

CARROLL HAD TO GOOGLE SUAREZ!

Carroll has admitted his football IQ was so low he had to use Google to find out who Luis Suarez was when he joined Liverpool in 2011. Carroll moved to Merseyside for a record fee for a British player of £35 million and teamed up with the Uruguayan superstar in attack. The 30-year-old former England international striker excused his ignorance by saying he meant no disrespect to Liverpool or Suarez. He said he was just much more interested in going out with his friends than following football off the pitch when he was making his name at his first club Newcastle.

--AFP



MU ‘disgusted’ by Pogba racist abuse

AFP, London



Manchester United said they “utterly condemn” the racist abuse their World Cup-winning midfielder Paul Pogba received after he missed a penalty in the 1-1 draw with Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday.

The 26-year-old Frenchman has missed four penalties since the start of last season -- the most by a Premier League player -- while teammate and fellow penalty-taker Marcus Rashford has converted all four of his attempts in that time.

Pogba was assailed on social media, becoming the third player in England to have received racist abuse in the past week due to missing a penalty.

United said they were “disgusted” by the abuse and “utterly condemn” it.

“The individuals who expressed these views do not represent the values of our great club and it is encouraging to see the vast majority of our fans condemn this on social media also,” the club said in a statement.

“Manchester United has zero tolerance of any form of racism or discrimination and a long-standing commitment to campaigning against it through our #AllRedAllEqual initiative.

“We will work to identify the few involved in these incidents and take the strongest course of action available to us. We also encourage social media companies to take action in these cases.”

Rashford tweeted his support for Pogba. “Manchester United is a family. @paulpogba is a huge part of that family. You attack him you attack us all...” the England international said.

Chelsea’s Tammy Abraham and Championship side Reading’s Yakou Meite have suffered similar abuse in the past week.

Abraham missed the crucial penalty in the shootout loss to Liverpool in the Super Cup last Wednesday. The posts aimed at him were described as “abhorrent” by Chelsea and manager Frank Lampard said he was “disgusted”.

Lampard also called for social media sites to do more to prevent players being abused while Abraham has said he wants to “silence the haters” with his performances on the pitch.

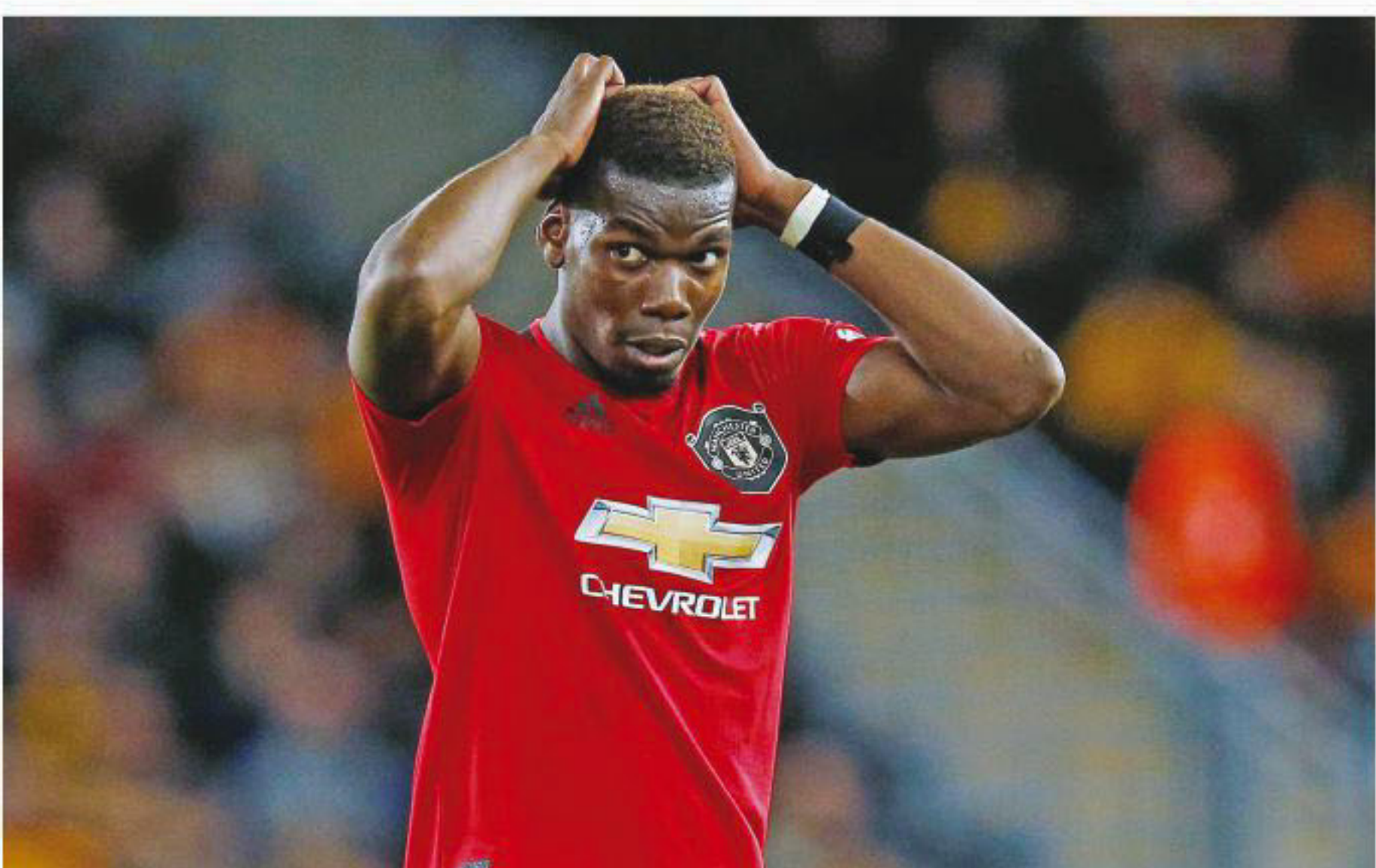
Chelsea banned a supporter for life in July for racially abusing Manchester City’s Raheem Sterling.

Five others were excluded for periods of between one and two years for abusive language.

Ivory Coast international Meite missed a penalty in time added on for Reading on Sunday against Cardiff but his side had the match already wrapped up at 3-0.

Some of the tweets aimed at Pogba were later deleted while several accounts appeared to have been taken down.

Twitter’s terms and conditions say it “takes action against behaviour that targets individuals with hateful conduct”.



Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba reacts after his penalty is saved by Wolverhampton Wanderers goalkeeper Rui Patricio during their 1-1 draw in the Premier League at the Molineux Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Volleyball team lose again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh’s bid to regain the title of the Asian Senior Men’s Central Zone Volleyball Championship suffered a massive blow when they lost their second group match -- two in a row -- in 3-2 sets against Afghanistan at the Nepal Army Physical Training and Sports Centre yesterday.

Last edition’s runners-up Bangladesh, who suffered a 3-0 sets defeat to Uzbekistan in their opening match, started the match on the wrong foot by losing the first set by 21-25 points before bouncing back to win the next two sets by 25-19 and 25-18 points.

The 2016 champions, however, lost the next two sets by 25-23 and 15-12 points to see their hopes of semifinal berth all but disappear.

Bangladesh will have to beat defending champions Turkmenistan in their third and final group match today to have any chance of making it to the last four.

Dembele out for 5 weeks

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona’s France forward Ousmane Dembele will be sidelined for about five weeks with a hamstring injury suffered in their defeat at Athletic Bilbao in the La Liga opener, the Spanish champions said on Monday.

“A medical examination on Ousmane Dembele has diagnosed a strain of his left hamstring and the Frenchman is set to be out for approximately five weeks as a result, the club said on their website.

Dembele’s injury layoff is another blow for Barca coach Ernesto Valverde after forward Luis Suarez limped off in the first half of the 1-0 loss away to Bilbao on Friday.



Abahani coach Mario Lemos (R) and captain Shahidul Alam (2nd from R) exchange greetings with their opposite numbers during a pre-match press conference at the BFF house yesterday on the eve of their AFC Cup match against April 25.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani cautious of April 25

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite the absence of a couple of key players, Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani are looking forward to pulling an upset in the AFC Cup when they take on visitors April 25 SC of North Korea in the first leg playoff of inter-zone semifinal today.

The match will get underway at 6:45pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani have already made a piece of history by entering the knockout stage of the second-tier club competition in Asia for the first time and the Sky Blues are now dreaming of moving into the inter-zone final. However, they must get the better of April 25 SC, who will play the inter-zone semifinal playoffs for the third successive time.

Ahead of the match, Abahani received two big blows, with Egyptian defender Alaaeldin Nasr Elsayed Eissa ruled out due to suspension and midfielder Mamunul Islam ruled out due to injury. But the club’s coach Mario Lemos wants to bank on the available players, who are apparently ready to take the challenge on the back of three weeks’ preparation.

“We played a few group-stage

matches without a few key players. Without Sunday Chizoba, we won against Minerva Punjab in the last match. We also beat Chennaiyin FC without Wellington Priori. And we topped the group to come to this stage. There will be suspensions and injuries in football and some other players will get a chance in tomorrow’s big match as we expect all the players to be equal. And I have told my players that missing someone is not an excuse,” Lemos said at the pre-match conference at the BFF house yesterday.

“The North Korean side is a good one, but we are not afraid of them. However, we can’t play the same way we played in the other matches. The players will defend differently and they are motivated,” Lemos said. “I do believe we can beat April 25 but we must play our best and must be perfect. We can’t allow the opposition to play. April 25 did not concede too many goals in the group stage and they played with two forwards with the attacks being made through both flanks. We will have to stop their forwards and stop them from sending crosses.”

The North Korean side scored 17 goals while conceding only two goals in six group matches. Exposing

their defence will be a tough task for Abahani, who are expected to face a tough challenge from the opposition forwards as well. However, Lemos has his idea of stopping April 25.

“I think the key is defending well, which has been on our mind in the AFC Cup. It is a test for our defenders but we’ve got to be aggressive because there is no option. You’ve got to run more, fight more and jump more. We need to be very aggressive while defending. Attacking wise, if we can defend well and not concede any goals, I really believe we can also score because forwards like [Kervens] Belfort, Sunday, Jewel Rana, [Nabib Newaj] Jibon and Rubel Mia have quality,” said Lemos.

Lemos’s counterpart O Yun Son, however, does not have much idea about Bangladesh football, but he wants to leave Bangladesh with a good result by concentrating on their own game.

“It is a match in the knockout stage and is very important for both sides. I don’t have any idea about Bangladesh football even though I have watched highlights of Abahani’s matches. We want to focus on our strategy and game plan to win the match,” Son said, adding that his squad features four national team players.

Messi, Ibra nominated for Puskas award

AFP, Lausanne

Lionel Messi and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are the star names on the 10-player short-list announced on Monday by FIFA for its Puskas award for goal of the year.

They are joined by three women and five men, with goals scored between July 16, 2018 and July 19, 2019.

There are nominees from the Bundesliga, Spanish Liga and women’s World Cup and one, a jaw-dropping shot by Billie Simpson of Cliftonville Ladies, from a Northern Ireland women’s league game played on what appears to be a public pitch in front of no spectators.

Messi, who has yet to win the award, earned a seventh nomination with a delicate chip for Barcelona against Betis in Seville. Ibrahimovic netted with a balletic volley for LA Galaxy in Toronto in Major League Soccer.

The award, which was established in 2009, is named after the legendary Hungary, Spain and Real Madrid striker Ferenc Puskas.

Fans can vote until September 1 on the 10 candidates nominated by FIFA. The governing body of world football will then choose between the top three vote getters.

The winner will be announced at the FIFA Football Awards in Milan on September 23.



WTC the right move: Kohli

ICC



Test matches in recent years have got more competitive, and the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) will only make it more so, Virat Kohli, the Indian captain, has said.

Kohli’s love for the red-ball format is no secret, and he is now excited by what the Test Championship has to offer.

“The games are going to be much more competitive and it brings a lot of purpose to the Test matches you play. It’s the right move and the absolute right time,” he said on Monday, at a discussion during the CWI/WIPA awards night, at which the Indian team were guests.

“People have been talking about Test cricket not being relevant or dying down. For me, the competition has gone up two-fold the last couple of years,” he went on. “It’s up to the players to take the challenge and go for victories.

“That’s going to be the essence of this Test Championship as well. There will hardly be any boring draws, there will be exciting draws, because everyone will want those extra points.”

England and Australia in the Ashes,

and Sri Lanka and New Zealand, have begun their Championship campaigns. Both series have seen bowlers play crucial roles, with the teams not able to pile on big totals. Kohli, whose team are preparing to take on West Indies, whose bowlers too have come into their own in home conditions, agreed that there has been a revival of sorts in bowling, and it was now up to the batsmen to match up to it.

“I don’t think us batsmen have lived up to the standard,” he said, stressing on the importance of the batting coming together as a team, rather than individuals doing well. “Batsmanship will always be hard at Test level, but even harder now with the Championship where every decision you make counts in the larger scheme of things.”

India and West Indies begin their campaigns in the competition on Thursday. Kohli, whose side are also hoping to hold on to their No.1 spot on the MRF Tyres ICC Test Team Rankings, wants consistency from his men.

“It’s about continuing the same work we’ve done and making sure we’re consistent enough like we have been over the past couple of seasons.”

Sakib Molla outshines Tamimul, Rubel

SPORTS REPORTER

Unheralded archer Sakib Molla outshone his senior and experienced teammates Tamimul Islam and Hakim Ahmed Rubel to finish 24th in individual recurve junior men’s event at the Madrid 2019 World Archery Youth Championships in Spain yesterday.

Sakib scored 638 out of 720 points in the qualification round to finish 24th among 111 participants while Tamimul and Rubel finished 35th and 44th after scoring 632 and 628 points respectively.

Tamimul and Rubel, who are also members of the senior recurve team, had scored 659 and 662 points respectively in qualification round of Hyundai World Archery Championships in Netherlands in June, but they failed to improve their performance in the youth competition.

The trio will play the elimination round today.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh became ninth in recurve men’s team event despite scoring identical 1898 points as India, who finished eighth by virtue of better 10-scoring. Bangladesh team will play the first round of elimination against 24th-ranked Australia.

In individual recurve junior women’s event, Mehnaz Akter Monira scored 583 points to finish 52nd among 73 archers and she will face 61st-ranked Belgian Charlotte Destrooper in the first round of elimination.

Indian hockey lesson for women’s team

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh under-21 women’s hockey team began their preparation for the upcoming Junior Women’s AHF Cup with a 6-0 defeat against an Indian academy side in the first of their six-match series at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The defeat was expected for the home side, who took up the sticks only last year and had no prior experience of playing international matches except for a three-match exhibition series against Kolkata Warriors in November last year.

Although the Bangladesh girls need were far from convincing in their skill, running, hitting and position sense, they kept their opponents from Sports Authority of India (SAI) academy at bay in the first quarter. They also denied

the Indian side from scoring at least 10 penalty corners.

The Indian team broke the deadlock in the 18th minute from a penalty stroke before the lead was doubled two minutes later. The visitors went into the break with a 3-0 lead.

In the third quarter, India scored two more goals and added the last one in the fourth and final quarter.

“The girls never played such competitive international match under such pressure even though they played three matches against a Kolkata side, which was comparatively weaker than them. If the girls can get rid of pressure in the remaining matches, they can hopefully do well in Junior Women’s AHF Cup in Singapore next month,” coach Hedayetul Islam Razib said after the match.

The second match will be played tomorrow.



Bangladesh Under-21 women hockey players vie against an Indian academy side in the first match of a six-match series at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED