

JESUS HANDED TWO-MONTH BAN

Brazil's Gabriel Jesus has been handed a two-month international ban and fined \$30,000 for his behaviour following his dismissal in the Copa America final last month, South American soccer governing body CONMEBOL has said. Jesus scored in the 3-1 win over Peru but was sent off in the 70th minute when he received a second yellow card. The Manchester City striker argued with the referee and then took his anger out by kicking a water bottle and pushing over the Video Assistant Referee's monitor before leaving the pitch. "Gabriel Jesus is suspended for two months from the day following the notification of this decision," CONMEBOL said in a statement.



—REUTERS



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah will be looking to recapture his scoring touch as the Premier League begins with the game against Norwich City tonight. Salah ended as the top goal scorer in the previous two seasons.

PHOTO: LIVERPOOL FC OFFICIAL SITE

The squad won't change much: Jamie Day

SPORTS REPORTER



The national team's preparation for the joint qualifiers of the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 Asian Cup are likely to get underway in the last week of this month as English coach Jamie Day is scheduled to return to Dhaka on August 19.

Day has finalised his 38-member preliminary squad, which has been sent to FIFA and AFC on August 5. There were very few changes from the squad that played the pre-qualifiers against Laos in June as the 33-year-old coach pinned his hopes on proven campaigners who know Day's formations and styles.

"I have seen most of the [domestic] games from the UK and as I have said before, the top five sides [Bangladesh Premier League clubs] feature most of the Bangladesh [national] players. There are one or two who have done well recently from clubs lower down but the squad won't change that much.

"The players who have played this year have not let me or the country down so far and have been very successful, so I don't believe we need to change much," Jamie told The Daily Star over an email exchange on Tuesday.

Day was unwilling to reveal the

38-member squad until an official announcement was made but it has been learnt that he may call upon a couple of new faces for the away match against Afghanistan on September 10.

Young forward Rakibul Islam of Rahmatganj MFS, who struck three goals in the league, is likely to make his debut in the senior side after representing Bangladesh U-23 team. However, national discard Toklish Ahmed -- who struck seven goals for Mohammedan in the second leg of the just-concluded league -- was not in Day's consideration.

With Afghanistan yet to decide their home venue, there has been a bit of uncertainty about where the team's training camp abroad will be held as the team management wants to fly out for Afghanistan's home venue straight from the camp.

National team manager Satyajit Das Rupu said that they have already talked to Qatar and United Arab Emirates about a short-term training block and have let those federations know that Bangladesh would want to play a couple of practice matches against local sides.

It is however certain that Day will have to start the preparatory camp without Abahani players as they will play the AFC Cup inter-zone semifinal play-offs against North Korea's April 25 on August 21 and 28 respectively.

L'pool bank on stability

Man City set the benchmark

AFP, Liverpool

Missing out on the Premier League title despite a record-breaking campaign was eased by winning a sixth European Cup for Liverpool last season, but ending a 30-year wait to be crowned English champions is now more important than ever on Merseyside.

Jürgen Klopp's men are expected to strike first blood in the title race when they kick off the Premier League season against newly-promoted Norwich under the Friday night lights of Anfield.

However, unlike most of their competitors who have delved into the arms race for talent in another transfer window where Premier League clubs have spent over £1 billion (\$1.2 billion), the European champions have been conspicuously quiet in the transfer market.

Teenage talents Sepp van den Berg and Harvey Elliott have been snapped up with an eye to the

future, while Spanish goalkeeper Adrian will replace Simon Mignolet as back-up to Alisson Becker in three low-key arrivals.

Klopp, though, believes the foundations are already in place for another tilt at the title after spending over £230 million in the past two years on the likes of Alisson, Virgil van Dijk and Mohamed Salah.

"You should never do transfers because other clubs are doing transfers," Klopp told Sky Sports.

"That makes no sense, it's not about that. And if you sit back for a second and have a look at the squad, do we need more players?"

On the evidence of last season, there is precious little for Liverpool to improve on.

A Premier League points tally of 97 would have won the title in any season bar the last two as Manchester City have set a new bar under Pep Guardiola.

City have further strengthened the squad that won a first ever domestic treble of trophies in England last

season with the club record signing of Spanish midfielder Rodri and will be the benchmark for Liverpool to beat.

A 1-1 draw between the sides, with City edging a penalty shootout 5-4, in the Community Shield last weekend again highlighted how little there is to separate the English and European champions.

Yet, in contrast to last season when Liverpool were the least affected of England's big six by the late return to pre-season of players at the World Cup, Klopp has a tougher time in ensuring his side hit the ground running.

The prolific front three of Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane were all involved in international tournaments again this summer.

Liverpool have decided against investing heavily in back-up for that trio and their presence was missed in a bumpy pre-season that saw an under-strength side beaten by Borussia Dortmund, Sevilla and Napoli.

But Klopp believes the squad he has assembled will be bolstered by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Adam Lallana and Rhian Brewster's return to fitness, while Naby Keita can have a bigger impact in his second season in English football.

"People think that players from other clubs, other countries, are better than the players we have here but without really having the proof, because those players haven't played here," he said.

"It means whoever wants to start has to be at his top level. We have proper competition and that's exactly what you need."

Winning the Champions League also booked Liverpool's place in next week's UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup in December, meaning they have five trophies to play for this season.

However, it is ending 30 years of hurt by winning a 19th league title come May that will determine whether Liverpool's season has been a success or failure.

Spurs, Arsenal to splash the cash

AFP, London



Tottenham made the headlines on a busy final day of the Premier League transfer window with deals in the pipeline for Giovanni Lo Celso and Ryan Sessegnon, but their hopes of signing Paulo Dybala are fading.

Across north London, Arsenal are expected to complete moves for Celtic left-back Kieran Tierney and centre-back David Luiz from Chelsea.

Spurs chairman Daniel Levy has been under pressure from manager Mauricio Pochettino to build on the progress made on and off the field as Tottenham moved into a new 62,000-capacity stadium and reached the Champions League final last season.

They have made just one summer signing so far, with French international midfielder Tanguy Ndombele joining for a club-record fee from Lyon, but all that is set to change in the final hours of the window.

Argentine international midfielder Lo Celso is expected to complete a season-long loan deal that will contain an obligation on Tottenham's part to make the transfer

permanent next summer.

And Spurs' long-running interest in England under-21 international Sessegnon will be realised in a reported £25 million deal that could rise to £30 million including add-ons.

However, a sensational swoop for Dybala has reportedly broken down, with Juventus unwilling to let the Argentine leave without an adequate replacement, having missed out on Lukaku.

Arsenal are badly in need of defensive recruits to shore up a backline that conceded 51 Premier League goals last season to miss out on Champions League football for a third straight year.

Tierney travelled to London on Wednesday after the payment structure of a £25-million move from Celtic was finally agreed between the clubs.

Luiz is also set for a switch across London to replace departed Arsenal captain Laurent Koscielny, who joined Bordeaux earlier this week, in a £8 million transfer from Chelsea.

Leicester are also set to use some of the £80 million they received from Manchester United for Harry Maguire on Sampdoria midfielder Dennis Praet for 20 million euros.

SAFF U-18 CHAMPIONSHIP

Booters to battle India, Sri Lanka

Sports Reporter



Last edition's runners-up Bangladesh have again been pitted against India in September's SAFF U-18 Championship when the groups of the regional youth championship were determined at the BFF House yesterday.

Sri Lanka are Bangladesh's other opponents in Group B, while two-time winners and defending Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Pakistan have been placed in Group A. The third edition of the tournament will start from September 20 at the Armed Police Force Stadium in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Bangladesh will start their campaign with a match against Sri Lanka on September 21 and will then take on first edition runners-up India on September 25.

In the first edition in 2015, the boys in red and green put up a tremendous performance in their opening match and especially in the second half, coming back strongly from three goals down to hand mighty India a 4-3 defeat. Players like Jafar Iqbal, Mahbubur Rahman Sufil and Rahmat Mia became the toast of football fans for delivering the memorable performance.

Only five teams participated in the second edition in 2017, with matches taking place in a round-robin basis and the top two sides progressing to the final. Nepal beat Bangladesh 2-0 in the title bout in Thimphu, thereby retaining their title.

The inclusion of Pakistan, who skipped the first two editions, this time enabled the teams to be split into two groups.

In another move, South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) disclosed the fixtures of SAFF U-15 Women's Championship where only four teams -- champions India, runners-up Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan -- are taking part. The round-robin league matches will take place at Changlimithang Stadium in Bhutan from October 9 to 15. Bangladesh will play against Bhutan on October 11 before taking on Nepal and India on October 11 and 13 respectively. The top two teams will play the final.

Coutinho set for Barca stay

AFP, Miami

Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde claimed on Wednesday that Philippe Coutinho is set to stay at Camp Nou despite strong interest in the unsettled Brazilian from the Premier League.

The latest status update came after Croatian Ivan Rakitic score a 79th-minute winner to see off Napoli 2-1 at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami.

Former Liverpool forward Coutinho has distanced himself from a move to Tottenham -- he was also linked with Arsenal -- and with the transfer window in England closing Thursday, the chances of the 27-year-old returning to England appear slim.

Former Barca forward Neymar, currently at Paris St. Germain, has also been touted to make a sensational return to the La Liga champions, although it has now been suggested that arch rivals Real Madrid are also weighing up a move.

"The plan is to count on Coutinho," Valverde stressed. "The transfer windows are open but we expect him to stay of course."

"And as for Neymar, the last time I came to this stadium I had to answer a load of questions about him. Two years later and it's the same again. It's like it's following me. I don't know what is going to happen."

Cancelo in, Danilo out

AFP, London



Manchester City signed Portuguese international right-back Joao Cancelo from Juventus on Wednesday with Brazilian full-back Danilo heading in the other direction to join the Italian champions.

City will pay a net fee of 28 million euros (\$31 million) with Cancelo's move valued at 65 million euros and Danilo costing 37 million euros.

"City are a fantastic club, with a brilliant manager and I am delighted to be here," said Cancelo, who signed a six-year contract.

"Everything about them has impressed me, from the facilities, to their style of play.

"I am always looking to develop my game and win trophies and I believe I can do that here, so now I'm really looking forward to the new season and testing myself in the Premier League."

Cancelo won one Serie A title with Juventus after a 40 million euro move from Valencia last year.

"Joao is a fine player and an excellent attacking full-back who will provide us with a real threat on the right-hand side," said City director of football Txiki Begiristain.

"He fits the profile of player we want here at Manchester City. His best years are ahead of him, he's technically proficient and has the physical attributes we desire."

Danilo was part of the City squad that has won five domestic trophies in the past two seasons, but has played second fiddle to Kyle Walker at right-back.

"It's been a pleasure to be part of the success City have enjoyed in my time here," said Danilo, who has signed a five-year contract with Juventus.

"The club have been fantastic with me from day one and I will always be grateful."

"The Premier League title wins will stay with me forever and I will always have City in my heart."



Manchester City's latest signing, Portuguese defender Joao Cancelo, poses with the club jersey during his unveiling at the City Football Academy in Manchester yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Lukaku joining Inter Milan

AFP, Rome



Manchester United's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku arrived in Milan early Thursday to undergo medical tests ahead of his likely transfer to Inter, Italian media reported.

"Lukaku is ours" chanted Inter Milan ecstatic fans who turned out at the airport to welcome him on his arrival during the night.

The 26-year-old has not played a single minute of United's pre-season campaign as talk of a transfer to the Serie A intensified, with Inter Milan the hot favourites.

Italian newspapers have said the fee could be 65 million euros (\$73 million), plus bonuses of around 10 to 13 million euros.

Sports newspaper Gazzetta Dello Sport said Lukaku travelled to Milan with his agent and friend Federico Pastorello and was to undergo stringent medical tests on Thursday.

Inter coach Antonio Conte said on Sunday he was "very hopeful" of finalising a deal to bring the former Everton star to the San Siro.

"Lukaku is a good player, a striker who I had tried to buy when I was coach at Chelsea" from 2016 to 2018, Conte said.

According to Gazzetta Dello Sport, Manchester United initially refused a deal and frenzied contacts between the two sides have taken place in recent days.

The player was in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday training with his boyhood club Anderlecht. Local papers showed pictures of him in the Belgian club's colours.

Inter have been in the market for a centre forward since the start of the transfer window.

But the club has been competing for his services with fellow Serie A side Juventus, who Italian media said had offered Manchester United an exchange with Paulo Dybala.