

West Ham spinners

AFP, London

West Ham completed a stunning turnaround on Wednesday, roaring back from two goals down against Tottenham Hotspur to reach the League Cup quarter-final. Chelsea saw off the challenge of Everton.

Slaven Bilic's side were trailing 2-0 at the break but a brace from Andre Ayew and a third from Angelo Ogbonna shocked the Wembley crowd and completed an astonishing comeback for the Premier League strugglers.

Spurs, who made multiple changes, were quickly in control through an early goal from Moussa Sissoko, who stroled through the middle of the defence and stroked the ball past West Ham goalkeeper Adrian after a pass from Son Heung-Min.

They doubled their lead within about eight minutes remaining in the first half when Dele Alli curled the ball into the net via a deflection. But the game came alive within 10 minutes of the re-start when Ayew pounced to poke home from close range.

West Ham were level just five minutes later when Ayew applied the finishing touch to a cross by Manuel Lanzini and astonishingly took the lead when Ogbonna rose to head home Lanzini's corner with 20 minutes to go.

"I said I am calm and glad when we win in this way," Bilic said. "You see the team is very alive and we are very stubborn in a positive way. There is no time and place to go large now. We have done a lot, but considering the season, we have done nothing."

Napoli back on top

AFP, Milan



Napoli reclaimed top spot in Serie A on Wednesday amid increasing tensions ignited by a photo of Holocaust victim Anne Frank in a Roma jersey posted on Lazio fans last weekend which overshadowed the tenth round of Serie A action.

Inter Milan had provisionally moved up with a 3-2 win over Sampdoria on Tuesday but Napoli responded with Dries Mertens scoring a double and forcing an own goal in a come-from-behind 3-2 win at Genoa.

"The regrets are we didn't kill off the game we absolutely dominated then conceded a goal ten minutes from time to leave it open," said Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri.

Adel Taarabt opened for Genoa after four minutes but Napoli fought back and equalised with a Mertens free kick ten minutes later. The Belgian pulled Napoli ahead with his second after half an hour.

Napoli got their third when Mertens forced an Ervin Zukanovic own goal but

Armando Izzo got Genoa back into the game on 76 minutes with their second.

Juventus remain third a point behind Inter after a 4-1 win over SPAL in Turin, with Lazio shrugging joint third with the champions after a 2-1 win at Bologna.

AS Roma are a decisive battling past Crotone thanks to a Diego Perotti converted penalty after ten minutes.

There was welcome relief for under-pressure AC Milan coach Vincenzo Montella with a 4-1 win at Chievo getting the Chinese-owned club back to winning ways after three straight defeats and a draw.

Milan move up to eighth place with 16 points from ten games.

"It's a victory that conveys strength and conviction," said Montella. "I'm very pleased with this performance but there is no time to rejoice even if we want to enjoy this moment. Mentally we were in a rut."

The team next play Juventus and Montella insisted: "Next Saturday I would like the real spark. I hope the Juve will underestimate us a bit."



Napoli striker Dries Mertens (R) continued his incredible scoring streak as he struck a brace in his side's 3-2 win against Genoa in the Serie A on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Neymar must learn from red card'

AFP, Paris



Paris Saint-Germain coach Unai Emery said Neymar needs to learn not to respond to provocation after the world's most expensive player was sent off against Marseille last weekend.

The 222 million-euro Brazilian picked up a second yellow card late in Sunday's 2-2 draw between the rivals at the Velodrome for reacting to a foul by Lucas Ocampos.

Neymar got up and shook Ocampos and the Argentine's over-reaction played its part in the ex-Barcelona man receiving his second booking, just two minutes after his first.

"He is going through the process of adapting to the league, the team, the referees, but he is intelligent. He is also aware that he must learn from what happened on Sunday," said Emery ahead of Friday's Ligue 1 meeting with Nice.

Neymar will be automatically suspended for that game at the Parc des Princes.

"He was sought out more aggressively by the opposition, and it is important that referees know how to handle matches where these situations occur on the field," Emery added.

"I spoke to him about it before the match and we said not to get involved in any provocation. But on the pitch, with the intensity and the aggression, the players are people, and we need everyone to maintain our

balance and do the job well."

The Nice game will be just the second that Neymar has missed since making his Paris debut in August - he previously sat out a 0-0 draw at Montpellier last month.

Emery could make other changes to his side with the encounter coming four days ahead of the home Champions League meeting with Anderlecht, where a win could wrap up their place in the last 16.

Veteran midfielder Thiago Motta will not feature against Nice because of a knee complaint, while Emery could have a problem at right-back as both Dani Alves and Thomas Meunier are doubts.

Angel Di Maria could benefit from Neymar's absence to make just a second start since August.

"When he doesn't play, he is not happy. He wants to play and start every match, but when he doesn't it is because of the competition and the performances of others," said Emery of the ex-Real Madrid man, who pointed out the ex-Barcelona winger at the bench to score in the recent 4-0 win at Anderlecht.

A win against Nice will allow PSG to go seven points clear at the top from reigning champions Monaco before they visit Bordeaux on Saturday.

Nice are the only French team to have beaten PSG in 2017, recording a 3-1 triumph in April.

Ansar to face Biman in final

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Ansar and VDP women's team moved into the Southeast Bank 37th National Senior Table Tennis Championship final with a straight sets win over Dhaka at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Gymnasium yesterday.

In the semifinals, Ansar's Shikha and Mouf defeated Dhaka's Monami and Sima before the duo went on to impose a similar straight sets defeat to Dhaka's Tania and Sima. Meanwhile, Biman beat Bangladesh Army by 3-2 sets and will face Ansar in the final today.

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:

Sarfraz rejected spot-fixing approach
Captain Sarfraz Ahmed said that he was the Pakistan player who was approached by an alleged bookie during the one-day international series against Sri Lanka earlier this month.

Teammates unhappy with Neymar's Privileges
PSG forward Neymar has had an incredible start to his Paris Saint-Germain career but his privileges are causing friction in the dressing room.

Giving award to Ronaldo and not Messi 'hurt my soul'
Legendary Argentine Diego Maradona admits that handing over the FIFA best award to Ronaldo instead of compatriot Lionel Messi hurt his soul.

LIBERIAN WARLORD ENDORSES WEAH FOR PRESIDENT

Former Liberian warlord Prince Johnson has endorsed George Weah for president before a run-off vote between the former football star and Vice President Joseph Boakai. The endorsement should help Weah, who won 38.4 percent of the vote in the first round this month, more than anyone else but shy of the 50.1 percent needed to win outright. "I am humbled to announce my full and unflinching support in collaboration with the Congress for Democratic Change party of Senator George Weah," Prince Johnson said. Johnson's attempt at playing kingmaker makes many in Liberia uncomfortable, given his role in the civil war that ended in 2003. In 1990, his band of troops took control of parts of the capital Monrovia to oust former president Samuel Doe, and he celebrated as the leader was executed.

—REUTERS



U-19s hope to end 14 years of waiting

Team leaves for Tajikistan today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh U-19 football team will leave for Dushanbe today to take part in the AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers with the aim of qualifying for the finals after 14 years.

The Bangladesh U-19 team has played the finals of the tournament six times -- in 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1996 and 2002 -- but since their last appearance, the boys in red and green have been unable to cross the qualifying stage for the past seven editions.

However there is hope of making it to the finals this time around after the boys put up scintillating performances in the SAFF U-18 Championship, where they won three of four matches and finished as runners-up despite finishing on equal points with champions Nepal.

A total of 41 nations, split into 10 groups, will play the qualification round and the group champions along with five best runners-up will join host nation Tajikistan in the 16-team final round to be held next year.

Bangladesh were drawn in Group B alongside four-time semifinalists Uzbekistan, hosts Tajikistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives and coach Mahabub Hossain Roxy said that they would be looking to secure a place in the finals.

"Our main target is to qualify for the final round but we will definitely try to improve upon our performances in the SAFF Championship last month," Mahabub said at a press conference yesterday.

"The first match against Tajikistan is very important for us. If we can beat them or draw then the possibility of qualifying for the finals will be brightened as we will get four more days



Bangladesh Under-19 coach Mahabub Hossain Roxy (L) speaks to reporters prior to the team's departure for Tajikistan yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

before taking on a strong Uzbekistan side in our penultimate game." Mahabub continued, adding that his side were optimistic of beating Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The team's result in the SAFF U-18 Championship was unexpected as they entered the regional championship without any hopes and little training, but they showed their potential after coming from three goals down to beat India 4-3 in their opening match.

The performances were possible because of the inclusion of a group of youths who have been playing in the country's top-tier Bangladesh Premier

League. Striker Faraj Iqbal had some brilliant performances in that tournament and scored in all four matches so the focus this time will understandably be on the Chittagong Abahani forward.

However, the Bangladesh U-19 team got only nine days to prepare for the Qualifying Round as the players were busy with their engagements in the professional football league. They played just one warm-up match, defeating SAFF SCU-19's-0.

Mahabub was a bit concerned over the chilly conditions in Tajikistan and believed that coping with the weather would be the main challenge for his boys, who will get three days of training before facing off against the hosts.

Mahabub has made some changes to the side by bringing in four new players including striker Faisal Ahmed Fahim, who had won the golden boot in the SAFF U-15 Championship with seven goals. He is expected to pair up with faraj up top in the starting eleven.

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