

POCH SPEAKS IN FAVOUR OF DIVING

Mauricio Pochettino fears that English football's tendency towards over-analysis, and its fixation on minor issues like diving, is slowly "killing the game". Speaking after Dele Alli was booked for simulation in the 2-2 draw against Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday -- his third such offence in as many seasons -- Pochettino voiced his belief that the general mood of moral panic within the game, over what he described as 'minimal details', risks stifling football's natural expression. He argued that simulation on the pitch, while an offence rightly punishable under the laws of the game, was simply a sporting tactic rather than anything more sinister, insisting: "Football is about trying to trick your opponent -- yes or no? Tactics -- what does 'tactic' mean? When you do tactics, it is to try to trick the opponent. You play on the right, but you finish on the left. Twenty years ago, thirty years ago, we all congratulated a player when he tricks the referee like this. That is the football that I was in love with when I was a child. Yes, in Argentina, but in England too. You believe that in England you were honest and always perfect?"



---AGENCIES

Di Maria fuels PSG romp

AFP, Paris

Angel Di Maria scored a hatrick as holders Paris Saint-Germain defeated second-tier Sochaux 4-1 on Tuesday to reach the French Cup quarterfinals, while Marseille demolished Ligue 2 outfit Bourg-en-Bresse 9-0.

The Argentine winger headed PSG, who were playing without the rested Neymar, ahead inside the first minute at the Stade Bonal in eastern France, but twice former winners Sochaux levelled through Florian Martin before the quarter hour.

Edinson Cavani restored the lead for Unai Emery's team on 27 minutes when he turned in a Layvin Kurzawa cross at the far post, and Thiago Silva then rattled the crossbar with a header from a corner.

Di Maria added a third just prior to the hour with a composed finish after he was released in behind the home defence by a pass from Italian midfielder Marco Verratti. He completed his hatrick just three minutes later by forcing home a rebound from close range after Sochaux goalkeeper Lawrence Ati Zigi parried a fierce shot from Cavani.

Dani Alves finished the game in goal for PSG after Kevin Trapp was sent off in the closing stages for a foul outside his area on Sochaux striker Thomas Robinet.

"The goal today was to advance beyond this round of the French Cup without injuries," said Emery, whose side travel to Real Madrid next week for the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie. "We're very happy with [Di Maria]," added the Spaniard, who has seen the revitalised Argentine score nine goals in 10 matches since the turn of the year.



Paris-Saint Germain winger Angel di Maria scores one of his three goals in a massive 4-1 win in the French Cup quarterfinal against Sochaux on Tuesday. It was the Argentine's first hatrick since 2010.

PHOTO: AFP

Sanchez admits to tax fraud

AFP, Madrid

Manchester United forward Alexis Sanchez struck a deal with Spanish authorities to accept a 16-month suspended jail sentence for tax fraud in return for avoiding a trial.

Sanchez, who joined United from Arsenal last month, faced being tried over a one-million-euro fraud linked to image rights in 2012 and 2013 during his time at Spanish giants Barcelona.

The 29-year-old Chilean forward is rumoured to be the highest paid player in the Premier League following his move to United, reportedly earning around £500,000 a week before tax.

He is one of a number of high-profile players to have fallen foul of the tax laws in Spain. Last month, Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric paid Spanish fiscal authorities close to one million euros to settle his own image rights tax case.

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:

'Incredible' Messi improves every day

Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho is already mesmerized by the insatiable genius of Lionel Messi and he lauds the Argentine, saying that the playmaker was still improving.



Kim Jong Un's sister to head South for Winter Olympics

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister, an increasingly prominent figure in the country's leadership herself, will be part of the North's delegation coming to South Korea for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, Seoul said Wednesday.



Falcao injury blow for Monaco

Monaco captain Radamel Falcao will miss the next three Ligue 1 games due to a thigh injury picked up during the weekend win over Lyon, the club said on Wednesday.



Conte safe for now

AFP, London



Antonio Conte won't be sacked as Chelsea manager in the short term at least after being granted a stay of execution by Roman Abramovich, according to reports on Tuesday.

Conte's future with the troubled Premier League champions was cast into doubt on Monday after a dismal 4-1 defeat against Watford.

Fourth-placed Chelsea are languishing 19 points behind leaders Manchester City after a turbulent campaign marred by Conte's squabble with his club's hierarchy over their transfer policy.

Blues owner Abramovich has never been shy about wielding the axe when his managers under-perform and it was suggested the debacle at Vicarage Road, coming hot on the heels of a wretched home loss to Bournemouth, could prompt Conte's dismissal.

But widespread reports in the British media on Tuesday claimed former Juventus and Italy manager Conte is now expected to remain in charge for Monday's game against West Bromwich Albion.

While there were meetings between various Chelsea board members on Tuesday, it is understood they were non-football related, over other corporate and commercial issues, with the future of the manager not on the agenda.

Former Barcelona boss Luis Enrique is among the big names who have been linked

with the Chelsea job, but Conte is said to be refusing to contemplate resigning after less than two years in charge at Stamford Bridge.

The Italian is believed to have irritated his squad with his demanding training schedule and intense personality.

And Conte has now given Chelsea's players three days off to recover after the Watford defeat.

Having publicly complained about Chelsea's failure to land his top transfer targets this season, Conte risked angering Abramovich last week when he questioned why the club hadn't given him a vote of confidence amid speculation over his future.

Chelsea backed their manager, who still has 18 months of his contract to run, during the January transfer window by bringing in defender Emerson Palmieri from Roma and France forward Olivier Giroud from Arsenal.

Meanwhile, Chelsea defender Gary Cahill admits the squad needs to be held accountable for the performance against Watford.

"Whatever is decided, the players have to take responsibility. The manager has done an absolutely unbelievable job," Cahill told the London Evening Standard.

"This is the worst I've felt for quite a while. Performance-wise, I didn't recognise us or myself.

"It was abysmal. It hurts a lot when you come off after a performance like that.

"We just need to keep strong. I've been here before at this club - it's about staying calm."



Maxwell ton powers Aus

AFP, Hobart

Glenn Maxwell slammed a last-ball six to score a masterful century and lead Australia to a five-wicket victory over England in the second tri-series T20I in Hobart on Wednesday.

Maxwell, who earlier took three wickets in two overs, was man of the match with an unbeaten 103 as the Australians chased down England's 155 for nine in the 19th over.

After being controversially dropped from Australia's one-day team for the recent series against England, Maxwell responded with a 58-ball century including 10 fours and four sixes at Bellerive Oval.

"It was nice to get one over the rope and finish the job," Maxwell said. "For us to start the series the way we have has been outstanding."

SCORES IN BRIEF
 ENGLAND: 155 for 9 (Hales 22, Malan 50; Agar 2-15, Maxwell 3-10)
 AUSTRALIA: 161 for 5 in 18.3 overs (Maxwell 103 not out; Willey 3-28)
Result: Australia won by 5 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Glenn Maxwell

India take 3-0 lead

AGENCIES, Cape Town



India captain Virat Kohli continued his excellent recent form to smash a sparkling unbeaten century and lead his side to a comprehensive 124-run victory over South Africa in the third One-Day International at Newlands on Wednesday.

Kohli made 160 not out from 159 balls as India, who had been put into bat, posted 303 for six in their 50 overs, before restricting their hosts to 179 all out to take a 3-0 lead in the series.

The 29-year-old took a relatively sedate 119 balls to reach his 34th one-day international hundred, hitting only seven fours, but added another five fours and two sixes off 40

more balls in a blazing finish to the innings.

South Africa's brittle batting lineup, without injured stalwarts Faf du Plessis, AB de Villiers and Quinton de Kock, were stifled once more by the Indian spinners as Kuldeep Yadav, who took career-best figures (4-23 in 9 overs), and Yuzvendra Chahal (4-46 in 9 overs) strangled their innings.

The fourth match will be played at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Saturday.

SCORES IN BRIEF
 INDIA: 303 for 6 in 50 overs (Dhawan 76 Kohli 160 not out; Duminy 2-60)
 SOUTH AFRICA: 179 all out in 40 overs (Markram 32, Duminy 51, Miller 25; Chahal 4-46, Yadav 4-23)
Result: India won by 124 runs
Player-of-the-match: Kohli



India skipper Virat Kohli scored a magnificent 160 off 159 balls to power the visitors to a commanding 303 for six in the third ODI against South Africa.

PHOTO: AFP



Garbine Muguruza and Rafael Nadal added more trophies to their collections by winning the men's and women's Best Athlete of the Year 2017 at the 70th Gala of Mundo Deportivo in Barcelona on Tuesday. Both Spaniards were ranked World No. 1 last September, but while Nadal has held on to his spot, Muguruza has slipped to fourth.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

My heart is in Madrid: Courtois

AGENCIES, London



Thibaut Courtois has done nothing to quell rumours that he will be joining Real Madrid in the summer after revealing his "heart is in Madrid".

Chelsea are hopeful that the Belgian will sign a new deal and he is set to start talks later this month, with his current contract expiring at the end of next season.

Courtois lived in Madrid for three years and his two children still live there, leaving him to admit he the prospect of moving back to the Spanish capital was an attractive one.

"If Real is really interested, my personal situation could affect, yes," he said in an interview with Belgian magazine Sport. "The family aspect, it is priceless. But I repeat to you that, for the moment, I'm busy talking to Chelsea to extend."

"My personal situation is related to the city of Madrid. My two children live there. I have my daughter every day on Facetime. She often tells me that I miss her. My son is still too small to communicate like that.

"Whenever I have the opportunity, I try to make a return trip to Spain. As a situation, it is not always easy. Yes, my heart is in Madrid. It is logical and understandable.

"If they want me, they have to contact Chelsea. We'll see. But they never did it. What is certain is that I will one day return to Madrid. We agreed to meet [with Chelsea] again in February because the club had more urgent issues to deal with in January."

উচ্চাস ভরা অভিনন্দন ও শুভেচ্ছা

পিএইচপি পরিবারের চেয়ারম্যান আলহাজ্ব সুফি মুহাম্মদ মিজানুর রহমান ২০১৭ সালের সমাজ সেবায় অসামান্য অবদানের জন্য নোবেল বিজয়ী বিশ্ব বিখ্যাত সমাজসেবী মাদার তেরেসার প্রতিষ্ঠিত ভারতের পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ফাউন্ডেশন কর্তৃক পুরস্কৃত হওয়ায় আইপিডিসি ফাইন্যান্স লিমিটেডের পক্ষ থেকে অভিনন্দন ও শুভেচ্ছা।

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