

SONY ESPN
West Indies v Sri Lanka
First Test, Day-1
Live from 8:00pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & 2
French Open
Quarterfinals
Live from 6:00pm

TOURE'S AGENT JOINS PEP CRITICISM

Former Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure, who recently said goodbye to the Etihad after eight years at the club, made a string of wild allegations on Monday in an attempt to 'bust the myth' of the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager. And his agent Dimitry Seluk has now backed his client, rubbishing the coach's achievements and suggesting that he will never win the Champions League again because of his poor treatment of Toure. "God sees everything. As a man who acted with Yaya, the legend of the club, which under different pretenses did not give the opportunity to go on the field," he said. "He turned all Africa against himself, many African fans turned away from Manchester City. And I'm sure that many African shamans in the future will not allow Guardiola to win the Champions League. "This will be for Guardiola an African curse. Life will show whether I am right or not." When Toure's departure from City was announced in spring, Seluk went public with an offer that the player would pay back half of his wages to stay in England if a Premier League club were not satisfied with his performances. Less than a month on, the outspoken agent has offered Toure to top six clubs for £1-a-week plus performance-related bonuses.

— AGENCIES



The weight of expectations from Argentines will be firmly on the shoulders of talismanic forward Lionel Messi. The Barcelona frontman has won every accolade at club level, but football's most prestigious award – the FIFA World Cup – is still missing from his illustrious trophy cabinet. In the picture, the Albiceleste captain is seen training with his teammates at the Joan Gamper training Centre on Monday, ahead of Saturday's friendly against Israel in Jerusalem. The Argentine team has come under criticism for agreeing to play in Jerusalem. (INSET) Protesters pose with symbolic blood-stained Argentina shirts outside Argentina's training session.

PHOTOS: REUTERS



Outcasts play out 1-1 draw

AFP, Turin



Nathan Ake headed in a late equaliser as the Netherlands held 10-man Italy 1-1 in Monday's international friendly in Turin between two heavyweights who failed to qualify for the World Cup.

Simone Zaza had put Italy ahead after 67 minutes in Juventus' Allianz Stadium but the hosts were hit two minutes later when defender Domenico Criscito was sent off for a tackle on Ryan Babel.

Bournemouth centre-back Ake got the equaliser past the hosts two minutes from time, and almost added a second in injury time.

Both sides are rebuilding after failing to reach the World Cup finals in Russia.

New Italy coach Roberto Mancini's first three games in charge have resulted in a 2-1 victory over Saudi Arabia, 3-1 defeat by France, and 1-1 draw against the Dutch.

"It was a friendly, I don't know if that was really a red card," said Mancini.

"Nevertheless it was an enormously naive error. Playing down to 10 men for 20 minutes was tough, as we were already feeling tired."

Mancini said he was optimistic with what he had seen in his first two weeks in charge.

"It's difficult after 10 days to develop really complex tactical situations, but we saw some good things against France and again today," said the 53-year-old.

"We've got to get playing and gaining experience and that's what the friendlies are for."

"The lads have got the right mentality, the balance of these days is positive but we have to put some things right. There is optimism, people are enthusiastic about this young national team and this helps us."

The Dutch are also forging a new era under Ronald Koeman after failing to qualify for both Euro 2016 and the World Cup.

Four-time world champions Italy proved wasteful in the first half despite dominating play with chances from Andrea Belotti, Simone Verdi and Criscito.

Torino striker Belotti – starting in place of Mario Balotelli – had the ball in the net within three minutes but the goal was ruled offside.

Lorenzo Insigne – wearing the captain's armband on his 27th birthday – then set up Verdi who fired over, with Criscito's header cleared off the line by Ruud Vormer.

Koeman's side got into their stride more after the break but Italy nevertheless opened the scoring when second half substitute Zaza picked up a Federico Chiesa centre.

But minutes later Criscito was sent off for a mistimed tackle, giving three-time World Cup runners-up the Netherlands a numerical advantage.

"I'm happy with the goal because I had sad memories of the national team, I felt a little emotional," said Zaza, who has been recalled by Mancini having not played since missing a penalty kick in Euro 2016 against Germany.

"We're a young group and we need time to prepare. Unfortunately in a way we have a lot of time to prepare for the next tournament."

Serbia stumble at home

Morocco ease past Slovaks

REUTERS, Zurich



Lukewarm Serbia stumbled to a 1-0 home defeat by Chile in a World Cup warm-up on Monday while Morocco were far more impressive in a 2-1 win over Slovakia in the other match involving a finalist.

Serbia, who face Brazil, Costa Rica and Switzerland in their group, looked vulnerable every time the South American champions – who surprisingly failed to qualify for the World Cup – came forward.

Guillermo Maripan headed in an 89th-winner for Chile, a fair reward for their more adventurous display.

Morocco, who face Iran, Portugal and Spain in World Cup Group B, produced plenty of slick passing against Slovakia as they extended their unbeaten run to 11 matches.

Morocco's Ayoub Kaabi and Younes Belhanda scored in a 10-minute second-half spell to give the World Cup-bound side a convincing 2-1 win.

The North Africans dominated the first half and nearly went ahead when Hakim Ziyech hit the post from long range.

Slovakia, who missed out on the

Egypt gambled on Mohamed Salah returning to fitness by naming him in their final squad, while Mohamed Elneny, the midfielder who has not played since April after suffering an ankle injury in action for Arsenal, was also included.

Salah is still recovering from the shoulder ligament injury suffered in last month's Champions League final when he went off early in the game in Kiev as Liverpool lost to Real Madrid.

Egypt are hoping he will recover within three weeks, which could leave him fit to play in their final group match against Saudi Arabia on June 25.

Egypt's squad also includes veteran goalkeeper Essam El Hadary, who will be 45-years-old when his side play Uruguay. Should he feature, El Hadary would become the oldest player to feature in the World Cup.

Glik doubtful for WC

REUTERS, Warsaw

The shoulder injury suffered by Poland's Kamil Glik will most likely exclude the defender from the squad for the World Cup in Russia as it would take at least six weeks until he is ready to restart training, Poland's team doctor said on Tuesday.

"In my opinion, the situation is bad... Even if the treatment is non-surgical, return to full training will take at least about six weeks," Jacek Jaroszewski said in a news conference.

Team officials put off the decision on Glik's place in the squad until Thursday, when doctors from his club AS Monaco will decide on the treatment.

World Cup rules allow the final squad to be named 24 hours before the first game starts.

Buffon banned for three matches

AFP, Lausanne

Outgoing Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was on Tuesday banned for three European matches for his red card and comments about referee Michael Oliver after the Italian side's dramatic Champions League quarter-final loss to Real Madrid last month.

The 40-year-old had been charged both with breaching UEFA's "general principles of conduct" over his outburst and also for his red card for dissent.

European football's governing body announced Tuesday that Buffon was suspended for "three UEFA competition matches for which he would be otherwise eligible".

The last-eight clash between holders Real and Juventus was decided by a last-gasp Cristiano Ronaldo penalty after the Serie A champions had staged a remarkable comeback to wipe out a 3-0 first-leg deficit at the Santiago Bernabeu.

But Buffon, who was sent off in the aftermath of the penalty decision, lashed out at Oliver's decision to award the spot-kick, saying the English official had a "rubbish bin for a heart".

The 2006 World Cup winner, who did not renew his contract with Juventus, could however be playing for Paris Saint-Germain next season.

Iceland fired up for thunderclap

REUTERS, Reykjavik



An inhospitable climate and the smallest population of any World Cup nation have failed to dampen Iceland's burning desire to make history at this month's tournament in Russia in their own unique way.

What other national team coach, for instance, addresses the fans in a local bar before a home international, as Heimur Hallgrímsson did before Iceland's recent game against Norway?

For good measure, Norway coach Lars Lagerback, who led Iceland on their glorious Euro 2016 odyssey that ended in a quarter-final defeat by hosts France after knocking out England, also turned up to assist in continuing the tradition.

Despite sub-zero temperatures that make it virtually impossible to grow grass on pitches for much of the year, the game is thriving in the Nordic island nation.

With a modest population of about 340,000, the country's men's team is ranked 22nd in the world, with the women three places better in 19th. The previous smallest country to have reached the World Cup finals was Trinidad & Tobago in 2006, with 1.3 million people.

"Our training is the whole year outdoors, and we have very strong kids," coach Freyr Sverrisson told Reuters as he kept a watchful eye on young players during a session at the Haukar Hafnarfjörður club south-



The Icelanders were out in full voice during their friendly against Norway on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

west of Reykjavik.

The club also offers basketball, handball, skiing, karate and chess, but football is fast becoming the dominant sport, especially with widespread investment in full-size indoor pitches and outdoor astroturf surfaces.

"Soccer was always very popular, but after the Euros it's getting bigger," says Sverrisson, who coached the country's Under-16 team from 2002 to 2016.

It wasn't just the footballers that put themselves on the map in France – the "thunderclap" performed by Iceland's fans provided some of the most memorable moments in the stands.

With their faces painted in the red, white and blue tones of the

Icelandic flag and plenty of Viking imagery, they provide loud and colourful support to a team punching way above its weight on the international stage.

"It's amazing, the support is so huge," goalkeeper Runar Runarsson told Reuters.

"From my family, from my friends, from people I don't even know, the support is huge. They're so happy."

Set to face Argentina, Nigeria and Croatia, Iceland have a tough task to make it out of Group D in their debut World Cup.

But, regardless of the results, the tiny nation and its colourful fans are guaranteed to make an impact in Russia.

Loris Karius suffered concussion!

AFP, Los Angeles



Liverpool goalkeeper Loris Karius suffered a concussion shortly before the blunders which gifted Real Madrid their Champions League final crown last month, two Boston doctors who examined the shotstopper revealed on Monday.

A statement from doctors Ross Zafonte and Lenore Herget said Karius had undergone a comprehensive examination at Massachusetts General Hospital on May 31, five days after Liverpool's 3-1 defeat to Madrid in Kiev.

"After carefully reviewing game film and integrating a detailed history ... physical examination and objective metrics, we have concluded that Mr Karius sustained a concussion during the match May 26, 2018," the statement from Zafonte and Herget said.

Karius had complained to match officials in the 49th minute that he had been elbowed in a clash with Madrid defender Sergio Ramos which went unpunished.

Two minutes later, Karius committed a howler when he attempted to throw a pass out to the Liverpool defence only for it to go straight to Real striker Karim Benzema for the opening goal of the final.

Karius also erred with Real's third goal, fumbling Gareth Bale's long-range shot into his own net to complete a miserable night for the German goalkeeper.

Zafonte and Herget's statement said it was possible that the concussion had impacted Karius's performance.

"At the time of our evaluation, Mr. Karius's principal residual symptoms and objective signs suggested that visual spatial dysfunction existed and likely occurred immediately following the event," the statement said.

"Additional symptomatic and objectively noted areas of dysfunction also persisted. It could be possible that such deficits would affect performance."

It added that Karius had shown a "significant and steady improvement since the concussive event".

"We expect him to make a full recovery based on the results of the examination," it added. "We have encouraged vigilance and an emphasis on safety in his eventual return to full activity."

Beckham backs North American bid

AFP, London

David Beckham has thrown his weight behind North America's bid to host the 2026 World Cup as the vote looms, saying the fans' passion for football would make the event "very special".

The US-Canada-Mexico joint bid is battling against Morocco for the right to stage the tournament, with FIFA members picking the winner at a vote in Moscow on June 13.

"A football competition as big as the World Cup deserves to be in great places and if the US, Canada and Mexico get that it will be very special," said former LA Galaxy star Beckham in a video released by Major League Soccer.

The former England captain said he had experienced the passion for the game in all three countries.

"I've been able to have played in one of these countries and I've been to the other two as well and also played in Canada for the Galaxy but I know the passion that runs through all three of those countries," he said.

"Don't get me started on the passion that runs through Mexico because the players that I've played against, I've played against them as a nation before and there's not many nations that are as passionate as them."