



Roberto Pereyra (L) was one of three Argentina players that got their first goal for La Albiceleste in a 4-0 friendly win over Iraq on Thursday. Argentina have been bleeding their youngsters in recent matches, but will likely put out a strong side against Brazil on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

New-look Argentina ease past Iraq

Mbappe spares France's blushes with late cameo

AFP, Riyadh

Argentina easily overcame Iraq 4-0 in a friendly in Saudi Arabia on Thursday with three players scoring their first international goals for the two-time world champions.

Argentina were without Lionel Messi, who is taking a sabbatical from international football, and fielded a new-look side that included one player making his debut and two others their first ever starts.

The new boys were rarely troubled by an Iraq side that defended in numbers, but showed little threat in their opponent's half.

Inter Milan striker Lautaro Martinez, playing his second game for the national side, put Argentina ahead after 15 minutes with a superb header from a Marcos Acuna cross.

Roberto Pereyra doubled their lead eight minutes into the second half when he took a pass on the edge of the box and swept a right-foot shot home after the Iraq defence opened up in front of him.

Defender Pezzella grabbed a third eight minutes from fulltime when he headed home after a flick



With France trailing Iceland 2-0, Kylian Mbappe came on and inspired the team, first forcing an own goal before striking from the spot to salvage a draw for the world champions on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

on at a corner and Franco Cervi added a fourth in injury time after a surging run from midfield.

"It wasn't easy opening them up but we managed it and we were patient and managed to score more goals," Pezzella said.

The win took Argentina's unbeaten run under interim coach Lionel Scaloni to three games. They next face off on Tuesday against arch rivals Brazil in Jeddah.

In Guingamp, Kylian Mbappe

turned in by Iceland defender Holmar Orn Eyjolfsson.

The Paris Saint-Germain forward levelled from the penalty spot in the 90th minute after Kolbeinn Sigthorsson handled at a corner.

"The team saw we needed to do something else. I bring what I can do," Mbappe told TF1.

"We saw the fans were completely behind us even if it wasn't a big stadium. We wanted to do everything for the people who were there. We got the draw, we didn't lose, but we're still a bit annoyed."

SPAIN CRUSH WALES

At the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, Paco Alcacer made his case for a regular place in the Spain team as the on-loan Borussia Dortmund forward struck twice in his country's 4-1 rout of Wales on Thursday.

With Diego Costa injured and Rodrigo on the bench, Alcacer seized his chance to impress Spain boss Luis Enrique in his first international appearance since March 2016.

Alcacer netted twice in the first half to make it eight goals in 14 Spain appearances, while Sergio Ramos and Marc Bartra were also on target for the visitors.

Lewa's 100th spoiled

AFP, Paris

Portugal, playing without Cristiano Ronaldo, defeated Poland 3-2 in the Nations League on Thursday, shattering Robert Lewandowski's celebrations of playing his 100th international.

European champions Portugal scored three times in 20 minutes in the Polish city of Chorzow through Andre Silva (32 minutes), a Kamil Glik own-goal (43) and a strike from Bernardo Silva (52).

Fernando Santos's Portugal team now have two wins in two in the Nations League after also beating Italy 1-0 in September.

Prolific Genoa striker Krzysztof Piatek had given Poland a 19th-minute lead with Jakub Blaszczykowski cutting the deficit for the home side in the 77th minute.



Robert Lewandowski (L) walks off in dismay after Poland went down to a 3-2 defeat to Portugal, on the Bayern Munich striker's 100th international appearance, in a UEFA Nations League match on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Bolt bags double on first start

AGENCIES, Sydney



Usain Bolt was delighted to score his first goals for Central Coast Mariners and hopes to earn a contract after starring in Friday's 4-0 win over Macarthur South West United.

The eight-time Olympic champion was handed a start in Sydney and netted a second-half double, including a neat left-footed finish to open his account, as he staked a claim for a permanent deal.

His performances while on trial with the A-League club, whose season begins a week on Sunday, have received mixed reviews but the Jamaican believes he has made huge improvements to his game.

Reflecting on his display after being substituted late on, Bolt said: "It was my first proper game with the first team. I'm just happy I got the chance and I'm proud of myself."

"It was a big deal. I think scoring a goal in your first proper match, is a big deal. Your first start and scoring two goals, it was a good feeling."

"This is what I worked towards, I tried to improve myself, I tried to get better, and I'm on the way to doing that."

Bolt had missed several chances before his first goal in the 55th minute and he revealed that some half-time words of wisdom from coach Mike Mulvey had helped him stay on track.

"The coach said to me, 'Listen, you'll get chances

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USAIN BOLT
CENTRAL COAST MARINERS STRIKER

, you'll miss some, you'll score some. Keep your head up and try for the next one," said the 32-year-old.

"I've improved in every area. I think my touch is a little bit better, my vision needs to improve a little bit more. I think running off the ball is where I've improved the most, I can see and move into space."

"But there's a lot more to learn. I've just got to continue learning and getting better."

Questioned on the next steps in his bid to become a professional footballer, Bolt said: "Now the discussion comes up because the season starts next week."

"We have to sit down with the coach, the management side and figure out how we go forward, what's the plan, if they're going to sign me or I need to do more. So I'm just waiting on that. I'm keen, that's why I'm here - to play my best and to try to get into the team."

After being withdrawn to a warm ovation, Bolt spent time signing autographs and taking selfies with supporters.



Usain Bolt impressed in his first start for the Central Coast Mariners on Friday, opening his account with a deft left-foot finish before capitalising on a defensive mix-up for an easy second against Macarthur South West United. PHOTO: AFP

SHORT CORNER

Fan rushes Kohli to get embrace

An overenthusiastic fan breached security at Hyderabad cricket ground on Friday to take a selfie with Virat Kohli, but was stopped before he was able to plant a kiss on the Indian captain's cheek.

Kohli was at mid-wicket in the opening session of the first day of India's second Test against the West Indies when the young fan ran on the field and embraced the Indian star.

Security officers overpowered the youngster and hauled him off the field as the crowd roared and clapped. The umpires called for a drinks break as Kohli was visibly upset.

It was the second incident in the series after Kohli was surrounded by selfie-taking fans in the middle of the first Test in Rajkot last week.

Kohli, 29, is often the subject of adulation with one fan touching his feet before taking a selfie during an Indian Premier League game this year.

19 charged in Belgian fraud probe

Belgian prosecutors have charged 19 suspects and detained nine in a massive fraud and match-fixing scandal that has mired Belgium's elite league in scandal, they said on Friday.

The charges came after police on Wednesday carried out a massive operation in Belgium, arresting 29 people, 10 of which were released without charges.

Among the detained were at least three players' agents, a referee, and a top executive from a major football club, a statement from prosecutors said.

Mogi Bayat, portrayed in the media as Belgium's most powerful sports agent, was charged with money laundering and conspiracy, the statement said.

Bayat was detained pending his next hearing, as were fellow agents Dejan Veljkovic and Karim Mejjati, who were questioned this week as part of the operation targeting Belgium's football elite.

Siddikur moves up

Siddikur Rahman moved up to seventh position in the UMA CNS Open Golf Championship in Karachi after a two-under (70) in the second round yesterday.

The two-time Asian Tour winner exchanged three birdies for a bogey at the Karachi Golf Club to take a share of the seventh position at three-under (141). Three Thai players enjoyed the lead at seven-under (137) in the 300,000-dollar event, which is a comeback event for the Asian Tour in Pakistan after a gap of 11 years.

Ireland's O'Brien retires

Ireland wicketkeeper-batsman Niall O'Brien announced on Friday that he is retiring from international and first-class cricket after a 16-year career.

The 36-year-old, who made his international debut against Denmark in 2002, played 216 times for Ireland and appeared in his nation's first-ever Test, against Pakistan, in May this year.

O'Brien opted for the number 72 shirt to mark his match-winning score in Ireland's famous win against Pakistan at the 2007 World Cup.

"It is with a heavy heart that I am announcing my retirement from international and professional cricket," said O'Brien, who has played much of his career alongside his younger brother Kevin. "I have been blessed to have been lucky enough to have represented my country for 16 years with plenty more ups than downs and for this I look back with nothing but smiles and laughter."

Djokovic relishing Zverev semi

Novak Djokovic said that he was relishing facing "top player" Alexander Zverev in Saturday's semifinals of the Shanghai Masters, just the second meeting between them.

The 14-time Grand Slam champion beat Kevin Anderson 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 on Friday to set up the tasty last-four clash.

The 31-year-old from Serbia is in sparkling form, winning Wimbledon, the Cincinnati Masters and US Open in recent months, after having elbow surgery in February.

Djokovic said they were "both different players" now.

"I wasn't -- I feel like -- playing as well as I'm playing today," he warned. "But also he has improved a lot and he has established himself as a top player. It's going to be definitely a close match."

A rising star touted as a potential future multiple Grand Slam winner, fourth seed Zverev eased past Kyle Edmund to reach his first Shanghai semi-final.

The 6-4, 6-4 victory over the 11th-seeded Briton seals Zverev's place in the season-ending ATP Finals in London next month, which bring together the top eight men.

In the other semifinal, Swiss maestro Roger Federer, who defeated Kei Nishikori in straight sets in the quarters, will take on Croatia's Borna Coric.

YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

BD lose 5-0 to Argentina

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh five-a-side hockey team suffered a 5-0 defeat against hosts Argentina in the quarterfinals of the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina yesterday.

Bangladesh, who beat Kenya 4-3 in their last pool last match to confirm the quarterfinals, conceded two goals in the first half before Argentina added three more goals in the second half.

Bangladesh will pay the 5-8th place-deciding match against Poland today.

The boys in red and green had beaten Canada 5-2 in their penultimate pool match after having suffered straight defeats against India, Australia and Austria in their first three matches of the competition.

BBC grabs snooker title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Billiard Center Ltd (BBC) clinched the 2018 Dhaka Club National Snooker Team Championship title while Narayanganj Club Ltd became the runners-up at Dhaka Club's Samson Chowdhury Center on Thursday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan distributed prizes among the winners.