

RONALDO AWAITS A FOURTH

Cristiano Ronaldo has confirmed that his first child, with girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez is on the way. The 32-year-old Real Madrid player is set to become a father for the fourth time, he informed Spanish news outlet El Mundo on Tuesday. When asked by El Mundo whether he was "happy" to have another child on the way, he replied: "Yes, very much." Ronaldo, who just became a father to twins Eva and Mateo and who also has a seven-year-old son Cristiano Jr, also added that he is "happy about what is coming." The fact that Rodriguez has started following a wedding dresses Instagram account has also led to speculation that the couple could be set to marry, as well as become parents together. Proud Ronaldo also admitted his newborn babies are "precious" and that he has a lot to learn when it comes to changing their nappies.

—AGENCIES



Chelsea agree Morata deal

AFP, London



Chelsea have reached an agreement to buy Spain international striker Alvaro Morata from Real Madrid for a reported 80 million euros, the two clubs announced on Wednesday.

"Chelsea Football Club and Real Madrid have agreed terms for the transfer of Alvaro Morata to Stamford Bridge," Chelsea said on their club website.

"The move is now subject to him agreeing personal terms and passing a medical."

Madrid confirmed the news as well in a brief statement on their website.

"The club wishes to express its thanks for the dedication, professionalism and exemplary conduct displayed by the player over the years, spanning his time in our academy right through to his spell as a member of the

first-team squad," the statement added. Chelsea had reportedly tabled a 22 million bid for the 24-year-old last week but Madrid, according to Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, have agreed the sale for 80 million euros.

Morata is expected to leave Madrid's training camp in the United States as soon as possible.

British media reported last week that Chelsea had offered Morata a five-year contract at Stamford Bridge worth £150,000 a week.

Real exercised a buy-back clause to bring Morata back from Juventus a year ago, having joined the Italian club in 2014 just days after Antonio Conte's exit in Turin.

He scored 20 goals in 43 appearances last season as Real retained their Champions League crown while edging Barcelona to the Spanish title.

Morata had previously been linked with a move to Manchester United, but their reported interest ended after the signing of Romelu Lukaku from

Everton.

The Spaniard told The Guardian in April that Chelsea boss Conte, who was instrumental in persuading him to sign for Juve, had given him self belief and that he was looking forward to working with the Italian one day.

"I feel indebted to him because he's the coach that most trusted in me, most wanted me, who made me feel I could perform at the highest level," Morata told the newspaper.

Morata's arrival in London could signal the end to his international teammate Diego Costa's time at Chelsea, with the latter strongly tipped for a return to Atletico Madrid.

Costa was granted extra time off by the Blues and has missed the start of pre-season training after the 28-year-old revealed in June that he was not part of Costa's plans.

The Brazil-born Spain striker is keen on rejoining Atletico despite them not being allowed to register new players until January because of a transfer ban.



Spanish striker Alvaro Morata (R) landed in London's Heathrow airport yesterday as the Real Madrid man looks to complete a medical before his 80-million-euro move to Chelsea.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

United fans troll Ashwin

India player Ravichandran Ashwin was at the receiving end of online bashing for stating that the return of his former IPL team Chennai Super Kings will increase its value just like Manchester United after the Munich disaster in 2008.

Pietersen eyes SA return

Kevin Pietersen said he has not ruled out resurrecting his international career with his native South Africa even though he'll be pushing 40 when he requalifies.

Barca are sleeping: Xavi

Legendary Barcelona midfielder Xavi Hernandez has called on the club to return to their stylistic roots, the philosophy of the famed La Masia academy.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Wednesday he had Sergio Aguero but confirmed the club was in talks with "three or four" potential new signings.

Speaking to reporters ahead of Manchester City's Houston derby with Manchester United on Thursday, Guardiola attempted to draw a line under speculation about Argentina striker Aguero's future.

"He's our player. He will remain here," Guardiola said of Aguero.

The City boss, meanwhile, was coy about a possible move for Arsenal's Chilean international Alexis Sanchez.

"Alexis is a player from Arsenal. Arsenal says that, it's because he knows more than me," Guardiola said.

Guardiola appeared to confirm City's interest in Monaco's Benjamin Mendy but again declined to go into details.

"We are talking to three or four players - with the next three, four, five years in mind. They are young players," Guardiola said.

"We have options for players coming, but until the deal is done, out of respect for the other clubs I cannot say anything."

"Mendy is the same case as Danilo. We have targets and we see what happens. He's a Monaco player so I'm quiet in my comments."

City, meanwhile, are planning to offload striker Kelechi Iheanacho, who is on the brink of a deal to join former champions Leicester City.

Guardiola said that he would prepare in his usual way and see what happens in New York.

"I'll definitely try and get myself organised, prepared and ready so that I'll have the best chance to do well at the US Open."

'Would be a joke to win US Open'

AGENCIES, New York



World number three Roger Federer, who won his 19th grand slam singles title and an eighth at Wimbledon title last week will be heading to the US Open as a favourite to win his 20th slam.

The 35-year-old Swiss star, who turns 36 in August, has had a stunning 2017, having won five tournaments including a fifth Australian Open crown in January.

The final slam of the year is the US Open in New York from 28 August to 10 September which Federer won five times between 2004 and 2008.

The tournament has not been dominated by anyone since 2008, with Spain's Rafael Nadal (2005, 2006, 2007) and Novak Djokovic (2011, 2013, 2015) winning the title while Juan Martin del Potro, Andy Murray, Marin Cilic and Stan Wawrinka have claimed the title once each.

In an interview with CNN, when Federer was asked about the possibility of him winning a third slam this year, he replied that it would be a "joke" if he accomplished that feat.

"That would be a joke if I won three slams this year out of nowhere," quipped the Basel native.

He said that it would no longer be feasible to expect him, at his age and with his record of injuries, to be competing for three Grand Slams in a year.

"I know if I stay in shape there are chances for me to do well at the US Open, but to win it? Yeah, at some stage I almost feel like I have to be realistic. I am not 25 anymore. I'm not sure I can win three slams in one year. Winning two is already pretty crazy and plenty good enough for me."

Federer added that he would prepare in his usual way and see what happens in New York.

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Barca relaxed, PSG excited

STAR SPORT DESK



As the rumour-mill surrounding Barcelona superstar Neymar's move to Paris Saint Germain goes into overdrive, journalists have been catching up with members of both the teams to get their take on what would be the most expensive transfer of all time as Les Parisiens prepare to shell out 222 million euros to buy out the Brazilian's contract.

PSG coach Unai Emery stood the flames yesterday, telling L'Equipe that the club are seeking a "top-five player."

"PSG want the best players in the world. If we want to compete with Bayern Munich, Barcelona, Real Madrid and win the Champions League then PSG need to have one of the top five players in the world. We will try and buy one of them this summer," the Spaniard said.

"Neymar has advanced his game massively and today he is one of the five best in the world," he added. "The president and club have been working for several years to bring in players."

On the other side of the deal, Barcelona have been doing just about everything to put the rumour to bed.

Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu assured fans that the club were very relaxed regarding the future of the superstar, telling journalists: "We're all relaxed, we've already talked enough. If you want to know more? Ask him."

A spokesman for the club added that selling Neymar was an impossibility.

"Selling Neymar is not something the club would think about," club spokesman Josep Vives said. "We are very calm. He is one of the most important players we have, we cannot consider any offers we receive for him."

However, aware of the fact that

Barcelona's willingness to sell or lack thereof would be inconsequential if the clause is met. Vives added: "He is still happy here. Playing as he did last year, he showed that he is still getting better. He is fantastic and is happy with the club, and we are delighted with him."

Former Barcelona president Joan Gaspart also insisted that PSG were not serious about their interest, but were only reticulating to Barcelona's interest in Italian midfielder Marco Veratti.

In 2013, PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi had reportedly paid Lionel Messi's buyout clause after Barcelona had attempted to lure away Thiago Silva. Gaspart believes they are using the same ploy "make a mess of Neymar's situation."

There are also reports swirling in Brazil that Neymar has confirmed to his four countrymen at PSG – Marquinhos, Lucas Moura, Thiago Silva and Dani Alves – that

he will be joining them in French capital next season to lead his own team.

PSG captain and Neymar's international teammate Thiago Silva said he was hopeful of the move being completed.

"Neymar in Paris? I don't know. I've heard a lot of journalists talking but the minute there is nothing concrete although I think it is important for the PSG project. It's always good to have great players like him. If he comes, it will be good for the group," he told reporters after PSG's friendly against AS Roma.

"If he comes, he will be an exceptional player and will help us a lot," another Brazilian, Marquinhos added. The defender also joked about reports Neymar had told the Brazilians at PSG he would be playing with them next year. "I don't know if he told PSG's Brazilians. In any case, he didn't tell me."



Neymar (R) has reportedly informed his Brazilian teammates at PSG of his wishes to step out of Lionel Messi's shadow and lead a side to European glory as its centrepiece.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Match-fixing at Wimbledon?

AFP, London

Wimbledon came under the microscope on Thursday with three matches at this year's tournament set to be investigated for possible match-fixing, according to the Tennis Integrity Unit.

Two qualifying matches and one from the main Wimbledon draw triggered some bizarre betting patterns and are to be examined further.

One match from June's French Open will also be looked at.

No more losses for Djibouti

AGENCIES, London

The Djibouti Football Federation has dissolved the national football team in a bid to 'stop poor results'.

They announced that the squad and coaching staff have been disbanded as the focus shifts to youngsters.

The move comes after Djibouti lost 5-1 at home to Ethiopia in the first leg of their 2018 Africa Nations Championship qualifier on Saturday.

The FDF said there is no timeframe on the dissolution. The statement added that the decision was due to 'the never-ending series of bad results' of the national team.

Aguero going nowhere

AFP, Houston



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SPORTS REPORTER

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The occasion quickly turned into a reunion for those present, including State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Shikder and Deputy Sports Minister Anir Khan Joy.

Veteran journalist Muhammad Kamruzzaman, who wrote for the first issue, poet Sanaul Haque, a regular contributor since the early issues, and Electra International were accorded receptions for their involvement in the sports magazine.

"It is a milestone for a Bengali sport magazine, who started in 1977. It is not only a landmark but has also been preserving the history of the Bangladesh sports," said editor Mahmud Hossain Khan Dulal.

"A lot of love, emotion and patience are involved with the magazine as I was first a reader and then a contributor before finally becoming editor in 1996," said Dulal, adding that they would revamp the magazine in the coming days.

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Jose treating derby as training session

AFP, Houston



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said he plans to treat Thursday's exhibition match against Manchester City as a training session as the two Premier League rivals prepare to clash in Houston.

The two teams met at the NRG Stadium -- home of the Houston Texans NFL team -- in the first ever edition of the Manchester derby to be staged overseas.

Mourinho, who will lock horns with City boss Pep Guardiola once more, insisted however he was not concerned with the result of the game.

"It's nice for the US and US fans, it's very good for the event. I think it's very good for both clubs but there is always a little bit of rivalry, a bit of an extra ingredient but for me it's a friendly," Mourinho said.

"I'm not going to jump to celebrate a goal, or cry if we concede. It's preparation for me. The European Super Cup is a match, West Ham is a match," the Portuguese manager added.

Mourinho is likely to field two separate line-ups during the game, with one XI playing 60 minutes and a second XI 30 minutes.

In United's two previous tour games -- wins over the Los Angeles Galaxy and Real Salt Lake -- he changed the entire line-up at half-time.

"It's a competitive training session, a training session that you try to win but it's

not the most important thing," he said.

"I know what I want and it's to give minutes to my players, to improve, to make mistakes to report in training, to stop those mistakes and to make the new players try to understand their teammates."

Mourinho meanwhile brushed off questions about former club Chelsea's capture of Arturo Vidal from Real Madrid earlier Wednesday, insisting he was happy with United's high-profile signing of Romelu Lukaku last week.

"I'm not interested in what Chelsea FC does, really," Mourinho said.

"We got a big player, a player that I can compare with what he was a few years ago, because he worked with me for a few months and his development was very good."

"We have a player who is now a top player. You have to prove it at the highest level, he has to do it for United, in Champions League matches but he has amazing qualities."

Mourinho meanwhile reiterated that United had not finished their transfer business, but that the club was making business difficult, and he may scrap initial plans to sign four players during the window.

"Everybody knows I would like four players and I'm ready to go from four to three because the market is difficult, some clubs think the market is different from others," he said.

"We are not a club that is ready to pay what the clubs want us to pay so I'm ready to go from four to three."

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