttam Kumar in a one-on-one position in the 35th minute while Felix lost his balance inside the box with only the goalkeeper to beat three minutes later. Frank, a former Abahani striker, wasted yet another opportunity in the 54th minute before Ridon surprisingly volleyed wide from the edge of the six-yard box.

MUKTIJODDHA HELD BY TEAM BJMC Nigerian midfielder Samson Iliasu gave BJMC the breakthrough during the 32nd minute by converting a penalty only to have it cancelled out by Ahmed Kolo Musa who the equaliser with a well placed shot after nutmegging goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel.

Muktijoddha Sangsad could have secured the full three points had Ahmed Kolo Musa not wasted the spot kick in the 53rd minute. The All Reds also failed to capitalize on BJMC being one-man short after Bayebeck was given the marching order in the 65th minute.

Kolo equalised the margin two minutes later after bad defending from Nigerian defender Samuel Adams, a misplaced header clearance by Samuel fell before Kolo who then took the shot from the edge of six-yard box.

BROTHERS UNION	1	-	1	FENI SOCCER
MUKTIJODDHA	1	-	1	TEAM BJMC



Brothers Union striker Augustine Walson gets his teammates to dummy a selfie pose after scoring the equaliser against Feni Soccer Club during their JB Bangladesh Premier League match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



The Chinese Olympic team, the second biggest contingent of athletes, arrive at the Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport in Rio de Janeiro on Monday. The Olympic Games will be held in Brazil from August 5 to 21.

PHOTO: AFP

Ecclestone's mom-in-law kidnapped

AGENCIES, Sao Paulo

Bernie Ecclestone's mother-in-law has been kidnapped in Brazil with criminals demanding a ransom of £28million, according to reports.

Aparecida Schunck, the mother of the Formula One supremo's wife, Fabiana Flosi, was seized in Sao Paulo on Friday night, insist Veja and Globo. However, police in the city are yet to comment on stories of the 67-year-old's disappearance.

According to Veja, kidnappers say the ransom must be paid in pounds and divided into four bags of cash. Ecclestone has not commented.

Russian shooters cleared

REUTERS, London

Russian shooters have been cleared to compete at next month's Rio Olympics, the International Shooting Federation (ISSF) said on Tuesday.

"The 18 Russian shooters who have been entered... to participate in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games are neither mentioned in the McLaren Report nor have they tested positive.

Phelps 'not the greatest ever'

REUTERS, New Jersey



An Olympic historian disagrees with a widely held consensus that American swimmer Michael Phelps is the greatest ever Olympian.

Phelps holds the record for career gold medals at 18, followed by Soviet gymnasts Larisa Latynina (nine) and Nikolai Andrianov (seven).

But as Bill Mallon points out, swimmers, gymnasts and runners, among others, benefit greatly from being more easily able to pile up medals in several events.

But discus throwers and pole vaulters, to use just a couple of examples, can win only one gold medal every four years.

Mallon, while freely acknowledging the greatness of Phelps, rates discus thrower Al Oerter the greatest Olympian.

Oerter, who died in 2007 at the age of 71, won four consecutive gold medals from 1956-68, a feat matched only by fellow American Carl Lewis (long jump, 1984-1996).

What sets Oerter apart, according to Mallon, is that he was an underdog in three of those Olympics, and a co-favourite in the other. He perfected the art of peaking at the right time.

"Oerter never won the U.S. Olympic trials," Mallon, a co-founder of the International Society of Olympic Historians, told Reuters. "Yet he won each gold with an Olympic record and a personal best."

Phelps will have two chances in Rio to join Oerter and Lewis on the four-peat list -- in the 100 metres butterfly and 200 individual medley.

Mallon rates Phelps and Lewis among those with claims to being the second-greatest Olympian, and says Usain Bolt will deserve consideration if the Jamaican sprinter can win the 100 and 200 metres and 4x100 relay for a third consecutive Games.

In individual events in Rio, Mallon says American gymnast Simone Biles, in the women's all-around, is perhaps the surest bet for gold, while the United States women's basketball team is the biggest lock for a team gold.

One other athlete Mallon will be watching closely is Japanese wrestler Saori Yoshida, who will shoot for a fourth consecutive gold.

Yoshida, 33, is not only unbeaten at the Olympics, but is a perfect 13-for-13 at world championships, stretching back to 2002.

Juve edge Spurs in Australia

AFP, Melbourne



Italian champions Juventus scored two early goals and held off a strong finish to down Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 in the International Champions Cup in Melbourne on Tuesday.

The Turin giants, who won a fifth consecutive Serie A championship this season, struck early through Paulo Dybala and Medhi Benatia to lead 2-0 at half-time.

Argentinian star Erik Lamela sparked a Spurs comeback when he came on in the second half, scoring a goal and almost grabbing another.

"It was a good test against one of the toughest teams in next season's Champions League," said Juventus manager Massimiliano Allegri.

Spurs paid dearly early on for failing to clear the ball when defender Dominic Ball lost possession and Roberto Pereyra picked out fellow Argentinian Dybala.

Dybala went one-on-one with Dutch goalkeeper Michel Vorm and found the bottom corner in just the sixth minute.

The Spurs defenders were punished again when they failed to clear a corner and Moroccan Benatia headed home

eight minutes later.

New Juventus signing Miralem Pjanic should have made it three early in the second half when he was released by Brazilian Hernanes, but he blazed his shot over the bar.

Tottenham pulled a goal back in the 67th minute when playmaker Lamela finished neatly after Victor Wanyama won possession on halfway.

Lamela almost scored again but his shot was beaten down by Juve's Brazilian goalkeeper Neto.

Neto also had to make a smart save in stoppage time to prevent a Spurs equaliser through Shayon Harrison.

"It was a very good second half and in the end I'm happy. It's not about the result, it's about pre-season," said Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino.

"It was a great experience for us. Lots of things to learn and lots of positives. I'm very pleased with our young players."

Juventus leave Australia with a win and a defeat on penalties to Australian A-League side Melbourne Victory.

The Italians' next pre-season opponents will be South China in Hong Kong on July 30.

Spurs face Spanish European Champions League finalists Atletico Madrid in Melbourne on Friday.



Juventus forward Paulo Dybala (C) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their International Champions Cup match against Tottenham Hotspur in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Juventus agree to pay 94m euro Higuain fee

AGENCIES, Milan



Gonzalo Higuain completed his move to Juventus after the Italian champions reportedly agreed to pay a 94.7m euros (\$104m) buyout clause to wrest the Argentine striker from Napoli on Tuesday.

Juventus and Napoli have yet to officially announce the move, which was instead published on the 'transfers' section of the official Serie A website www.seriea.it.

Napoli had slapped a 94.7m euros buyout clause on Higuain's contract after he hit a record 36 goals in the league last season.

If Juventus splash out the full amount it will equal the sum Real Madrid paid Manchester United for Cristiano Ronaldo in 2009, the world's second highest transfer fee.

On Saturday, Napoli supporters gathered in the city centre to tear up pictures of the Argentine and set fire to replicas of his number nine shirt.

After weeks of negotiations, Juventus finally buckled to capture the 28-year-old striker whom they believe can make the difference between success and failure in the Champions League next season.

Reports on Tuesday said Juve CEO Beppe Marotta had negotiated with Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis to pay the transfer fee over two instalments.

Higuain will be expected to partner fellow Argentina striker Paulo Dybala, who in his maiden season with Juventus, was their top scorer with 19 league goals.

Pochettino not interested

AFP, London



Mauricio Pochettino says he is not interested in the vacant coaching post with his native Argentina because he is happy at Premier League side Spurs.

The 44-year-old -- who turned Spurs into title contenders last season before they faded in the final few weeks and ended up third -- said it was natural that being in charge of a high-profile club would see him linked with his country's top job.

"I think the speculation is normal because I am an Argentinian coach at a top club in England," Pochettino, presently in Australia on Tottenham's pre-season tour, was quoted as saying in several British newspapers.

"There are a lot of rumours that appear in the media but I am happy at Tottenham and for that reason, this is not the right moment."

The Argentina post became available when Gerardo Martino resigned days after losing to Chile in the Copa America Centenario final on penalties for the second successive year.

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