

JOSE BREAKS DOWN

Footage has emerged of Jose Mourinho close to tears after admitting his time away from football has made him realise how much he loves the game. The unemployed manager has returned to his hometown of Setubal, but revealed he has a void in his life without football. "The first moment I went into professional football I felt a click," he said to Gazzetta dello Sport. "Since then it's been serious stuff. It's been serious stuff until now. Non stop. Now that it's stopped, instead of enjoying it, I can't really enjoy it, I miss it," Jose said, wiping away the tears that had swelled in his eyes. "Right now, I'm studying German I speak English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian. I don't exclude anything."

—AGENCIES



Bangladesh under-15 football team's coach Robert Martin Ryles (L) and midfielder Rakibul Islam speak at a press conference at the BFF house yesterday. The team will fly to West Bengal today with the aim of defending the title of SAFF U-15 Championship, which gets underway on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

U-15s determined to defend title

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh U-15 football team are all set to depart for India today to take part in the SAFF U-15 Championship, where they will look to defend the title they earned by beating Pakistan in last edition's final in Nepal.

The boys in red and green will begin their campaign with a match against Bhutan on August 23 after the five-nation championship kicks off on August 21 at the Kalyani Stadium in Nadia district of West Bengal.

Bangladesh underwent four months of preparation for the championship. Initially, 34 players trained under local

coaches at the BFF-Fortis Football Academy in Beraid, Badda before British coach Robert Martin Ryles took over midway through June.

This is the first time that the boys in red and green will play under the supervision of a foreign coach, however, it should be mentioned that local coaches delivered two titles from the regional age-level championship in 2015 and 2017 respectively.

"It was a positive experience in Fortis with excellent facility and environments. We focused hard in developing physical, technical and other aspects of the players who gave everything we asked for in the training. The boys showed resilience and improved their game day by day," Ryles told reporters at the press

conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation house yesterday.

Ryles also informed that they played a number of practice matches against youth sides of the premier league clubs and the older groups of academy players to sharpen their skills.

"Our target is to defend the title which our senior brothers earned last year," said midfielder Rakibul Islam.

The tournament initially began as the SAFF U-16 Championship before it was turned into the SAFF U-15 Championship last year to be a part of the teams' preparation for the AFC U-16 Championship in line with AFC prescription. Pakistan was first to win the inaugural title before Bangladesh (2015 and 2018) and India (2013 and 2017) shared the other four titles.

Sabina becomes youth ambassador

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh women's football team captain Sabina Khatun has been made the youth ambassador of the Suchana Programme organised by Save The Children, who look to inspire the deprived adolescents in Sylhet and Moulvibazar.

"We have been working with the people battling with malnutrition in Sylhet and Moulvibazar, where there is over one lakh adolescents. We want to present Sabina Khatun to those minors as a role model to show them how far a woman like Sabina can go and how any woman can be successful in their own right just like Sabina. We are initially signing her on a one year and expect to extend the contract till the end of this Suchana programme in 2022," said the head of the Suchana Programme, Dr. Sheikh Shahed Rahman, at a press conference at the Bangladesh

Football Federation house yesterday.

"We will present Sabina in different programmes in Sylhet and Moulvibazar, where she will share her experience, thoughts, the challenges she faced to come to this far and her contributions to the nation. We believe her presence will inspire those deprived adolescents," said senior officer Sheikh Ali Haider Azam.

"I want to thank Save the Children for giving me such an opportunity. I believe I will learn something new and work attentively with those adolescents. I also think becoming youth ambassador will also inspire other footballers to take my position in the future," said Sabina, who will also get some financial benefits from the Suchana Programme.

BFF women's committee chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiran, BFF general secretary Abun Nayeem Shohag and Suchana Programme project director Arif Hossain were, among others, present on the occasion.



Striker Sabina Khatun became a youth ambassador for Suchana Programme of Save The Children yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ashley Cole calls time

AFP, London

Former England, Arsenal and Chelsea left-back Ashley Cole announced his retirement at 38 on Sunday and plans to forge a career on coaching.

Cole won 13 major trophies, including three Premier League titles, and, with 107 caps, is one of just nine men to have made more than 100 appearances for England.

After leaving Chelsea in 2014, he had short spells with Roma, LA Galaxy and Derby County, under the management of former teammate Frank Lampard last season.

However, his contract with the Rams ran out at the end of last season.

"After hard thinking it was time to hang up my boots and look forward to my next chapter," Cole told Sky Sports.

Cole was part of the Arsenal "Invincibles" side that won the Premier League without losing a game in 2003/04.

He left the Gunners for a move to West London in an acrimonious circumstances after Arsenal failed to match his wage demands in 2006.

Cole went onto win another Premier League title, the Champions League and the Europa League in an eight-year spell at Chelsea.

Ramsey's 'proud debut' for Juventus

AFP, Milan

Aaron Ramsey made his debut for Italian champions Juventus on Saturday in their final pre-season friendly, a 1-0 win over Serie C side Triestina.

The Welsh midfielder and former Arsenal star, who signed a four-year deal in February worth a reported seven million euros a season, came on in the 70th minute in Trieste.

"This was a very proud moment for me to put on this famous jersey," said Ramsey. "I am happy that I got a few minutes out there. I have been working hard to get back fit and hopefully now I can stay fit."

Ramsey won three FA Cups in his 11 years at Arsenal.

"I am really excited to be a part of it and experience the Italian league," he continued. "We start now on Saturday, so I am looking forward to that."

Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo did not make the trip to north-eastern Italy because of muscular problems, while coach Maurizio Sarri was also absent because of flu.

But a stunning Paulo Dybala goal after 38 minutes sealed a win.

Abahani feel the blues as Eissa ruled out

SPORTS Reporter



Six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani were dealt a huge blow ahead of their AFC Cup inter-zone semifinal play-off match against April 25 as their new recruit, Alaaeldin Nasr Elmagraby Eissa, is yet to complete a he suspension awarded to him by the AFC during the last edition of the AFC Cup.

Eissa, who then played for TC Sports Club of Maldives, was given the marching order against Bengaluru FC in their last group stage match on February 20, 2018. Therefore, the Egyptian defender is not eligible for the first-leg match against the visiting North Korean side to be held on August 21.

Interestingly, Eissa did not inform his new outfit about the suspension before signing the deal. Abahani came to know about the matter through correspondence with the AFC on Saturday.

"We came to know about it yesterday [Saturday] when the AFC let us know about the ineligibility of Eissa in our home match against April 25 following his two bookings in the last match of last edition's AFC Cup. It is really a bad news for us and we have to find an available option." Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu told reporters yesterday.

Abahani have struggled with their backline throughout the season in the absence of defender Tapu Barman. Masih Saighani tapered the cracks but the 32-year-old afghan ended up joining Chennaiyin FC, which left a big void in Abahani's defence until the Sky Blues flew in Eissa.

"[It is a] bad feeling. I want to play this match. I got to know this yesterday [Saturday]. This was two years ago and I forgot," said Eissa.

Now, Abahani will likely face April 25 with



April 25 players were in regimental mood during their first training session at the Abahani club ground yesterday ahead of Wednesday's AFC Cup fixture against Abahani.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

an all local backline if South Korean midfielder Lee Tae Min is played in defence for the match. This would prove a tough task for the Sky Blues indeed as the North Korean side have scored 17 goals so far in the group-stage fixtures.

"It makes us tough as we expect Ala (Eissa) to play. Badshah [Tutul Hossain] had a light accident but he will recover. It's tough to have a solution. Mamun Mia may have a chance and even Lee Tae-Min, a defensive midfielder, can play as centre-back. We can use two of these three," admitted Abahani coach Mario Lemos.

Meanwhile, April 25 held their first training session yesterday with their sights set on making it to the inter-zone final for the second time in a row.

Players of April 25 were unwilling to speak to reporters, however, team interpreter Jing Myong provided some insight on the team which features eight national players, of which only four travelled with the team as the rest are undergoing training with the national team for the for 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Joint Qualifiers. Forward Kim Yu-Song has been in rich form, with six goals in six group stage matches, but he will likely miss the first-leg against Abahani due to an ankle injury.

Jing also believes that the Bangladeshi climate will not have any impact on their performance as the weather is actually better than what they expected.

Monaco nightmare continues

REUTERS, undated



Monaco's nightmare start to the Ligue 1 season continued with a 3-0 defeat at newly-promoted Metz on Saturday, leaving them at the bottom of the table and yet to score a goal.

Title contenders Lille, meanwhile, suffered a shock 1-0 loss away to Amiens and Andre Villas-Boas's Marseille were held to a goalless stalemate by Nantes.

Leonardo Jardim's Monaco avoided relegation by just three points last season and have begun the new campaign in terrible form.

They lost their opening game against Lyon, also by 3-0, last Saturday and had Cesc Fabregas sent off. The Metz encounter at the Stade Saint-Symphorien proved an action replay as Ruben Aguilar saw red for a rash first-half tackle after Habib Diallo had opened the scoring for the hosts from the penalty spot.

Diallo notched his second after the break before Renaud Cohade's low strike secured a memorable victory for last season's Ligue 2 champions.

Lille, runners-up in 2018/19, were also made to pay for ill-discipline at Amiens as Boubakary Soumare was shown a straight red card after 40 minutes, which the hosts punished through Sehrou Guirassy's winner midway through the second half.

In the early kick-off, Marseille striker Dario Benedetto missed a first-half penalty in a 0-0 draw with Nantes, prolonging Villas-Boas's wait for his first win as manager.

Patrick Vieira's Nice joined Lyon at the top of the table on maximum points after a 2-1 victory away to Nimes, while former Arsenal captain Laurent Koscielny made his Bordeaux debut in a 1-1 home draw with Montpellier and Jean-Victor Makengo's goal gave Toulouse a 1-0 win over Dijon.

Reigning champions Paris St Germain are in action away to Rennes on Sunday after Saint-Etienne host Brest and Reims take on Strasbourg.

Guardiola fumes after VAR denies City

AFP, Manchester

Pep Guardiola called for VAR to be "fixed" after Manchester City were denied a winner in their dramatic 2-2 draw against Tottenham on Saturday.

Guardiola's side failed to win for the first time in 16 Premier League games dating back to last season as a result of the latest VAR row.

The champions thought they had stolen the points when Gabriel Jesus fired home in stoppage-time, only for the goal to be disallowed for handball after a replay review showed Aymeric Laporte had flicked the ball on with his arm.

It was the second time City have been frustrated by VAR against Tottenham following last season's Champions League quarterfinal.

"I thought we left that situation in Tottenham in the Champions League last season. But it is the



(L) Pep Guardiola was involved in a heated exchange with Sergio Aguero following the striker's substitution before (R) the Manchester City manager argued with his opposite number, Mauricio Pochettino, after a VAR decision denied a late winner from Gabriel Jesus.

PHOTO: REUTERS

same. The referee and VAR disallow it. It's the second time it's happened. It's honestly tough but it's the way it is," Guardiola said.

"It happened last week with Wolves (against Leicester) and we saw for Chelsea on Wednesday -- the keeper wasn't on his line --

Adrian in the penalty shoot-out. They have to fix it. The whistle inside matches now isn't quite clear. But they believe it's hands with Llorente in the Champions League and sometimes they don't."

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino shared a touchline

conversation with Guardiola immediately after the goal was disallowed and after the match joked he was "in love with VAR."

"I didn't agree when we started to talk about VAR, but sometimes you get the benefit like today and in the Champions League (last season)."

Djokovic heaps praise on Medvedev

REUTERS, undated



Novak Djokovic acknowledged he had rarely faced the sort of barrage a resilient Daniil Medvedev used so effectively to shock the world number one 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the Cincinnati Masters semifinals on Saturday.

After losing the first set, Medvedev changed his approach midway through the second set, the Russian going for broke with pretty much every shot, particularly on second serve.

The complexion of the match changed in a heartbeat as Medvedev overpowered the previously dominant Djokovic.

"I did not experience this too many times in my career that someone goes so big on second serves and just serves two first serves basically for an extended period of time,"

the vanquished Serbian told reporters.

"When someone serves a 128 miles-per-hour second serve and doesn't make too many doubles faults and goes for every shot, you just have to put your hat down and congratulate him."

Medvedev explained why he had switched tactics.

"I was so tired in the first set and playing Novak, I thought I'm not going to be able to keep the intensity," the world number eight said in a courtside interview with ESPN.

"Then there was one momentum change in the second and I just started playing unbelievable."

Medvedev added that it was par for the course to go for broke on his second serve when trailing in a match.

"Novak was destroying me on the second serve so at one moment, at three-all, love-30, I'm like 'okay, what's the matter.'"