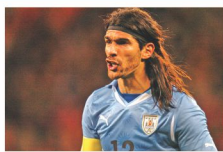


'LOCO' SETS NEW WORLD RECORD

Uruguayan striker Sebastian Abreu is remembered primarily, at least by the wider world, as the lank-haired assassin who scored that ice-cold Panenka penalty against Ghana in the quarterfinals of the 2010 World Cup to settle the shootout and send La Celeste into their first semifinals in over 40 years. However, the veteran nomad also has another claim to fame after becoming the most well-travelled professional footballer ever. Having started out in Montevideo with Defensor many moons ago, the man they call 'Loco' has enjoyed brief stints (usually one year at a time) all over the world, including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Paraguay, El Salvador, Greece, Israel and Spain. Now aged 41, Abreu is still keen to keep plugging away, having signed a short-term deal with Chilean top flight side Audax Italiano — the 30th transfer of his career.

—AGENCIES



Sheikh Jamal defender Yeasin Khan clears the ball under pressure from a Saif SC player during their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sk Jamal's wasted chance

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Sheikh Jamal DC wasted an ideal opportunity to take the solo lead in the Bangladesh Premier League after being held to a 1-1 draw by newcomers Saif SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The draw left the three-time champions on 44 points from 19 matches, a point behind defending champions Abahani. Early pace-setters Chittagong Abahani are a further point behind in third position, with three rounds of matches remaining. Saif SC remained in fourth position with 35 points.

"Though we missed the chance to go top, the title race is still wide open. The difference among the top three teams is very small and no one can boldly say that they will win the title," Sheikh Jamal coach Mahbub Hossain Roxy said after the match.

"The next two matches of the top three teams are very crucial as they will play each other and the picture will be clear after that," said Roxy, who saw his side drop points for the second time since taking charge following the departure of former coach Joseph Afusi.

Sheikh Jamal came into the match on the back of three successive victories,

but they looked short of determination against a side that held them to a goalless draw in the first leg. They conceded as early as the sixth minute when Saif SC striker Charlie Sheringham was left unmarked inside the box on a well-judged cross from Rahmat Mia, with the Englishman comfortably nodding in.

The Dhannomdi giants twice came close to reimbursing the goal but Nurul Absar and Javed Khan wasted the opportunities. Absar, availing a cutback from Raphael Odoyin, floated

SK JAMAL (ONG 22)	1-1	SAIF SC (SHEKHJAMAL 6)
FARASHGANJ (SUHAN 94-5)	1-1	ARAMBAGH (BURKA 99-2)

one over the bar in the 17th minute before a sudden long-range attempt from Javed inches over the bar in the next minute.

The pressure, though, paid off in the 22nd minute when Hemantu Vincent Biswas committed a foul on the edge of the box to avoid a free-kick to Sheikh Jamal. Gambian forward Solomon King curled the free-kick into the top corner of the net.

One minute before the break, Saif SC got another brilliant opportunity when Miraz Hasan released a cross for

striking duo Charlie and Hember Valencia, but neither could get on the end of it with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Saif SC enjoyed domination after the break and created another opportunity to restore the lead but Kabirul Islam saw his left-foot from inside the box go wide of the far post after taking a deflection off a Sheikh Jamal defender as both sides settled for a draw.

Meanwhile, substitute Joshim Uddin Sujan scored a stunning goal from 35 yards to give relegation-threatened Farashganj SC a valuable point against Arambagh KS.

In an otherwise insipid encounter, none of the teams managed to break the deadlock within 90 minutes before the six minutes of added time produced some excitement.

Nigeria's Alamu Bukola converted from the spot to give Arambagh the lead two minutes into stoppage time before Sujan drew a dipping shot from 35 yards to score the equaliser in the penultimate minute of stoppage time.

The draw helped Farashganj move out of the drop zone and into 11th position with 14 points, one ahead of Rahmatganj MFS, while Arambagh stayed in ninth position with 16 points.

Kane aims to improve

AFP, London



Harry Kane insists he still has room for improvement after the Tottenham striker's treble set a Premier League record and took him above Lionel Messi to finish as Europe's leading scorer.

Kane's 22nd-minute header in Tuesday's 5-2 win over Southampton at Wembley was his 37th goal of the year, moving him past Alan Shearer's previous Premier League record, which was set when he played for Blackburn in 1995.

But Kane wasn't happy to settle for that milestone and he scored twice more to claim his eighth treble of the year.

His second goal took him to 55 for club and country in 2017 — lifting him above Barcelona great Messi to become Europe's top-scorer over the last 12 months in the five major countries (England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France).

Messi, who has 54 goals this year, can't catch Kane as Barcelona don't play again until 2018.

To sum up the magnitude of the achievement, it's the first time either Messi or Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo have not led the way in nine years.

2017'S TOP SCORERS				
PLAYER	GOALS	GAMES	MINUTES/GOAL	
Harry Kane	56	52	79	
Lionel Messi	54	64	103	
Robert Lewandowski	53	55	88	
Edinson Cavani	53	62	97	
Cristiano Ronaldo	53	60	98	

"I'm very proud. Messi and Ronaldo have dominated football for so long and they're two of the greatest players ever so it's an honour to even be compared to them," said Kane.

"I'll keep working harder, it's about finding little percents to get better and doing things on the training ground to make you better."

"There's a great staff here and a great manager here who will keep pushing me, don't you worry about that!"

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino paid tribute to Kane and put him in the same bracket and Ronaldo and Messi.

"It's a massive achievement and we feel it's our achievement, something we share with his team-mates and the club," he said.

"At 24 to score these goals. For me, he's world class. Of course Messi and Cristiano are different. He's one of the best."

Reds alive in top four battle

AFP, Liverpool

Two goals from Roberto Firmino and one each from Philippe Coutinho, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain helped Liverpool to an emphatic 3-0 win over Swansea City at Anfield.

The victory ensured Liverpool remain in the thick of the battle for the Champions League places in fourth spot - five points behind second-placed Manchester United.

Brazilian duo Coutinho and Firmino were both particularly influential in the Boxing Day win at Anfield.

However, Klopp preferred to extol the virtues of the collective efforts.

Klopp said: "I am happy for all the boys when they score but I couldn't say how many he has, or how many he has. I don't care."



Forward Roberto Firmino volleys home the second of his two goals during Liverpool's 5-0 demolition of Swansea City in their Premier League encounter on Tuesday night.

PHOTO: AFP

'I couldn't lift my arm'

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Former world number one Novak Djokovic admitted Tuesday his six-month absence from tennis has taught him never to take his career for granted, describing his injury

as a "roller-coaster ride". The 30-year-old Serb has not played since Wimbledon in July when a long-standing elbow injury forced him to shut down his 2017 season.

As a consequence, the 12-time world number one saw his world ranking slip to 12, his lowest place in 10 years.

"It's been a real roller-coaster ride for me for a year and a half with this issue. I've never had surgery in my life. I've never had any major injuries that kept me away from the tour for such a long time," Djokovic told Sport360 in Abu Dhabi.

"I never missed a Grand Slam in my career. It was a big decision, a big call to make. I couldn't play anymore, there was no choice. It was like, that's it, you can't lift your arm."

Djokovic will return to the court in Abu Dhabi at the pre-season Mubadala World Championship which runs from December 28-30.

He is then due to kick-off his competitive season as top seed at the Qatar Open next week before launching a bid for a seventh Australian Open crown.

Having added mercurial former top player Radec Stepanek to a coaching team spearheaded by Andre Agassi, Djokovic only started hitting again in Monaco four weeks ago.

"I've learned a lesson because I really want to avoid getting to that stage of an injury ever in my career after this," Djokovic added.

"And it was a great lesson to learn to be honest. It was not easy for me to be absent for so long."

"I can't wait to get back on the competition level but it was a great experience for me to have. And it was a somewhat necessary experience because I got maybe too comfortable with not having major injuries."



NOVAK DJOKOVIC

'£300m is not enough to compete'

Mourinho says in latest meltdown

AFP, Manchester



Jose Mourinho says Manchester United are struggling to compete with Manchester City's financial might and the sum of nearly £300 million he has spent on transfers is not enough to win the Premier League.

A 2-2 draw with Burnley on Tuesday saw United lose further ground in the table to Pep Guardiola's leaders, who are 12 points clear with a game in hand.

Mourinho claimed that United's illustrious history does not guarantee them — or any similar club — success when faced with City's huge resources.

"When you say a club 'like Manchester United', do you think Milan is not as big as us?" said Mourinho, listing other big European clubs who are struggling domestically.

"You think they are not as big as we are? Do you think Real Madrid are not as big as we are? You think Inter Milan



ARSENE WENGER TAKES A JAB

I have been in that position for 21 years so I will not start to complain now. I have always had one team or at least — sometimes four — who were richer than I was, so I learned to cope with that and deal with that. Yes, Manchester City are richer than us and, yes, Chelsea is richer than us and, yes, Manchester United are richer than us. But I still believe we have to find a way to be successful.

is not as big as we are?

"There are many big clubs and you say big clubs. I know what is a big club. One thing is a big club and another thing is a

Fencing C'ship underway

SPORTS REPORTER

The 5th Premier Cup Fencing Championship 2017 kicked off on Tuesday at the Shaheed Sohravardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur. Army, Navy, BGR, Dhaka Commerce College, Mirpur Die Hard Club, Mirpur Fencing Club, Quantum Cosmo School and College and Rajshahi Fencing Club are the participating clubs. The competition concludes on December 30.

Hasanul Haq Inu MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Information inaugurated the ceremony as chief guest while Monzur Hossain, Chairman of Rupali Bank Ltd and Kazi Rajib Uddin Ahmed Chaudhury, Treasurer of Bangladesh Olympic Association were present as special guests.

নাম পরিবর্তন

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ধাপ শাখা, রংপুর

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