

GUNNED DOWN BY FOOD POISONING

Arsenal were ravaged by food poisoning in Shanghai that ruled several key players out of their pre-season friendly with Bayern Munich on Wednesday, manager Arsene Wenger said. The Frenchman revealed the sickness that had swept the Arsenal camp, coupled with the severe heat in China and long flights, made for far-from-ideal preparations for another taxing campaign. Wenger was shorn of Olivier Giroud because of food poisoning, then captain Per Mertesacker pulled out of the game just moments before kick-off because he too fell ill with the same problem. New signing Sead Kolasinac also had to come off before the break, while Aaron Ramsey and Theo Walcott were only substitutes because they were sick. Wenger's ailing men were outplayed for long periods by Bayern before salvaging a last-gasp 1-1 draw and then winning 3-2 on penalties. -AFP

U-16s finish with a win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-16 women's team wrapped up their South Korea tour with a winning note when they handed a 3-0 defeat to Oju Middle School Women's FC in the fourth and final practice match yesterday. Sanjida Akter, Nargis Khatun and Sifat Jahan Swappa struck one goal apiece in the match to complete their ten-day tour of South Korea with two wins, one draw and one defeat. The tour was arranged as part of their preparation for September's AFC U-16 Women's Championship in Thailand.

The girls in red and green, who are supposed to leave for home today, are scheduled to have their final preparation in Vietnam later this month, followed by Thailand for the main competition which is scheduled for September 10-23.

Jose wants 15 years at United

AFP, LOS ANGELES

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has revealed he is targeting a 15-year stay at Old Trafford, telling ESPN in an interview on Tuesday he wants to restore the stability of the Alex Ferguson era.

Mourinho told the era's website that he is desperate to deliver success over a long-term period just as Ferguson did over nearly three decades.

Mourinho has never spent longer than three years as manager of a club during his trophy-laden career.

But the 54-year-old

unveiled he saw United as a

long-term project.

"I am ready for this,"

Mourinho told ESPN. "I am ready for the next 15. I would say? Here? Why not? I have to admit that it is very difficult because of the pressure around our jobs, everybody wanting to succeed and things that people say – that we have to win, but in reality only one can win and every year it is getting more difficult."

"After David [Moyes], and Mr. [Louis] Van Gaal, I come to my second year and hopefully I can stay and give that stability that the club wants."



The Bangladesh under-16 women's football team pose for a photograph prior to the last practice match of their South Korean tour yesterday.

U-23 booters lose 7-0 in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh returned to international football with a 7-0 defeat at the hands of Jordan as the Under-23 side were beaten handily in their AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers Group E opener at the Faisal Al-Husseini Stadium in Palestine yesterday.

The night was not only a nightmare for Bangladesh's future football, but also an embarrassing start for new coach Andrew Ord, for whom it was a first official competitive match following defeats against Nepal U-23 side and a Qatar U-23 side in practice matches.

The result was almost inevitable but the margin of defeat was unexpected, albeit not outside the realm of possibility. Jordan are ranked 108th in the FIFA rankings and their senior side had hammered Bangladesh's seniors 8-0 in a World Cup Qualifying match in March 2013.

The defeat against Jordan also reflected upon the state of football in Bangladesh and sent a clear message to the concerned authorities that there is no respite from such

humiliation until footballers are groomed up from the grassroots level.

Before the match Ord had said his charges were looking forward to establishing on Jordan's soil, but the fact was that one of his first man-backline that made mistakes one after another to pave the way for Jordan forwards – who squandered a lot of scoring chances and there would have been little surprise had the scoreline read 12-0.

Having dominated the match from start, Jordan took only 17 minutes to break the deadlock before doubling the margin in the 37th minute thanks to helpless goalkeeper Anisur Rahaman, who could have easily saved the second goal.

After resumption, Jordan added five more goals as the booters in red and green could not get out of bed. They could constantly catch up but always behind the play, in their attempt to thwart Jordan's forwards.

Bangladesh had a chance to score a consolation goal in the dying moments but forward Jafar Iqbal could only shoot the ball straight at the Jordanian keeper.

Bangladesh will play their next match in Group E against Tajikistan, with hosts Palestine being the other side of the group.

'League to start on time'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is determined to start the Bangladesh Premier League on time whether or not Saif Global Sports Limited, the title sponsors, continues sponsorship.

Uncertainty regarding the start of the 10th edition of the league, which is scheduled to get underway from July 28 with 12 teams, has loomed following a threat by the Saif Global Sports Ltd. The company on last Thursday sought suggestion from the local's game's governing body as to what they should do as they can't resell sponsorship following the departure of the league and the reduction of venues. They even threatened to pull out of sponsorship subject to uncertainty.

Brac University, who had earlier confirmed their quadruple title and continuing their amazing run by posting their fourth victory with a 1-0 win over East West University while Daffodil University also booked their quarterfinal seat with a 2-0 win over Sonargaon University.

In the day's other match, Sonargaon University held North South University to a goalless draw to ensure their last eight berth.

City University and Fareast University had earlier confirmed their quarterfinal berths and the last two teams of the quarterfinals will be determined on Friday.

The champions of the 20-team tournament will be awarded the Faraz Challenge Cup apart from Tk 1.2 lakh as prize money.

FARAAZ CHALLENGE CUP Green Univ in quarters

SPORTS REPORTER

Green University notched up their third successive victory to advance into the quarterfinals of Walton Inter-University Football Tournament, beating Gonu Group D encounter at the Birsreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

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Another summertime saga

STAR SPORTS

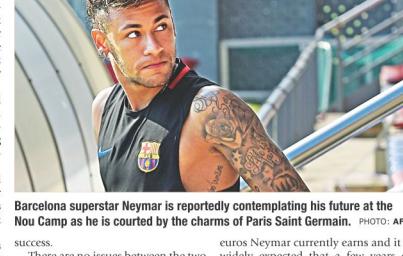
In the early hours of Wednesday, rumours of Neymar's possible transfer to Paris Saint Germain broke after Paris Saint Germain paid the Brazilian's 222-million-euro buyout clause, effectively bypassing any say Barcelona may have on the matter.

Although it seems a far-fetched deal, a multitude of outlets from Brazil, Spain and Paris have all published similar reports, the latest among them being that Neymar's father heading to Paris to settle an agreement.

While Barcelona's president said that there were no chances of Neymar leaving the club, if the buyout clause is met, then the decision would rest solely with Neymar.

The immediate question that comes to mind is why a player would want to leave one of the most dominant teams in the world, a club whose culture and language. Why would he leave a club where he can play alongside a multitude of superstars including one of the greatest to have graced the field, Lionel Messi?

If the reports are to be believed, then sharing the pitch with the Argentine is a deterrent to Neymar and not the privilege it was thought to be. The 25-year-old perhaps rightly believes that he cannot be recognised as the world's best player if he remains at Barcelona throughout Messi's prime. The Brazilian believes that his chances of winning the Ballon D'Or would be much greater if he played for Les Parisiens and led them to European



Barcelona superstar Neymar is reportedly contemplating his future at the Nou Camp as he is courted by the charms of Paris Saint Germain. PHOTO: AFP

success.

There are no issues between the two players as he and Messi are good friends on and off the pitch, but another selling point for PSG has been their recent acquisition of Dani Alves.

Alves and Neymar are extremely close friends and it is possible the Barca legend could have convinced Neymar to join him. Neymar has reportedly also received guarantees from PSG that they will not sell Marco Verratti.

While all those remain significant factors, wages may prove to be the selling point. The Barcelona board have just handed Messi a massive deal and may not be willing to strain their budget with a mega-contract for Neymar at the moment. The French side however would have no problems more than doubling the 15 million

euros Neymar currently earns and it is widely expected that a few years of service will be rewarded with the largest contract in European football.

Goal.com yesterday published an interview with Neymar, where he states that he is "happy at Barcelona". The questions were sent to the Brazilian via email last week and the timing of his response may have been perfect, but his refusal to shut the doors on the rumours upon return to Catalonia after a trip to Ibiza was all the more bewildering.

If the Brazilian wanted to end the speculation, the easy way would have been for him to address the throng of journalists at the airport. However, time has taught us the lesson that there are more reasons than a transfer to remain silent – new, improved transfers being chief among them.

Aubameyang taken off the market

REUTERS, Berlin

German side Borussia Dortmund will not sell prolific striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang after the 28-year-old failed to make a decision within a deadline provided by the club, the team's sporting director Michael Zorc has said.

British and German media reports on Sunday said that Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke had given Aubameyang, who scored 31 league goals in 32 games last season to finish as the Bundesliga's top-scorer, a deadline to decide on his future, which has now expired.

"We consider the transfer window closed. The timing [of it] was decisive in the magazine," Zorc told German magazine Kicker on Tuesday.

The Gabon international was being pursued by a Chinese club before the deal fell through earlier and had most recently been linked to both AC Milan and Chelsea.

In June he raced for the final time on home soil, clocking 10.03 seconds in 100m.

Before London, he will also compete in the 100m at the Diamond League event in Monaco.

Chelsea secure Conte's future

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte signed a new two-year deal with the Premier League giants on Wednesday as the club moved to quell reports of a rift with the Italian.

The deal was confirmed as Conte, who guided Chelsea to the title in his first season last year, prepares to take his squad on a pre-season tour of Asia.

"I am very happy to have signed a new contract with Chelsea," he said in a statement on Chelsea's official website.

"We worked extremely hard in our first year to achieve something amazing, which I am very proud of. Now we must work even harder to stay at the top."

No terms of the deal were disclosed. English press reports said the new contract improved the terms of the remaining two years left on the three-year deal Conte signed when he joined the club last year.

Chelsea director Marina Granovskaia said the contract rewarded the "incredible success" Chelsea had enjoyed in Conte's first season.

"This new contract reflects our belief that he can continue to deliver results both

domestically and as we return to European competition in the Champions League," Granovskaia said in a statement.

"Since arriving in west London, the 47-year-old Italian's passion, tactical acumen and winning mentality have endeared him to Chelsea supporters all over the world and we look forward to further triumphs with Antonio at the helm."

Conte's coaching staff has been augmented by the arrival of two more Italians, with Paolo Vanoli joining as an assistant to the first team head coach and Davide Mazzotta working as assistant/player analysis.

The contract comes amid reports that the Italian has grown frustrated with Chelsea's inability to reinforce their title-winning squad.

Chelsea had long been linked to the likes of Everton striker Romelu Lukaku but saw the Belgian international join Manchester United instead.

Conte had also reportedly been keen on Juventus duo Leonardo Bonucci and Alex Sandro, but neither came to fruition.

Chelsea's hierarchy meanwhile reportedly unhappy that Conte had notified unsettled striker Diego Costa that he does not feature in his plans – potentially weakening the club's bargaining position in the event of any transfer negotiations.



Usain Bolt was his usual self as he attended a press conference in Monaco yesterday, two days ahead of his race at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in London. PHOTO: AFP

Bolt to run 100m and relay in last event

BBC



Usain Bolt has confirmed he will run the 100m and 4x100m relay at the World Championships in London in August, his final event before retiring.

Bolt, an eight-time Olympic gold medallist and an icon of world sport, has led one of the most illustrious careers in the history of athletics.

"My aim is to win in London. I want to

retire on a winning note," the Jamaican 30-year-old said on Wednesday. The World Championships take place from 4-13 August.

Bolt, a fast bowler Jason Gillespie, scored a double-century in what turned out to be his final Test.

Shastri wants Tendulkar onboard as consultant

Newly appointed India coach Ravi Shastri wants Sachin Tendulkar as the national team consultant, provided there is no conflict of interest, Times of India reported.

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