

MBAPPE continues his rise

REUTERS, Paris

Kylian Mbappe answered his critics with a sterling performance as France thrashed Iceland 4-0 in a Euro 2020 qualifier on Monday, showing no signs of irritation this time to continue his meteoric rise.

The striker, whose nerves had been pointed out in the 4-1 win against Moldova last Friday, kept his cool throughout to find the back of the net after the break and set up Samuel Umtiti and Antoine Griezmann for the first and fourth goals.

In Chisinau, the Paris St Germain forward often sought individual solutions and was booked for diving, appearing less threatening than usual.

Coach Didier Deschamps, however, was never worried by a player who has now scored 12 and delivered seven assists in 30 games for France.

"There's no problem with Kylian. He's in the game like all the others. If you had been a football player you would understand," Deschamps said at the Stade de

France.

The 20-year-old's goal in Paris on Monday meant he became the youngest player to score 12 international goals since Denmark's Harald Nielsen, then 18, in 1960.

"Mbappe? He is a great player, he proves it everyday. He is a phenomenon and sometimes, when you are one, you want to do more," said midfielder Blaise Matuidi.

"He's got character, it's a good thing. He already has a lot of maturity."

Mbappe is set to gain even more maturity as he benefits from Deschamps's full trust, having been fielded in France's last 28 games, the longest series since Patrick Vieira played 44 successive matches between 1999 and 2002.

Deschamps also noted that Mbappe's relationship with fellow striker Griezmann had improved.

"They are efficient. There is a complementary partnership between Antoine and Kylian, and not just when they have the ball. It's also how they occupy space when they don't have it," the coach said.



France's electrifying youngster Kylian Mbappe put in another heroic performance against Iceland on Monday night, netting once to become the youngest player to 12 international goals before assisting two others in a Euro 2020 qualifier in Paris. PHOTO: AFP



In an act of defiance towards racist fans, England forward Raheem Sterling celebrated a goal by first cupping his ears to the fans to take in their abuse, before covering his ears to show that it was having no effect on him. The forward continued his fine form as England demolished Montenegro 5-1 in Podgorica on Monday night. PHOTO: REUTERS

Southgate hits out at racism

AFP, London

Gareth Southgate has called for education to stamp out racism in football as European governing body UEFA opened disciplinary proceedings against Montenegro following abuse aimed at black England players during his side's 5-1 Euro 2020 qualifier win in Podgorica.

Raheem Sterling celebrated the fifth goal on Monday by cupping his ears towards the home fans as a sign of defiance, while Callum Hudson-Odoi said he and Danny Rose heard monkey noises aimed at them.

"Sanctions are worthless if there is nothing alongside that to help educate people," said England coach Southgate. "My kids don't think for one minute about where people are born, what language they speak, what colour they are."

"There's an innocence about young people that is only influenced by older people. So we have to make sure that the education is right for everybody."

"In our country, (it's) the same. I've said this before, I'm not sitting here just criticising what's happened tonight because in our country we have the same issue. We're not free of it."

Sterling's fifth capped a fine performance in which Ross Barkley struck twice and Michael Keane and Harry Kane also scored as England overcame the hosts' early opener.

Southgate said the racist chanting had marred the win, which leaves England in charge of Group A after two big wins.

"What we have to do is make sure our players feel supported," Southgate told BBC Radio. "They know that the dressing room is there and we're there as a group of staff for them. We'll report the incidents through the correct channels. It's clear that so many people have heard it."

"We have to make sure that in our country we continue to make the strides and that we've got to trust the authorities to take the right action here."

UEFA regulations state that if supporters engage in racist behaviour then "the member association or club responsible is punished with a minimum of a partial stadium closure".

UEFA said on Tuesday that disciplinary proceedings had been opened and charges against Montenegro including racist behaviour and crowd disturbances. The case will be dealt with on May 16.

Sterling tweeted a picture of his goal celebration, saying: "Best way to silence the haters (and yeah I mean racists)".

"It's 2019 now, I keep saying it. It's a shame to see this going on and we can only bring awareness to the situation," he told Sky Sports.

"It's now time for the people in charge to put a real stamp on it because you can fine someone, but what is that going to do?"

Ronaldo to return in one or two weeks

REUTERS, Lisbon



Cristiano Ronaldo does not think the injury which forced him out of Portugal's match against Serbia on Monday is overly serious and he told reporters he expects to return to action in one or two weeks.

Ronaldo went off in the first half of the Euro 2020 qualifier with an apparent hamstring injury. The match ended 1-1.

"I'll know more in 24 or 48 hours," he told reporters.

"It happens, it's football. If you go out in the rain you get wet... I'm calm, I'll be back in one or two weeks."

A long absence would be a blow to his club Juventus, who signed Ronaldo last year

to boost their chances of winning the Champions League. Juventus travel to face Ajax Amsterdam in their quarterfinal first leg on April 10 with the return six days later.

Both Ronaldo and coach Fernando Santos said the referee had apologised to them for not awarding a penalty to Portugal for handball in the second half.

The referee initially gave the spot kick but then changed his mind. VAR is not used in the Euro 2020 qualifiers.

"It was very clear, the referee should have given it," said Ronaldo. "The linesman was 40 metres away so it seems a bit strange."

Santos said: "We saw the incident in the dressing room afterwards and neither we nor he had any doubt -- it was a penalty... He apologised."



Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo went down with an injury in a Euro 2020 qualifier against Serbia on Monday, but reassured Juventus fans that he would return in time for the Champions League quarterfinal first leg against Ajax on April 10. PHOTO: REUTERS

CSK make it two from two

PTI, New Delhi



Shane Watson and Suresh Raina made batting look easy on a lifeless track as Chennai Super Kings coasted to a six-wicket victory over Delhi Capitals in an Indian Premier League encounter here on Tuesday.

Shikhar Dhawan's painstaking half-century was the only silver lining in Delhi Capitals' sub-par total of 147 for six which the defending champions overtook with two balls to spare.

The scoreline might suggest that it was a close game but CSK were always in control of the chase despite a lot of balls being wasted by Mahendra Singh Dhoni at the back end of the innings. It was CSK's second win in a row.

When Delhi batted first, run-scoring looked an arduous job with a middle-order collapse dashing hopes of a big total.

When CSK started their chase, it was expected that the slowness will be a factor but it seemed Watson (44 off 26 balls) and Suresh Raina (30 off 16 balls) were batting on a different track. They showed positive intent which was singularly lacking in Dhawan and Co.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DELHI CAPITALS: 147 for 6 in 20 overs (Shaw 24, Dhawan 51, Pant 25; Bravo 3-33)

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 150 for 4 in 19.4 overs (Watson 44, Raina 30, Jadhav 27, Dhoni 32 not out; Mishra 2-35)

Result: Chennai won by 6 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Shane Watson.



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