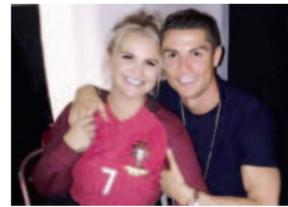


RONALDO'S SISTER HITS BACK

Cristiano Ronaldo's sister Katia Aveiro hit back at Virgil van Dijk on Instagram after the defender joked that the Juventus forward wasn't a "rival" for this year's Ballon d'Or. Barcelona star Lionel Messi claimed the coveted individual award for a sixth time in Paris on Monday, with Liverpool centre-back Van Dijk finishing second in the final voting. When asked if Ronaldo's failure to show up meant that he had one less rival to compete with for the accolade, Van Dijk responded: "Was he a rival then?" Ronaldo's sister Aveiro took to Instagram to vent her fury over Van Dijk's comments, expressing her belief that the Liverpool talisman is not in the same league as her brother. "Now, dear Virgil, where you are going, Cristiano Ronaldo has gone and has come [back] a thousand times," she began. "You see, my dear Virgil, that Cristiano Ronaldo was a three-times champion in the country where you have been playing for years and you still haven't got your hands on the trophy."

—AGENCIES



(Clockwise from L) At the age of 32, Lionel Messi grabbed a record sixth Ballon d'Or award in Paris on Monday. For Messi it was the first Ballon d'Or since 2015 which moved the Barcelona superstar to one ahead of rival Cristiano Ronaldo. Matthijs de Ligt, a key player in Ajax Amsterdam's thrilling run to the Champions League semi-finals and now at Juventus, won the Kopa trophy for the best Under-21 male player while Liverpool's Alisson Becker scooped the new Yashin trophy for best goalkeeper.

PHOTO: AFP



Messi grabs record sixth

REUTERS, Paris



Lionel Messi claimed a record sixth Ballon d'Or award on Monday, beating Liverpool's leading nominees and Cristiano Ronaldo to lift soccer's most prestigious individual trophy.

The Argentine, who won the Liga title with Barcelona but only managed third place in the Copa America with his country, added to his 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2015 trophies.

He finished above Dutchman Virgil van Dijk and Portugal's third-placed Ronaldo, who has won the award five times.

"I am very lucky, I am blessed. I hope I will continue for a long time," Messi told reporters. "I realize that I'm lucky even if one day it will be time to retire," added the 32-year-old.

"It will be tough but I still have some years ahead of me. Time flies so I will enjoy football and my family."

Senegal's Sadio Mane, who along with runner-up Van Dijk and fellow Liverpool nominees Alisson Becker of Brazil and Egypt's Mohamed Salah, helped the Merseyside club win the Champions League, came fourth in the poll of international journalists.

"It was amazing," said Van Dijk. "There are a couple of players like him (Messi) who are fantastic. I'm proud of what I've achieved with Liverpool and Holland. It's going to be tough (to win the award) when these guys are around."

Messi, whose stellar career was rewarded with another trophy, and Ronaldo, had between them won 10 consecutive Ballon d'Or awards until Croatia's Luka Modric prevailed in 2018.

Megan Rapinoe earlier won the women's Ballon d'Or after leading the United States to a record-extending fourth World Cup title in France this year as they retained the trophy.

The 34-year-old midfielder, the standout player at the June-July tournament, succeeded Norway's Ada Hegerberg who did not take part in the World Cup.

Rapinoe was not present at the ceremony in the Theatre du Chatelet, where the show 'An American In Paris' is on.

"I'm so sad I can't make it tonight. It's absolutely incredible congrats to the other nominees. I can't believe I'm the one winning in this field, it's been an incredible year," Rapinoe said in a recorded message.

"I want to thank my team mates and the U.S. federation."

Dutchman Matthijs de Ligt, a key player in Ajax Amsterdam's thrilling run to the Champions League semi-finals and now at Juventus, won the Kopa trophy for the best Under-21 male player.

Alisson, one of the four Liverpool players in the top seven for the men's Ballon d'Or, was awarded the new Yashin trophy for the best male goalkeeper of the year.

Police investigate racist abuse of Archer

AFP, Hamilton

New Zealand police were on Tuesday asked to investigate racial abuse directed at England cricketer Jofra Archer during last week's first Test, following information supplied by New Zealand Cricket officials.

NZC chief executive David White said they lodged a complaint with police after studying CCTV footage, listening to audio, interviewing spectators and obtaining material on social media.

Archer complained of being racially abused during the first Test against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui last week.

In a message on social media he said it was "disturbing hearing racial insults today whilst battling to help save my team, the crowd was being amazing this week except for that one guy."

White said the information gathered by NZC did not conclusively identify the person responsible but there was enough evidence to bring the police into the investigation.

"What happened to Jofra was reprehensible and has led to a general upscaling of security around the area of racial abuse at all our international venues," he said.

"Should the person responsible ever reoffend, we believe we have enough information to link him to the Bay Oval incident."

White said if the offender was conclusively identified NZC would seek to ban the person from all of its international venues for a lengthy period.

Nubairshah clinches SAARC chess title

Benazir urges sponsors to help chess

SPORTS REPORTER



India's IM M o h a m m a d Nubairshah Shaikh emerged as the champion in the open section of the inaugural SAARC Chess Championships after securing 7.5 points at the close of the ninth and final round in Dhaka yesterday.

Shaikh's compatriot IM Prantik Roy finished second with seven points while GM Ziaur Rahman and

CM Subrota Biswas became third and fourth with seven points each. Positions were decided through tiebreakers. GM Enamul Hossain Razib finished fifth with 6.5 points.

In women's section, WIM Sultana Sharmin Shirin clinched the title with 7.5 points while Sri Lanka's Dahampriya HKT Dewnethmie finished second with seven points. WIM Rani Hamid, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva and WCM Sharmin Samiha Shimmi finished third, fourth and fifth respectively after all

of three secured six points each.

Bangladesh's second GM, Ziaur Rahman, believes the introduction of SAARC Chess Championships will help promising players, who played well in the inaugural meet, but added that such tournaments should be held each year. He also asked for at least 20 title-holders to be present.

However, GM Razib had a different view, saying he believes the event was very competitive despite there being less title-holders.

In the afternoon, Bangladesh Chess Federation and SAARC Chess Council president and RAB DG Benazir Ahmed urged sponsors to come forward and take chess further.

"Cricket is now a successful discipline. Football is also a popular sport. Now we want to make chess more popular," Ahmed told reporters at a press conference at the RAB headquarter, adding that they could produce a GM within the next two years if there were sponsors.

Lampard awaits appeal results

AFP, London



Frank Lampard expects to find out "very soon" whether Chelsea will be free to make any January signings, with the club waiting to learn the outcome of their FIFA transfer ban appeal.

Chelsea's appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) was heard last month, with the Blues contesting FIFA's two-window ban relating to the recruitment of minors.

When asked when he expects to discover the result of that appeal, Lampard replied: "Very soon I believe. Days, I think. I haven't heard any more, so I would wait and reserve judgement (on Chelsea's plans for January) until we get the judgement and see where we want to go from there."

Fourth-placed Chelsea will give Tammy Abraham "every possible chance" to face Aston Villa on Wednesday as the England striker recovers from a hip injury.

Lampard admitted the 22-year-old, who has scored 10 Premier League goals this season, is still battling pain from the problem he picked up in the 2-2 Champions League draw at Valencia.

"We're giving him every possible chance to be fit," said the Chelsea boss, whose side have lost their past two league matches after a fine run.

"He's still got some pain in the area of the injury. (We will) make a judgement tomorrow. It's painful for him, so it's a pain threshold and whether it affects his movements. So I wouldn't want to commit today."

Olivier Giroud, who led the line in last weekend's 1-0 defeat at West Ham, and Belgium's Michy Batshuayi are continuing to press their claims up front, while US forward Christian Pulisic could operate as a false nine in Abraham's absence.



BCB President Nazmul Hassan handed over sports grade wheelchairs to members of the Bangladesh Wheelchair Cricket Team in Mirpur yesterday. The BCB made the endowment in response to a request from the Centre for Research and Information (CRI) for providing specially modified wheelchairs to the Bangladesh Wheelchair Cricketers Association.

PHOTO: BCB

Grandhomme, Boult doubtful

AFP, Hamilton



Injured New Zealand cricketers Trent Boult and Colin de Grandhomme, who sat out the drawn second Test against England, remained in doubt

yesterday for the upcoming series in Australia.

Coach Gary Stead said they were recovering but were yet to prove they were back to full fitness.

Boult and all-rounder de Grandhomme both suffered muscle injuries during the first Test against England.

Stead said they have until Friday to prove their fitness with the team departing from Australia the following day.

"I don't know if I'm really confident, but I'm quietly optimistic that they are both tracking where we want them to be," Stead said.

CCDM bans gadgets on matchdays

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) on Monday circulated a letter to clubs from the First and Third Divisions, stating electronic gadgets would not be permitted in the dressing room for anyone apart from the manager.

The decision caught club officials by surprise and they claimed it had never happened before.

"We did not receive these kinds of memos before. It's probably because of the recent controversy regarding the Third Division that they have taken this decision," a club official requesting anonymity said.

The memo, issued on December 2, stated that players, coaches, officials and other staff involved during matchdays, barring the manager, would not be allowed to use mobile phones or electronic gadgets during matchdays.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to pull up their socks after a recent incident in the Third Division was caught on film and went viral on November 18. That put umpiring irregularities back into spotlight in the country's lower tiers and raised questions over the BCB's claims of eradicating corruption.

The video shows a number of players of Dhaka Royal Cricketers abusing and accusing two on-field umpires of making biased decisions to help their opposing team, Kamrangirchor SC, win the match in Fatullah. At one point, the players can be heard chanting: "cheat, cheat."

The coach, captain and a player of Dhaka Royal Cricketers are set to receive punishments for misbehaving with the umpires after they pled guilty in a hearing.

"We have issued this memo because we want to uphold the image of the country's cricket," an official of the CCDM said.

NZ draw Test, win series

AFP, Hamilton



Centuries from Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor ensured New Zealand drew the rain-hit second Test against England in Hamilton yesterday, sealing a 1-0 series win.

The weather turned sour soon after lunch on the fifth day when New Zealand, having taken advantage of some sloppy fielding, were 241 for two in their second innings, 140 ahead with Taylor on 105 and Williamson on 104.

Williamson brought up his 21st Test century with a four off Joe Root in the third over after lunch, while Taylor reached century number 19 with a flourish in Root's next over when he smacked a four and two sixes in consecutive balls.

The rain arrived to wash out England's faint hope of forcing a result.

New Zealand resumed the day at 96 for two with England hunting early



New Zealand's Ross Taylor (R) celebrates after reaching his century with Kane Williamson on the fifth day of the second Test against England in Hamilton yesterday. The match ended in a draw.

PHOTO: AFP

wickets but their plans went off track when Ollie Pope and Joe Denly inexplicably dropped an even easier chance.

The New Zealand skipper was on 39 when wicketkeeper Pope put

down a regulation offering off the gloves and on 62 Denly inexplicably dropped an even easier chance.

Williamson gently chipped a slower delivery from Jofra Archer

straight to Denly at short midwicket and, as the bowler leapt in celebration and Williamson made an apologetic gesture to Taylor, the ball popped out of Denly's hands.

Williamson had another life when he should have been run out on 97 but Sam Curran's shy at the stumps was so far off line that the batsmen picked up an extra run.

The one positive for the England captain was his return to form with a double century and man-of-the-match award after a year of averaging below 30 to give him confidence heading into a four-Test tour of South Africa.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 375 and second innings 241 for 2 (Williamson 104 not out, Taylor 105 not out; Woakes 1-12)

ENGLAND: First innings 476

Result: Match drawn and New Zealand won two-match series 1-0.

Player-of-the-match: Joe Root
Player-of-the-series: Neil Wagner

United 'a closed chapter'

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho says his time at Manchester United is "a closed chapter" and he is only interested in beating them when he takes his in-form Tottenham side to Old Trafford today.

It is the new Tottenham manager's first return to the touchline at United's home ground since his sacking by the club last December.

"This is a closed chapter for me," said Mourinho, who has won all three of his matches in charge of Spurs. "I left the club, I took my time to process everything that happened, I took my time to prepare myself for the next challenge."

"Honestly, United for me is in my book of experiences, it's in my history book."

United are struggling under Mourinho's successor, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, but go into the game just two points behind fifth-placed Spurs.

"It is not for me to analyse United now," Mourinho said at his pre-match press conference. "I analyse them as an

opponent, how they play. How can we beat them? How can they beat us? For me that is the important thing."

Mourinho is excited about the prospect of returning to Old Trafford.

He said: "I feel good, I like to play big matches, I like to play against the best teams and go back to a place where I was happy."

"I have a great relationship with the Manchester United supporters. I went back as a pundit and I was humbled by such a beautiful reception."

"Tomorrow I go back as the coach of the team that will try and beat Manchester United."

"I understand that what they want is the exact opposite of what I want. Of course during the match I expect them to forget me."

Reports say Spurs midfielder Christian Eriksen has refused to sign a new deal with the club, while there has been speculation over the futures of Belgian defenders Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen.

Mourinho said he was speaking with Spurs chairman Daniel Levy about the contract issues but refused to be drawn on the details.