



CITY'S FASTEST

PLAYER	TIME	OPPOSITION	DATE
Jesus Navas	13 seconds	Tottenham	November 2013
Geovanni	29 seconds	Wigan	December 2007
Raheem Sterling	38 seconds	Watford	January 2018

Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling scored the fastest goal of the ongoing Premier League season, netting after just 38 seconds against Watford on Tuesday night. Interestingly, he has also scored the latest goal of the season, taking 96 minutes and 35 seconds against Bournemouth.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Szczesny is Buffon's heir: Allegri

'Fixture pile-up could kill us'

Raonic KO'd by wildcard De Minaur

Ctg Abahani sack Titu

AGENCIES, Turin

AFP, Manchester

AFP, Brisbane

SPORTS REPORTER

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri is not interested in pursuing AC Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma with Wojciech Szczesny already in line to replace Gianluigi Buffon.

Buffon, who turns 40 this month, has been expected to retire after this season, though he hinted at some doubts over his future in an interview with La Gazzetta dello Sport.

The goalkeeper also declined to give advice to Italy teammate Donnarumma about a potential move to the Bianconeri, though he did say "you never go wrong with Juve."

But speaking at a news conference ahead of Wednesday's Coppa Italia quarterfinal against Torino, Buffon's manager said Juventus already have a goalkeeper for the future.

"Szczesny is Buffon's heir. I've already said that and I repeat it," Allegri said of the former Arsenal and Roma man. "Juventus did good business in getting such a good player and bringing him in a year before Gigi stops at Juventus."

"I'm very happy, there's a good relationship between the two of them, they respect each other both as professionals and as men, so I don't see any problem."

"Donnarumma is a young lad who has to grow, he's at Milan and he's forging his path. But Juventus have Buffon's replacement."

Pep Guardiola claimed the fixture pile-up over the holiday season could "kill" players after Manchester City wrapped up their fourth game in 11 days with a 3-1 win over Watford.

Guardiola's side moved 15 points clear at the top of the Premier League as they bounced back from the end of their 18-game winning streak in a draw at Crystal Palace just 48 hours earlier.

Goals from Raheem Sterling and Sergio Aguero sandwiched Christian Kabasele's own goal at Eastlands.

But City boss Guardiola was not in the mood to celebrate as the Spaniard complained about the gruelling nature of the fixture schedule for English teams, who are asked to play a host of games in quick succession from late December until the new year.

"That packed programme is a stark contrast to most of the other top Europe leagues, who all have winter breaks."

"We made five changes from the last game but it's not our fault," he said.

"I know here in England the show must go on, but that's not normal, guys. The big bosses should reflect that."

"We're going to kill the players. The federations don't think about the players but they have to."

"They play 11 months in a row. They have to protect them and play with quality and not quality. We have to think about the artists. But I know it won't happen."

Guardiola's frustration had been stoked by a knee ligament injury suffered by Gabriel Jesus against Palace that could rule the City striker out for up to six weeks.

"He will be out for between four to six weeks, or a little bit longer, but hopefully as soon as possible," Guardiola said.

City might not have been at their best at the end of their draining schedule, but the runaway leaders were still too strong for Watford as they maintained their advantage over second-placed Manchester United.

"Watford scored because they have good players. We will review the action but people cannot expect us to win 7-0 every time," Guardiola said.

"We played really well. After dropping two points, we spoke about our reaction because big teams drop points but not too much."

Australian third seed Nick Kyrgios overcame a leg injury to reach the quarterfinals of the Brisbane International on Wednesday as fourth seed Milos Raonic was bundled out by wildcard Alex De Minaur.

Kyrgios came back against Australian Matthew Ebden to win 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, finishing the match with his leg heavily strapped.

In the late match on Pat Rafter Arena, 18-year-old De Minaur had the biggest win of his career when he stunned former champion Raonic 6-4, 6-4.

Raonic has not played since October because of calf and wrist problems and he looked rusty against De Minaur, making a host of unforced errors.

Lionel Messi returned to Barcelona yesterday after spending the Christmas and New Year holiday period back in his native Argentina and joined up with the team for training, although he is unlikely to feature in Barcelona's Copa del Rey clash against Celta Vigo tomorrow.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No intention of going into coaching: Messi

an interview with Serbian newspaper Blic. "Which part? Penalties, I have to practice them more."

Messi also spoke a little about his future, saying that presently he does not see himself becoming a manager, although he left the door open.

"I will probably not be a coach after I retire, but there is enough time, I can still change my mind," he added.

The 30-year-old added that he tried to lead a completely normal life, but that his hordes of fans on the streets complicated things.

"I'm a person like everyone else. I lead a completely normal life with my family. Okay, I wish sometimes that I'm not so familiar and that I can walk freely."

Football's ultimate con man

AGENCIES, Rio de Janeiro



CARLOS KAISER

Brazilian football star Carlos Kaiser had it all: exclusive contracts with popular teams, money and fame. The professional footballer was only missing one thing: the ability to play the game.

Arguably the greatest con man in all of sports history, Kaiser was able to maintain a career that spanned nearly two decades while playing in as few games as possible and never scoring a goal.

When his career began to trend downwards after the youth level, Kaiser devised a plan to keep going. He would maintain a career without ever playing.

"Like every other player, I came from a poor family, but I want to be big, have a lot of money so I could give better life conditions to my family," Kaiser admitted in a 2011 interview with Globo. "I knew that the best way to make it happen was through soccer. I wanted to be a football player without having to actually play it."

Kaiser was fortunate in the early stages of his scheme to befriend stars such as Romario, Carlos Albert Torres, and Renato Gaucho, all of whom would recommend him to coaches, where they would be persuaded to sign Kaiser to a short-term contract. Coaches were not afforded the technology of today, so having footage to scout players was not an option, and Kaiser used this to his advantage. Many of Kaiser's contracts would only last for three to six months, and upon signing would state that he needed time to regain fitness, buying himself a few months to collect without having to play.

Once it was time to practice, Kaiser would fall to the ground, clutching a hamstring or other body part. He would then proceed to ride out the rest of his contract while planning his next target.

Kaiser worked to maintain his reputation as a soccer star, going so far as to befriend journalists and giving them jerseys and memorabilia in an effort to get them to write fraudulent articles about his ability. One article even stated that Kaiser had received an offer to become a Mexican citizen in order to play for the national team.

In one season, Kaiser signed a contract with French club Gazélec Ajaccio, a division II team.

The team organised an open practice for their prestigious new Brazilian but Kaiser, wary being found out, decided to kick all of the balls into the stands, thanking the fans and kissing the team's badge on his jersey. "The fans went crazy. And in the grass there was not a ball," he recalls.

Without balls to practice with, the team was restricted to doing a physical training session.

Kaiser continued to take advantage of friendships with journalists and players, signing deals with new clubs each time someone started to catch on to his scheme.

Despite not scoring a single goal, the media often spoke of Kaiser's scoring ability. When Kaiser signed with Brazilian club Bangu, one newspaper headline read 'Bangu already has its king: Carlos Kaiser'.

"I do not regret anything," he told Globo. "Clubs already deceive so many players, someone had to be the avenger."

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:

Starc 'ready' to go, says Smith

Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc is in line to return to Australia's bowling line-up with second spinner Ashton Agar unlikely to play in Thursday's final Ashes Test against England.

Liverpool open to Coutinho negotiation?

Last season, Liverpool closed the door on Coutinho to complete his dream move to Barcelona but this season the English club are likely to respond to a bid from Barca for the Brazilian midfield dynamo.

Zidane, Real Madrid hoping for more glory in 2018

After enjoying extraordinary success in 2017, with an unprecedented haul of five trophies, Zinedine Zidane begins his third year in charge of Real Madrid with a trip to second-tier Numancia in the Copa del Rey on Thursday.

City back in the groove, Llorente fires Spurs

Raheem Sterling scored the fastest goal of the Premier League season as leaders Manchester City got back on track with a 3-1 win against Watford on Tuesday, while Fernando Llorente put Tottenham on course for a 2-0 victory at his former club Swansea.

Silva explains absence

Manchester City's Spanish international forward David Silva missed four matches recently because his prematurely-born baby son is fighting for his life, he revealed on Wednesday.