

Furry pitch invader steals the show, and the ball

REUTERS

A pitch-invading dog gave ground staff the runaround after the slippery canine stole the ball and charged around the pitch in a Mexican second-tier game between Alebrijes de Oaxaca and Dorados de Sinaloa on Wednesday.

Oaxaca beat Dorados 4-0 but the highlight of the match came as the clock hit 90 minutes.

The dog sprinted on to the pitch and demanded the ball from Sinaloa keeper Hernan Mendoza, who reluctantly tossed it aside when the referee stopped the game so stewards could enter the pitch and usher the animal away.

But as a steward approached the dog with a leash, the furry pitch invader managed to tightly hold the football in its mouth before running towards the centre circle, evading ground staff desperate to take him away.

Within seconds, the dog had transformed the 16,000-capacity stadium into its own personal bull ring as 'Ole's rang around the arena when several members of the ground staff tried -- and comically failed -- to catch it.

As players also joined the chase, the agile pooch kept possession for more than a minute and masterfully skirted several challenges before one player finally caught him and ground staff lured him off the pitch with a spare ball.

"Our new best friend is fine and with us in Templo Alebrije after having debuted in @LigaMXExpansion," Oaxaca said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Our new reinforcement went to undergo his medical tests to be officially loaned in the coming days," they added.



The Premier League will see a top-four clash take place today as second-placed Liverpool will travel to London to face Tottenham Hotspur. Following a draw against Chelsea in their opening league fixture, Liverpool have gone on a streak of five straight wins and would look to close their two-point gap with league leaders Manchester City, who are yet to lose a point from their first six matches.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Spurs test for Liverpool

AFP, London

Liverpool's Premier League title credentials face a stiff test at a resurgent Tottenham on Saturday as the Reds aim to keep pace with relentless leaders Manchester City.

Defending champions City have taken maximum points from their opening six games and can set a new club record should they extend that streak to seven at struggling Wolves.

Liverpool lead the chasing pack, two points back, with Brighton, Tottenham, Arsenal and Aston Villa all within six points of the top.

Szoboszlai shines for Liverpool

After years of going toe-to-toe with City for major honours, Liverpool slumped to fifth last season, prompting a full midfield rebuild during the transfer window.

The investment has paid immediate

dividends, with seven consecutive wins in all competitions.

Dominik Szoboszlai has been the pick of four new midfielders and scored a sensational goal in Wednesday's 3-1 League Cup victory over Leicester.

"Since the first minute of training, it was pretty impressive," said Jurgen Klopp of the Hungarian's adaptation after a £60 million (\$73 million) move from RB Leipzig.

"A very naturally confident boy. That helps and a super-hard worker and that's what you see."

But Klopp's men will need to inflict Tottenham's first league defeat under Ange Postecoglou to keep that fine run going.

The Australian has shrugged off the loss of Harry Kane to transform the mood at the north London giants.

Spurs are just two points behind Liverpool and claimed an impressive 2-2 draw away to Arsenal last weekend.

Challenging the top four

Brighton have made light of losing star players including Alexis Mac Allister and Moises Caicedo and sit third in the table with five wins from their opening six league games, including impressive victories over Manchester United and Newcastle.

Roberto De Zerbi's men face another side with ambitions of breaking into the top four on Saturday in Aston Villa.

Transformed since Unai Emery took charge just under a year ago, Villa have won four of their past five league games to climb to sixth.

However, both clubs face the challenge of maintaining their Premier League challenge alongside the demands of competing in Europe.

After naming much-changed sides in midweek, both Brighton and Villa crashed out of the League Cup but in the long run that could prove a bonus.

"I've felt not the slightest bit of insecurity regarding (my own safety)... but obviously, I wish (Peng) the best and I hope that she's doing well.

US tennis star Coco Gauff on the well-being of China's Peng Shuai



Sabalenka 'super motivated' to remain on top

AFP, Beijing

Newly crowned world number one Aryna Sabalenka said Friday she is "super motivated" to finish the year in top spot as she prepares to compete in the China Open in Beijing.

The Belarusian lost the US Open Final to homegrown talent Coco Gauff this month but has found succour in rising to the summit of the rankings for the first time.

But the 25-year-old is not content to stop there.

"It's also about finishing the year as world number one and staying there as long as I can," Sabalenka said in response to a question from AFP.

"It's good that I was able to achieve this goal, but there's another goal and so I'm super motivated right now," she said.

"The expectation here in Beijing is to bring my best tennis and do everything I can on court."

The China Open is being held for the first time since 2019 after Beijing abandoned its stringent zero-Covid policy.

The women's tour has also returned to China after its global governing body ended its boycott of the country.

Milosevic named Bosnia coach

AFP, Sarajevo

Former Serbia striker Savo Milosevic was appointed coach of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday, their third manager since the start of a floundering Euro 2024 qualifying campaign.

Milosevic, 50, succeeds Meho Kodro, who was appointed in August and sacked after two qualifying matches. Kodro's predecessor Faruk Hadzibegic was dismissed in June, just five months after his appointment.

"I sincerely believe that this team can get a place at the Euros, that it has enough quality to be there," Milosevic told a press conference.

Bosnia struggled to a 2-1 win over Liechtenstein earlier this month before losing to Iceland 1-0, a defeat which sealed Kodro's fate.

Milosevic, a former Partizan Belgrade and Aston Villa forward, began his coaching career at Partizan (2019-2020), before briefly coaching the Slovenian team Olimpija Ljubljana in 2022.

Russian athletes to compete as neutrals at Paris Paralympics

REUTERS

Russian athletes will be able to compete as neutrals at next year's Paris Paralympics after the International Paralympic Committee members voted against a full ban of Russia on Friday.

The IPC members first narrowly voted against a complete ban of the Russian Paralympic Committee (74-65) and then voted 90-56 in favour of a motion to partially suspend Russia for two years, subject to reassessment at a next general assembly.

"As a result of the General Assembly's decision, (National Paralympic Committee) Russia's membership rights are suspended for two years," the IPC said in a statement.

"With the exception that its athletes (and related support personnel) will be eligible to participate in an individual and neutral capacity in the Paralympic Games and World and Regional Championships and sanctioned competitions in the six sports for which the IPC acts as international federation."

Competing as neutral athletes means doing so without a national team or emblems, flags and anthems.

The IPC also voted not to suspend Belarus, which has been a staging ground for Russian troops and weapons during the invasion.

The decision comes two weeks before the International Olympic Committee session in Mumbai where it will also discuss Russia's and Belarus' participation at the Paris Olympics next year.

The IPC had last year suspended the paralympic committees of both countries and banned their athletes from competing following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Belarus has acted as a staging ground for Russian troops and weapons.

Although an appeal against the suspension of the committees was upheld this year, Russian and Belarusian para-athletes remain banned from competitions to this day.

The IOC has not sanctioned the Russian or Belarus Olympic Committee or Russian members of the IOC. It did ban athletes following last year's invasion of Ukraine, which Russia calls a special military operation.

In March, however, it issued a first set of recommendations for international sports federations to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to return.

The IOC has said athletes should not be punished for actions of governments.



A top-of-the-table clash awaits today as Real Madrid travel to the Estadi Montilivi to take on league leaders Girona, who have won six games and drawn one in their first seven fixtures. Real, on 18 points, sit second and are a point off Girona and a win would take them to the top of LaLiga.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

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