

‘Optimistic’ Cisse names Mane in squad

AFP, Dakar

Ballon d’Or runner-up Sadio Mane was named in Senegal’s World Cup squad by coach Aliou Cisse on Friday in spite of a recent injury.

Cisse, who captained Senegal at the 2002 World Cup, said he hoped the condition of the Bayern Munich attacker would improve within a few weeks and declared himself “really optimistic” that the injury would not require an operation.

Mane’s involvement in the tournament was in doubt after he limped off during Bayern’s 6-1 win over Werder Bremen on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old was diagnosed with an injury to his right fibula and will undergo further tests.

“I preferred to keep him in the group,” Cisse told reporters.



“Sadio Mane is an important player in our squad, it is important to continue to follow his injury, hoping that in two or three weeks there will be progress. But we are really optimistic. “We will give ourselves all the necessary means to allow Sadio Mane to recover.”

Mane’s fitness has been a major cause of concern in Senegal, the current African champions, with state president Macky Sall tweeting on Wednesday: “Sadio, heart of a Lion! All my heart is with you!”

Cisse admitted the possible absence of the talisman would be a massive blow for the continent.

“Losing Sadio Mane is not an easy thing for a coach, for the team, even for African football,” he said.

“We don’t want to think about it but inevitably we have to be prepared should Sadio Mane be absent.

“For now, we still have time ahead of us. I don’t want to talk about the absence of Sadio Mane even if, in the back of my head, I’m trying to prepare for it.”

Mane, who has scored 33 goals in 92 international matches, is joined in the squad by Abdou Diallo, Idrissa Gueye, Edouard Mendy and Kalidou Koulibaly.



Nepal players and officials celebrate with the trophy of the SAFF U-15 Women’s Championship following a 1-1 draw against hosts Bangladesh in the last match of the league stage at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. (Bottom) Bangladesh players were left inconsolable following the final whistle.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SAFF U-15 Women’s title slips away from hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh failed to regain the SAFF U-15 Women’s Championship title after Joynob Bibi Rita squandered a last-gasp penalty in a 1-1 draw with Nepal in the final group-stage game at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Motafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Their first draw in four games saw the hosts finish second behind champions Nepal, who secured 10 points from four matches, three more than Bangladesh. Bhutan finished bottom of the three-team competition, with four defeats from as many matches.

Trailing Nepal by three points, Bangladesh knew nothing other than a win would suffice if they wanted to lift the trophy five years after becoming champions in the inaugural edition.

Although they dominated most of the match, Bangladesh lacked composure in the attacking third, appearing to hurriedly control and distribute in what was the first international tournament for this batch, who underwent six-eight months of training after being scouted from the BFF-UNICEF Women’s Competition.



Nepal tightly marked the tournament’s top-scorer and most valuable player, Sauravi Akanda Prity, hardly allowing her space up front, before taking the lead against the run of play. Sushila made no mistake firing home from the top of the box after a feeble clearance from Kanon Rani came her way. Bangladesh created at least three good chances to level the margin but could not convert.

The hosts finally levelled the margin in the 54th minute, with captain Ruma Akter heading a Joynob Bibi corner home. A couple of changes then strengthened the attack and Bangladesh were awarded a penalty after Nepalese defender Bipana Snehi handled a cross from Trishna Rani

in the 89th minute.

But Joynob Bibi fired straight at Nepal goalkeeper Sujata Tamang as Bangladesh’s hopes of regaining the title disintegrated.

Golam Rabbani Choton said inexperience on the international arena was one of the reasons for the result, but believes only training and playing more international matches can help the girls mature and put up stronger performances in the future.

“They are not mature enough to handle such situation because, barring one player, the rest played their first international tournament. There is no lack of merit; they lack experience in international matches. That’s why they looked in a hurry. But if you look back, they have improved in every match and put up better performances,” Choton said at the post-match briefing.

“They have a tendency to play in a hurry. They also made small mistakes in the match. They need more training to make that up,” Choton said. “Prity was marked tightly and she did not know how to overcome that. But I think she can overcome it after more training.”

Munna, Sajida sixth in Daegu

SPORTS REPORTER

Shooters Rabbi Hasan Munna and Sajida Haque finished sixth in their respective finals of 10m Air Rifle events at the 15th Asian Airgun Championship in Daegu, South Korea yesterday.

Munna, who was eliminated from the qualification round with a score of 624.4 during the ISSF World Championship in Cairo last month, put his career-best score of 629 to qualify as the eighth and last shooter in the finals, where he had to be content with a sixth-place finish after scoring 205.7.

In the event, Korean shooter Park Hajun won the gold and Indian shooter Jadhav Kiran Ankush bagged silver. Two other Bangladeshi shooters – Robiul Islam and Tamjid Bin Alam – stood 17th and 18th among 28 competitors.

In the 10m Air Rifle women’s youth event, Sajida, despite scoring less than what she tallied during the ISSF World Championships in Cairo, made it to the eight-shooter final round as the seventh-placed shooter with a score of 623.4, which was 4.1 less than her score at the World Championships. She eventually finished sixth in the final round after scoring 206.9.

In the same event featuring 15 competitors, Jafirah Chowdhury and Moumita Riya finished 10th and 15th after scoring 615.9 and 605.1, respectively, while Indian duo Rajendra Yukthi and Gautami Bhanot grabbed gold and silver medals, respectively.

Thiago, De Gea left out of Spain squad

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain included Barcelona’s Ansu Fati but left out Liverpool midfielder Thiago Alcantara and Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea from their 26-man World Cup squad on Friday.

Fati, now 20, made his international debut in 2020 at 17 and in his second game became the youngest player to score for Spain, breaking a record held since 1925 by Juan Errazquien.

But the forward is fighting his way back from four surgeries to repair an injury to his left knee, suffered in November 2020.

“He was one of our last question marks. I doubted until the last minute, but I decided for him because his technical qualities are amazing and being here with us could work as a big motivation for him as he’s still working to get back to peak form,” Spain coach Luis Enrique told a news conference.

“It’s a process that he’s going through, to become the Ansu Fati that he was before the injury.

“Surely it could be assessed when he will recover his previous level. It is one of the things we all look for.”

Luis Enrique declined to comment on the players who were left out, but the absence of veterans like De Gea, Thiago and Marcos Alonso points to the manager’s preference to go all-in with Spain’s new generation of talent.



Real Madrid’s German midfielder Toni Kroos (L) scores with a spectacular volley during their LaLiga fixture against Cadiz at Santiago Bernabeu on Thursday. The win moved the defending champions to within two points of leaders Barcelona. (Bottom) Meanwhile, Manchester United’s Scottish midfielder Scott McTominay stretches full-length to score his side’s fourth goal against Aston Villa in the third round of the Carabao Cup at Old Trafford on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS



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