

KANE SCORES FROM HALFWAY LINE

Harry Kane scored a stunning 93rd minute winner from the halfway line as Tottenham Hotspur edged Juventus 3-2 in an entertaining pre-season friendly in Singapore on Sunday. The England captain latched onto Lucas Moura's short pass and launched a first-time shot high over a scrambling substitute Wojciech Szczesny in the Juventus goal as Spurs rallied past new manager Maurizio Sarri's Italian champions in front of a delighted National Stadium crowd.

—AFP



Another year off for Pioneer League?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Pioneer Football League, considered the breeding stage for aspiring footballers, has not been held for nearly two years since the final between King Star SC and Mirpur Sports and Physical Culture Centre took place in November, 2017.

The Pioneer League had the reputation of producing star footballers such as Monem Munna, Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir, Samrat Hossain Emily, Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib, Jakir Hossain, Alfaz Ahmed, Jewel Rana, Golam Gaus, Masud Rana and Mahbub Hossain Roxy in the past, but the same platform is now closed for those who dream to be future stars.

The league is a stage where some 2000 aspiring footballers from nearly 80 clubs get opportunity to showcase their talent and catch the attention of coaches of upper league clubs to climb the ladder in Dhaka-based leagues as football in most districts are all but on life-support.

Though the Pioneer League, during the second term of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, was held on regular basis from 2012 to 2016, but it has only been held once in three years during Salahuddin's third term.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) always gave attention to the upper leagues, especially the Bangladesh Premier League and the Bangladesh Championship League, but it shows little care about the lower leagues which are needed to maintain a proper pipeline. This happened due

to either BFF's reluctance or financial constraints. The game's local governing body added the Pioneer League in the 2019-2020 calendar during June and July, but is still no visible initiative to hold it.

"We will sit with the clubs after Eid-ul-Adha and start searching venues in Dhaka. Then we will start the league," Pioneer league committee's deputy chairman Amit Khan Shuvro told The Daily Star. "We could not hold the league last year because of the national elections but this time we are determined to hold it with under-15 players so that the players can be selected for the national team ahead of SAFF U-15 Championship and AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers."

Having echoed the same sentiment, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said, "Money is there for the Pioneer League as we have already received Tk 20 lakh from two city corporations."

The game's governing local body earlier put the pioneer football league under FIFA Forward programme by which the federation spends its own money and then collect the fund from the FIFA. But the BFF is not interested to do so this time.

"Yes, we held the Pioneer League under FIFA Forward programme once, but it is a very lengthy process to collect money from FIFA. Besides, we don't have much financial support to spend money behind the league and then collect it from FIFA," said Shohag.

It is mentionable here that the Pioneer League has, in recent past, produced national players like midfielder Mohammad Abdullah and forward Jafar Iqbal.



Deceuninck-Quick Step rider Julian Alaphilippe of France, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, leads the chasing pack during stage fifteen of the 106th Tour de France between Limoux and Foix Prat d'Albi, in Foix Prat d'Albi on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Wolves beat City to win Asia Trophy

AFP, Shanghai



Goalkeeper Rui Patricio was the hero for Wolves picking himself off the turf to save three spot-kicks after their Asia Trophy final against Manchester City went to penalties on Saturday.

Wolves won the exhibition tournament 3-2 on penalties after the game against the Premier League champions ended 0-0 after 90 sweaty minutes in Shanghai.

It was a story of missed penalties for Pep Guardiola's City but one of guts for Portuguese stopper Patricio, 31, who suffered a facial injury in the first half.

"He's ok, he had a bit of a cut and will have stitches now, but he will recover. That's part of his job," said victorious Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo.

Chinese-owned Wolves begin their Europa League campaign against Crusaders FC of Northern Ireland on Thursday, just days after arriving back from China.

It means an early start to their season, but Nuno believes that the trip to the Far East has put them in decent condition to compete at home and abroad in the months ahead.

Crucially, they jet home without any major injuries.

"The main thing is that we survived, we are happy," Nuno said.

His counterpart Guardiola was unconcerned about losing the final of the mini pre-season competition, which also involved West Ham United and Newcastle United.

He saw Raheem Sterling miss a first-half penalty for City, who dominated at a full Hongkou Stadium but were blunt in attack without Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus.

Pre-season games are notoriously poor barometers for the season to come, especially when played in stifling heat like in Shanghai.

Leroy Sane, the German winger wanted by Bayern Munich, started for City and won the Sterling penalty, but otherwise had a quiet game before being substituted on the hour.

Kevin De Bruyne was Guardiola's captain for the night -- the City armband is up for grabs following the departure of talisman Vincent Kompany.

England international forward Sterling, playing through the middle, also fluffed a golden chance in the first half from close range with only Patricio to beat.

In the third-fourth playoff, Newcastle beat West Ham 1-0 to give Steve Bruce victory in his first match as head coach.

The 58-year-old, whose appointment has gone down badly with already disillusioned Newcastle fans, was unable to be pitch-side because of Chinese visa restrictions.

The former Sunderland boss is just three days into the job and this was only a friendly, but he will have been heartened by what he saw against what was on paper a strong West Ham side.

Bruce is looking for forward reinforcements but Yoshinori Muto made his case by poking the ball in from close range in the first half after full-back Jamie Sterry crossed.

In contrast to their meek 4-0 defeat to Wolves on Wednesday in Nanjing, Newcastle were committed and bit hard into tackles.

Midfielder Jonjo Shelvey was prominent in the first half against an insipid West Ham and said afterwards that Bruce "deserved more credit than he gets".

Bayern spoil Hazard's Real debut

AFP, Los Angeles

Bayern Munich spoiled Eden Hazard's Real Madrid debut, downing the Spanish giants 3-1 in a friendly in Houston Saturday despite goalkeeper Sven Ulreich's sending off.

Corentin Tolisso, Robert Lewandowski and Serge Gnabry had given Bundesliga champions Bayern a comfortable 3-0 lead before recent Real Madrid signing Rodrygo grabbed a consolation goal with a brilliant free kick.

That followed Ulreich's departure in the 81st for a foul on Brazilian teen Rodrygo outside the area.

Rodrygo, Luka Jovic and Ferland Mendy all made their debuts for rebuilding Real Madrid -- all coming on at halftime as Zinedine Zidane changed his entire side.

Hazard's first outing in a Madrid jersey since his high-priced move from Chelsea had dominated the headlines.

But despite getting a starting nod he made little impact at the NRG Stadium -- home of the NFL's Houston Texans, where the European giants produced plenty of lively end-to-end action from the kickoff.

Bale's agent calls Zidane a 'disgrace'

AFP, Los Angeles



Gareth Bale's agent has branded Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane a "disgrace" after the Frenchman revealed that the La Liga giants were ready to offload the Wales star in a matter of days.

Zidane left Bale out of the Real squad for Saturday's 3-1 exhibition loss to Bayern Munich in Houston, and after the match he revealed he had been dropped because the club were "working on his departure", adding that he hoped it happens soon, "for everyone's sake".

"Zidane is a disgrace, he shows no respect for a player that has done so much for Real Madrid," Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett told AFP.

Asked whether Bale is close to leaving Madrid, Barnett added: "We are working on it".

Bale has been frozen out in Madrid by Zidane despite helping his side to

Zidane is a disgrace, he shows no respect for a player that has done so much for Real Madrid. We are working on it [Bale's departure from real Madrid].

JONATHAN BARNETT
GARETH BALE'S AGENT



a Spanish title and four Champions Leagues since arriving from Tottenham Hotspur six year ago.

His brace, including a brilliant bicycle kick, sank Liverpool in the 2018 final, but he was shunted aside by Zidane as soon as he returned to the Real bench in early March.

After Zidane's reappointment, Bale played 90 minutes in just three of the remaining 11 matches, was left out completely four times and frequently substituted when he did play.

He was denied a chance to say goodbye at the end of last season when he was left on the bench in a 2-0 loss to Real Betis that saw Zidane's side submerged with boos and whistles.

However Zidane insists that his treatment of the 30-year-old forward

"is nothing personal", even though Bale would be welcome at some of Europe's biggest clubs.

"There comes a time when things are done because they need to be done," Zidane added after the Bayern defeat.

"I've not got anything against him. We have to make decisions and change things, that's all there is to it. "I don't know if this will happen in 24 or 48 hours' time. The situation will change and it's for the best for everyone."

Bale joined Real Madrid to much fanfare, a blockbuster transfer fee and a big salary that may prove to be an obstacle for all but the richest teams.

He has three seasons left on his deal and has been linked to Tottenham, Manchester United and Bayern.



Algeria fans, lining the streets, greet the national football team during an open-top bus parade in the capital Algiers on Saturday, following the team's victory over Senegal in the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations. It was only the second Cup of Nations win for the country and first since 1990.

PHOTO: AFP



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