

PRANDELLI STEPS DOWN

Former Italy boss Cesare Prandelli resigned as coach of Valencia on Friday, after a poor run that has seen the relegation-threatened team go through several managers in quick succession. "Cesare Prandelli has communicated to Valencia Club de Futbol his irrevocable decision to resign from his position as coach, as of Friday, December 30th," the struggling La Liga giants said in a statement. They added Salvador Gonzalez -- the former Spanish footballer known as "Voro" who works at the club -- would take charge of the first team, though it was unclear whether this was a temporary or permanent appointment. Valencia did not give a reason for Prandelli's departure, which comes after less than three months in the post.

-AFP



Bangladesh emerge group champions

Hold India to a goalless draw; set up semi against Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh emerged champions of Group B in the 4th SAFF Women's Championship after holding three-time defending champions India to a 0-0 draw in their final group match at the Kanchenjunga Stadium in Siliguri yesterday.

The charges of Golam Rabbani Choton, who had got their campaign off to a flier with a 6-0 win over Afghanistan and thereby ensuring their semifinal berth and earning an edge on goal-difference over India, managed to hold their mighty neighbours to a draw with a deep defensive tactic.

The result, which saw the first time in six attempts Bangladesh avoiding defeat against the regional powerhouse, earned Bangladesh the top spot in the group with six points, equal to India's, but having a better goal difference.

Bangladesh will take on Maldives in the second semifinal on Monday after India take on three-time runners-up Nepal in the first semifinal.

The group championship was vital for Bangladesh as they apparently wanted to avoid Nepal in the last four.

However, the task was a tall one as Bangladesh had never previously managed to put up any fight against India.

But buoyed by the inclusion of a host of under-16 players, who have scaled dizzy heights of success in recent times, Bangladesh were confident of holding their mighty neighbours at their own backyard.

Coach Choton had said that unlike the opening match, he would want his side to play with a solid defensive shield and only go on attacks after securing the backline. According to message received, Bangladesh enjoyed minimal possession and hardly had a shot on target as they defended deep and in numbers, but the most important thing was they managed to stave off the attacks from the India, who have a squad far more experienced and aged than their Bangladesh counterparts.

Goalkeeper Sabina Akter foiled a number of Indian attacks to keep a clean sheet. The veteran goalkeeper said, "We proved that we are the best in the group and so we became group champions. I have kept my word and kept a clean sheet. Now our next target is to reach the Final."

India coach Sajid Yusuf Dhar gave credit to Bangladesh for playing fantastic football according to the gameplan, but rued the missed chances of his side.



Bangladesh captain Sabina Khatun (L) runs past her marker during their SAFF Women's Championship match against India at the Kanchenjunga Stadium in Siliguri yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Cillessen out for 2 weeks

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's back-up goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen will be sidelined for around two weeks due to a leg injury, the La Liga giants announced Friday.

Cillessen moved to Barcelona last summer but has played just once in La Liga while making a lone appearance in the Champions League against Borussia Moenchengladbach three weeks ago.

Welsh side break Ajax record

AFP, London

Welsh champions The New Saints broke Ajax Amsterdam's 44-year-old record for the most consecutive wins in top-flight football on Friday.

A 2-0 victory at Cefn Druids in the Welsh Premier League allowed them to move to 27 successive wins, one better than the 26 matches won in a row by the legendary Ajax team of Johan Cruyff in 1972.

The New Saints, also known as TNS, have won 21 successive games in the league this season and six in cup tournaments.

Feni take relegation fight to playoff

SPORTS REPORTER



Feni Soccer Club enforced a relegation playoff against Uttar Baridhara Club after beating Muktiyoddha Sangsad in their final match of the JB Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The side from the country's south eastern part were three points behind second-from-bottom Uttar Baridhara Club coming into their final league fixture. And thanks to Shahran Howlader's 47th minute strike and Ntim Twum Frank's 89th minute header, together with Muktiyoddha's lacklustre body language, Feni were able to accomplish what they came to do -- snatch all three points from this match.

Although Feni wasted a spot kick early in the game and saw one of their players sent off deep into stoppage time, those things hardly mattered in the end as they found a vital lifeline to stay in top-flight where they have been constantly playing since their debut in the 2009 season.

The result means that for the first time in nine editions, the top-tier professional football league will decide relegation through a play-off, the dates for which will be revealed later.

The win took Feni's tally to 18 points,

FIVE TOP SCORERS

GOAL	PLAYER	CLUB
19	Sunday Chizoba	Abahani
14	Nkwocha Kingsley	Brothers Union
14	Samson Illiasu	Team BJMC
13	Augustine Walson	Brothers Union
11	Siyo Zunapio	Rahmatganj MFS

POINTS TABLE

Teams	Played	Win	Draw	Loss	GD	Points	
Abahani	22	15	7	0	32	52	Champions
Ctg Abahani	22	14	5	3	21	47	Runners-up
Sk Jamal DC	22	8	8	6	4	32	
Brothers	22	7	9	6	3	30	
Muktiyoddha	22	8	6	8	0	30	
Rahmatganj	22	7	6	9	-5	27	
Arambagh	22	5	12	5	0	27	
Sk Russel KC	22	6	7	9	-5	25	
Team BJMC	22	5	10	7	-7	25	
MSC	22	3	11	8	-9	20	
U Baridhara	22	5	3	14	-20	18	Relegation playoff
Feni Soccer	22	4	6	12	-14	18	Relegation playoff

level with Uttar Baridhara, while Muktiyoddha finished their campaign on joint fourth position with 30 points.

In the second match of the day, Team BJMC and Arambagh Krira Sangha shared the spoils of a 0-0 draw. Arambagh finished the league in sixth position with 27 points while Team BJMC finished with two points less in ninth position.

While the league was extended to a relegation deciding play-off, the championship was decided on the previous day, with Abahani scooping their fifth title in the professional football league era. Newcomers Chittagong Abahani finished second and three-time champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club came up third.

The top-scorer's chart, like the previous years, was dominated by the foreign players. Sunday Chizoba, who played a key role in delivering Abahani's title, finished the chart with 20 goals, followed by Nkwocha Kingsley of Brothers Union and Samson Illiasu on 14 goals each, Augustine Walson of Brothers Union on 13 and Siyo Zunapio of Rahmatganj MFS on 11 goals.

Chelsea end year on top

AFP, London



Willian scored twice as Chelsea claimed a record-equalling 13th consecutive Premier League victory by beating Stoke City 4-2 on Saturday to provisionally move nine points clear at the summit.

Stoke twice hit back to level after falling behind at Stamford Bridge, but Willian's second goal and a late Diego Costa strike saw Chelsea match Arsenal's run of 13 wins within the same season from 2001-02.

Antonio Conte's side pulled nine points clear of second-place Liverpool, who host third-place Manchester City later in the day in an explosive climax to the calendar year.

Manchester United came perilously close to seeing their own winning streak end, only for late goals by star signings Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Paul Pogba to secure a 2-1 home win over Middlesbrough.

It was sixth-place United's fifth straight league win and took them to within a point of fourth-place Arsenal, who host Sam Allardyce's Crystal Palace on New Year's Day.

Chelsea welcomed back N'Golo Kante and Costa from suspension for the visit of Stoke and took a 33rd-minute lead when Gary Cahill headed in a corner from Cesc Fabregas.

Bruno Martins Indi equalised within seconds of kick-off in the second half, slotting in after Peter

Crouch nodded down Charlie Adam's free-kick.

After Willian had restored the hosts' lead, lashing in from Eden Hazard's lay-off, Crouch drew Stoke level again in the 64th minute when he tapped in Mame Biram Diouf's cross.

But Willian put Chelsea back in front a minute later and Costa's late strike sealed victory.

At Old Trafford, United produced a comeback reminiscent of the glory

Mourinho, contested the decision, and there was worse to come when Grant Leadbitter drilled Boro in front from Alvaro Negredo's knock-down in the 67th minute.

But Ibrahimovic did get his goal in the 85th minute, tucking in Martial's cross, and barely a minute later Pogba headed in the winner from Juan Mata's cross.

Champions Leicester City claimed a much-needed win, beating West Ham United 1-0 courtesy of Islam Slimani's 20th-minute header to climb six points clear of the relegation zone.

Swansea City made a demoralising start to life without sacked manager Bob Bradley, slumping to a 3-0 home defeat against Bournemouth that kept them at the foot of the table.

Goals from Benik Afobe, Ryan Fraser and Josh King gave Bournemouth victory, with first-team coach Alan Curtis taking temporary charge of Swansea.

Andre Gray became the first Burnley player to score a Premier League hat-trick as Sean Dyche's men beat third-bottom Sunderland 3-1 to climb to 11th place.

Gray scored three times in the first 53 minutes at Turf Moor, with Ashley Barnes netting a penalty before Jermain Defoe replied for the visitors.

Matt Phillips and Wales's Euro 2016 star Hal Robson Kanu scored as West Bromwich Albion came from behind to win 2-1 at Southampton, who had centre-back Virgil van Dijk sent off late on for two bookable offences.

RESULTS

Burnley (Gray 31, 51, 53, Barnes 67-pen)	4 - 1	Sunderland (Defoe 71)
Chelsea (Cahill 34, Willian 57, 65, Costa 85)	4 - 2	Stoke (Martins Indi 46, Crouch 64)
Leicester (Slimani 20)	1 - 0	West Ham
Man United (Martial 85, Pogba 86)	2 - 1	Middlesbrough (Leadbitter 67)

years of the watching Alex Ferguson to continue their recent upturn.

But they had to do it the hard way, with Ibrahimovic initially denied an 18th goal of the season in a contentious incident late in the first half.

Leaping to meet Anthony Martial's left-wing cross, the Swede jabbed the ball past goalkeeper Victor Valdes at the near post, only for referee Lee Mason to rule it out.

United's players, and Jose

Jose reveals Depay exile

AFP, Manchester



Jose Mourinho admits he has dismissed Memphis Depay from his plans because of the Dutch winger's desire to leave Manchester United in the January transfer window.

The 22-year-old, bought for £25 million (\$30 million) from PSV Eindhoven by Louis van Gaal 18 months ago, has been one of the biggest losers of Mourinho's arrival at Old Trafford in the close-season.

And the United manager explained his decision to omit him from first team consideration sprung from Depay's wish to leave Manchester next month.

"I have to say that in the past couple of months my decisions in relation to Memphis were influenced by the feelings and information that he would like to leave in January and that we were going to have a real offer that we would be willing to accept," said Mourinho.

"That obviously influences me. If I know, if I have the feeling that a player is leaving -- if I have to give chances and develop other players -- then I go to Lingard, Mkhitarjan, Martial, the players I know 100 per cent who are going to stay with us.

"It is a position where we have more options."

Depay has been little more than a bit-part contributor for United this season and has played almost as many minutes for Holland -- 119 in two World Cup qualifiers -- as he has with his club.

For United, Depay has started just one game, a 55-minute appearance in a League Cup tie at Northampton, and been reduced to 20 minutes of Premier



MEMPHIS DEPAY

League football, spread over four matches.

In total, Depay has featured in eight games in all competitions under Mourinho, amassing barely two hours of football, 124 minutes.

"He was not playing last season," added Mourinho. "It was not that last season he was playing phenomenally and this season he is not playing at all."

That's not the situation.

"He's a very good professional, is the only thing I can say. I know the public image is always influenced by some details of their private lives but the reality is that he is a very good professional, a very good boy.

"He has a high level of education, super polite, super professional, and works really hard.

"But it's a position where I have Martial, Mkhitarjan, Mata, Lingard, plus Rooney and Rashford who can also play in this position.

"So we have six, seven players. When I have the feeling and information that the player probably has a big chance to leave then I have to care more about the others.

"But if you arrive in January and nothing happens -- and we have lots of matches -- then if he is going to be my player until the end of the season I will help him and he will be useful for us."

Everton, desperate for cover for long-term injury victim Yannick Bolasie, remains Depay's most likely destination in the window, although Porto, Roma and AC Milan have also been linked with the player.

Meanwhile, Mourinho has admitted United fear losing 35-year-old veteran Zlatan Ibrahimovic to injury in the new year with no obvious goal-scoring successor ready to step into his boots.

Pakistan lose a legend

AFP, Karachi

Imtiaz Ahmed, a member of Pakistan's first-ever Test team, died in a Lahore hospital Saturday after a brief illness, his family said.

The 88-year-old Ahmed featured in Pakistan's first Test played in Delhi against India in October 1952 and went on to play 41 matches as a wicketkeeper-batsman.

Ahmed's family confirmed his death.

"He (Imtiaz) was suffering from chest infection and died early Saturday," a member of the family told local media.

Ahmed was known as an aggressive batsman who had a variety of strokes, most notably the hook and the pull shot. He scored 2,079 Test runs for Pakistan with a career best of 209 against New Zealand in Lahore in 1955.

He put on 152 for the first wicket with the legendary Hanif Mohammad in the Bridgetown Test against West Indies in 1958, scoring 91.

Mohammad, who died in August this year, went on to score an epic 337 in 970 minutes -- still the longest innings in Test cricket history.

ওভারসীজ মেডিকেল পলিসি

(বি এন্ড এইচ), (সি এফ টি) এবং (ই এন্ড এস) (দুর্ঘটনা এবং হঠাৎ অসুস্থতা বীমা)

- স্বল্প প্রিমিয়ামের মাধ্যমে বড় অংকের স্বাস্থ্য বীমা সুবিধা।
- ওয়ান স্টপ সেবার মাধ্যমে বীমা সেবা প্রদান।
- আমেরিকা, কানাডা ভ্রমণের ক্ষেত্রে ১,০০,০০০ ইউ এস ডলার।
- Schengen ভুক্ত দেশে ভ্রমণের ক্ষেত্রে ৩০,০০০ ইউরো।
- Schengen ভুক্ত দেশ ব্যতীত পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য দেশে ভ্রমণের ক্ষেত্রে ৫০,০০০ ইউ এস ডলার।
- ৬ মাস থেকে ৭৯ বছর বয়সী যে কোন গ্রাহকদের জন্য প্রযোজ্য।
- কেবলমাত্র পাসপোর্টের কপি প্রদানের মাধ্যমে গ্রহণ করা যায়।

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