

Fury to retire from boxing

AFP, London

WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury said he is retiring from boxing on his 34th birthday on Friday, having previously performed a number of U-turns over his future in the sport.

“Massive thanks to everyone who had an input in my career over the years & after long hard conversations I’ve finally decided to walk away & on my 34th birthday I say Bon voyage,” Fury posted on Twitter.

The announcement has been greeted with scepticism as Fury has previously stated his intention to retire only to return to the ring.

He was expected to fight the winner of Oleksandr Usyk’s rematch with Anthony Joshua on August 20 for the chance to unify the world heavyweight titles.

As recently as Tuesday, Fury suggested his most recent spell in retirement was over in order to set up a trilogy fight against Derek Chisora and even claimed to have appointed a new trainer in Isaac Lowe.

However, he has now announced the intention to retire undefeated with a record of 32 wins and one draw from 33 bouts.



Following a disappointing tour of Zimbabwe where they lost both T20I and ODI series, the Tigers returned home yesterday. Anamul Haque Bijoy (C) was one of those members who did justice to his inclusion, at least in ODIs, with two fifty-plus scores in three games. He is also in line the Asia Cup T20 squad, which is expected to be named today.

PHOTO: STAR

Benzema leads UEFA awards shortlist



REUTERS

Real Madrid’s Karim Benzema and Thibaut Courtois and Manchester City’s Kevin De Bruyne are in the running for UEFA’s 2021-22 men’s player of the year award after topping a 15-player shortlist, European soccer’s governing body said on Friday.

The winner will be announced with the UEFA men’s coach of the year and women’s player and coach of the year at the 2022-23 Champions League group stage draw in Istanbul on Aug. 25.

Benzema and Courtois helped Real seal a record 14th European title last season while De Bruyne guided City to the Premier League title – his fourth crown in seven seasons at the club.

Among other nominees for the award are Barcelona’s Robert Lewandowski, Real’s Luka Modric and Bayern Munich’s Sadio Mane.

Real’s Carlo Ancelotti, City’s Pep Guardiola and Liverpool’s Jurgen Klopp were among the nominees for the male coach of the year. UEFA will name nominees for the women’s awards next week.

Does Shakib play for BCB or with BCB?

NABID YEASIN

Shakib Al Hasan is undoubtedly the greatest player that Bangladesh has produced. However, known for his wily bowling and tactful batting, the 35-year-old, in a career spanning over 16 years, has rarely kept his wits and fiendish charm reserved only for the field.

When it comes purely to cricket, the star all-rounder has dominated almost every side he has played against over the years. But off the field, apparently Shakib’s favourite opposition to have a go at is the very organisation that signs his paycheck: the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

There is probably no other player in the world who has had even half the run-ins with the brass that Shakib has. If anything, the popular phrase that controversies and Shakib go hand-in-hand now seems to be underselling the antics of the top all-rounder.

One does not need to go too far back in his career timeline or drum up all of his past misgivings to prove Shakib’s penchant for controversy, especially involving the BCB. Even a gander at his transgressions this year will be more than enough to establish the point.

Before his shenanigans involving Betwinner News – a sister concern of betting site Betwinner – was finally put to an end on Thursday after days of drama, Shakib’s actions had forced BCB into a corner multiple times.

This January, Shakib had opted out

citing family reasons for the Tigers’ tour of New Zealand – Bangladesh’s first tour this year – only after embarrassing the BCB, who had initially announced an 18-member squad for the two-Test series including the all-rounder.

He followed it up with a



stunning U-turn on the South Africa tour in March. This time, he did go to the tour and played a significant part in Bangladesh’s historic away ODI series win over the Proteas, but only after initially stating that he was not mentally fit to play any form of cricket.

To make things more disconcerting

for BCB, he talked about his issues to the media instead of the board.

Thinking that BCB always bears the brunt of Shakib’s misdemeanours would be wrong, although it is the case on most occasions. When the 35-year-old snarkily replied that he would be available for the entirety of the multi-format West Indies tour in June-July, the BCB knew all along that he was going to skip the three ODIs.

If observed closely, a rhythmic pattern can be found in Shakib’s actions. More often than not, it goes something like this: Shakib goes over the head of BCB and breaks the news to the media, the BCB denies any knowledge about the issue when confronted by the media, the BCB investigates and finds out what has occurred, a verbal warning is issued – often saying such offences will not fly – and then eventually they let it fly.

However, it is also not that the BCB has never taken a strict stance against the cricketer. The six-month ban issued by the board in 2014 was one such incident. Still, the all-rounder’s recklessness despite the BCB’s steps only indicates an apparent lack of respect for the board.

Following the cricketer’s latest involvement with a site related to betting, the BCB said it would demand answers from Shakib as to why he had signed a sponsorship deal without informing the board about it beforehand. How things will be taken from then on is yet to be seen. And even if BCB opts for a hard stance, how effective will it be in keeping Shakib away from controversies in the future?

‘Don’t change a winning team’

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich’s explosive start to the season with two wins from two games, one trophy and 11 goals scored means coach Julian Nagelsmann will not be making changes when they host VfL Wolfsburg in their first Bundesliga home game on Sunday.

The German champions beat RB Leipzig 5-3 to lift the German Super Cup before crushing Europa League champions Eintracht Frankfurt 6-1 in their league opener last week.

Despite the departure of top striker Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona, Bayern have overrun their opponents, with new signing Sadio Mane having quickly become a fan favourite.

“There are two reasons to change something. Performance-related and managing the strain on players,” Nagelsmann told a news conference on Friday. “Performance-wise what we saw from the starting team in both matches was very, very good. On managing strain we are still in the humane phase of the season with one game over seven days, so you don’t need to change much.”

Eyeing a record-extending 11th straight Bundesliga title, the Bavarians, apart from Mane, have also brought in French forward Mathys Tel, Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt, and Ajax duo Ryan Gravenberch and Noussair Mazraoui.



Desperate Barca sell further stake

REUTERS

Barcelona have sold a 24.5% stake in their audiovisual studio to production company Orpheus Media for 100 million euros (\$102.93 million), the LaLiga club said on Friday, as they look to raise more funds to register new players.

The agreement comes after the club signed a deal with digital fan token firm Socios.com to sell off 25% of their stake in Barca Studios last month.

Barca have been using several mechanisms to increase their revenue in order to offset losses, reduce debt and fulfil LaLiga’s financial fair play rules.

The deals follow the club’s sale last month of a further 15% stake in their LaLiga TV rights to U.S. private equity group Sixth Street, giving Sixth Street a 25% stake.

Barca signed Brazil winger Raphinha from Leeds United and Poland striker Robert Lewandowski from Bayern Munich following a first investment from Sixth Street when it bought 10%.

The club have also signed the likes of Jules Kounde, Franck Kessie and Andreas Christensen among others, with Spanish media reporting that more could follow.

Barca need to meet LaLiga’s salary cap to register their new signings and the new investment deals as well as the potential sale of Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong could get them the green light from the league.

Serie A race begins today

AFP, Milan

AC Milan have their Serie A rivals snapping at their heels ahead of their title defence, with the big boys bolstering their squads over an eventful summer which has left the league with no clear Scudetto favourite.

Stefano Pioli’s side kick off the new season against Udinese at the San Siro on Saturday as teams gear up for a 15-match sprint between now and the World Cup in Qatar.

Inter Milan, Juventus, Roma and Lazio have all made interesting moves, meaning that the race is likely to be as open as last year’s, which went down to the wire.

Milan have lost Franck Kessie to Barcelona but brought in free-agent striker Divock Origi and spent 35 million euros (\$36 million) on promising but unproven forward Charles De Ketelaere.

Inter, meanwhile, started the summer with a bang by bringing back Romelu Lukaku on loan from Chelsea but were beaten to the punch by Roma and Juve respectively for key targets Paulo Dybala and last season’s best

defender, Gleison Bremer.

The loss of Bremer to their biggest rivals was a blow for Inter, the inability to strike a deal with Paris Saint-Germain for the sale of Milan Skriniar holding up the purchase of the Brazilian from Torino and allowing Juve to bring in a



sound replacement for Matthijs de Ligt and Giorgio Chiellini.

It dented the enthusiasm among fans who had thought Simone Inzaghi’s team would strengthen to the point of being hot favourites to retake the title but are newly worried about the financial stability of the club’s Chinese owners Suning.

Juve have also brought in star names Paul Pogba – now out until September with a knee injury – and Angel Di Maria, and are going after Leandro Paredes, Filip Kostic and mercurial attacker Memphis Depay.

However, Sunday’s 4-0 friendly thrashing at the hands of Atletico Madrid was exacerbated by old boy Alvaro Morata’s hat-trick and has caused murmurs about the future of coach Massimiliano Allegri, who needs a big campaign after finishing 16 points behind Milan last time out.

There has been some worry among Milan fans over the low-key nature of their team’s transfer moves, as well as the fact that the club didn’t renew the contracts of directors Paolo Maldini and Frederic Massara – the architects of Milan’s recent revival – until the last minute.

Supporters are waiting for the American investment fund RedBird’s purchase of the club to go through, with the closing of the 1.2 billion-euro (\$1.3 billion) deal with current owners Elliott due to be completed in late August or early September.



PHOTO: TWITTER