

Bellingham Real's 'last piece to the puzzle'

AGENCIES

Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham has got off to a sparkling start for the Los Blancos in the 2023-24 season. The 20-year-old scored twice and produced another masterful display in a 4-0 La Liga home win over Osasuna on Saturday, with the England midfielder reaching an astonishing 10 goals in his first 10 starts for his new team in all competitions.

Eight of those goals have come in the La Liga helping Real to the top of the table with eight victories in nine games. His tally so far has taken him to the top of the goal-scoring charts in the Spanish League and his goals have proved to be decisive in six of those contests.

Ten goals scored from 19 shots showed extraordinary effectiveness from the 20-year-old Bellingham who has made his transition to Spanish soccer look ridiculously easy.

He equalled Cristiano Ronaldo's splendid start at Real Madrid with 10 goals in his first 10 games in all competitions but managed to better the Portuguese star's stats by providing three assists against Ronaldo's one. "The first came from a brutal play by Modrić and Carvajal. I got into the box, picked up the ball, looked for a gap and hit it with my left foot. It was a good shot. In the second, I linked up well with Fede and beat the goalkeeper. Two good goals thanks to team play. I was there to put that last piece to the puzzle. It's always nice to score and even more so when you win," he told Real Madrid TV after the game.

Bellingham has found the net twice in the Champions League this season for Real and both the strikes helped the 14-time winners to win their first two group-stage matches against Union Berlin and Italian champions Napoli.



"It's been a great start to my life here in Madrid. You have all helped me a lot, the club staff, my teammates and the fans. I'm very grateful. I'm not going to score in every game, but I have to try to maintain this level to try to win as much as possible," he said.

The former Borussia Dortmund skipper also shared a pre-match ritual he follows ahead of games to get him into the mindset of delivering performances for his side.

"I like to visualise the game. I see the pitch, the grass, my playing position... That way I feel calmer, I know where I'm going to be on the pitch. It's something I've been doing throughout my career and thanks to that I go into matches without nerves and am prepared for everything. I was taught this from a very young age and I still practice it."



The national wrestling championship got underway at Sheikh Russel Roller Skating Stadium in Paltan yesterday. 12 district teams and four services teams are taking part in the two-day competition. More than 100 wrestlers in men's and women's divisions will be competing in 20 weight categories. Bangladesh Amateur Wrestling Federation's general secretary Tabir Rahman Pahlawan inaugurated the championship.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Performers participate in the closing ceremony of the 2022 Asian Games at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in Hangzhou yesterday. Hosts China racked up a record 201 gold medals in the 19th and biggest Asian, which concluded at the 80,000-capacity Olympic Stadium with China handing over to Japan for the 2026 edition. Around 12,407 athletes from 45 nations competed in 40 disciplines at the Hangzhou Games, which were delayed by a year due to COVID-19.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh end another bleak Asian Games

ANISUR RAHMAN from Hangzhou

"Look at the other small countries, they have improved. But we are stuck in the same place," a frustrated Bangladeshi athlete said this at the breakfast table of the Dining Hall of Hangzhou Athletes' Village yesterday, a few hours before the closing ceremony of the 19th edition of the Asian Games.

This statement encapsulates Bangladesh's frustrating campaign in their 11th appearance at the Asian Games, where they failed to make a mark in disciplines where they were hopeful of winning a medal like kabaddi, shooting and archery and will return home with two bronze medals from cricket.

Bangladesh had sent a relatively big contingent of 180 athletes to compete in 17 disciplines in this year's Games but only cricket saved their blushes and ensured that they wouldn't have to return home empty-handed like they did after the Jakarta Games in 2018, where cricket was not included.

After another disappointing showing at a global meet, the Bangladesh contingent is going through routine self-reflection where the same old reasons like lack of proper planning and insufficient financial backing are emerging as the reasons.

While Bangladesh had an overwhelming Asian Games, its neighbours India rose to new heights.

India, who were eighth in the medals tally in the last two editions of the Asian Games, rose to fourth position in Hangzhou with 107 medals - 28 gold, 38 silver and 41 bronze.

An official of the Bangladesh Olympic Association, who asked to remain unnamed, said that the Indian government and private entities are heavily backing athletics in their country which has enabled them to take forward strides at the global stage.

"The Indian government also gives huge financial backing to sports, whereas we still haven't received the allocation for the Hangzhou Games. Why wouldn't India progress like this?"

At the breakfast table, the Bangladeshi athlete, who sought anonymity, also pointed out the difference in preparation of Indian and Bangladeshi athletes.

"The Pakistani and Indian athletes who have government jobs don't have to go to their workplaces. Instead they get to train round the year. We, on the other hand, have to be on the run for approval of documents even two days before departure."

Amidst all the disappointment, boxer Selim Hossain surprised all by reaching the quarterfinals while Bangladesh missed a chance to win a first ever medal in archery when the men's team lost to Indonesia in the bronze medal decider in recurve team event. The men's football team showed some fight, suffering 1-0 defeats to Myanmar and India before drawing against China but couldn't go past the first round. The medal-hopeful disciplines of kabaddi and shooting disappointed most in their respective events with poor performances.

With the two medals from the Hangzhou Games, Bangladesh now has overall 13 medals in the Asian Games history. Twelve of those medals have come from kabaddi and cricket and the other one came from boxing.

This edition of the Games was also marred with another example of incompetency of the Bangladesh officials as karateka Hasan Khan couldn't take part in his event as his coach and manager reportedly couldn't board the bus for the event in time.

As per sources, Bangladesh also brought a pregnant athlete for the Games as the officials claimed they did not have any alternative.

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FASTEST ONE-DAY HUNDRED Fraser-McGurk breaks De Villiers' record

REUTERS

South Australia batter Jake Fraser-McGurk smashed a 29-ball century against Tasmania at the Marsh Cup on Sunday to register the fastest hundred in one-day cricket, eclipsing South Africa great AB de Villiers' previous record of 31 balls.

Replaying to Tasmania's mammoth 435-9, South Australia were dismissed for 398 at the Karen Rolton Oval in Adelaide, but it turned out to be a memorable outing for Fraser-McGurk, who hammered 125 runs from 38 deliveries, which included 10 fours and 13 sixes.

The 21-year-old was eventually dismissed by spinner Beau Webster in the 12th over. Fraser-McGurk reached his half-century in 18 balls, the quickest by an Australian in the 50-over format.

"I went out there with some good intent, had my plans and process, and seemed like everything went my way," Fraser-McGurk said.

"I've made a few 30s playing in twos and stuff, felt like I've been hitting them reasonably well but probably not that well so definitely surprised myself."

The record also marked Fraser-McGurk's first century in any professional format.

"It's probably an innings I'll never see maybe ever again. It was some of the cleanest ball-striking I've seen and sometimes you've just got to tip your cap to players like that that can do that," Tasmania captain Jordan Silk said.

"Whilst it was frustrating to watch it was also amazing to watch."

Milan make Giroud goalkeeper

AFP, Milan

Olivier Giroud was officially made a goalkeeper by AC Milan on Sunday after the France striker's heroics between the sticks at Genoa helped his team take top spot in Serie A.

Veteran forward Giroud took Mike Maignan's place in the Milan goal after his Les Bleus teammate was sent off in the seventh minute of injury time and did enough to ensure the away side won 1-0 and moved two points ahead of local rivals Inter Milan.

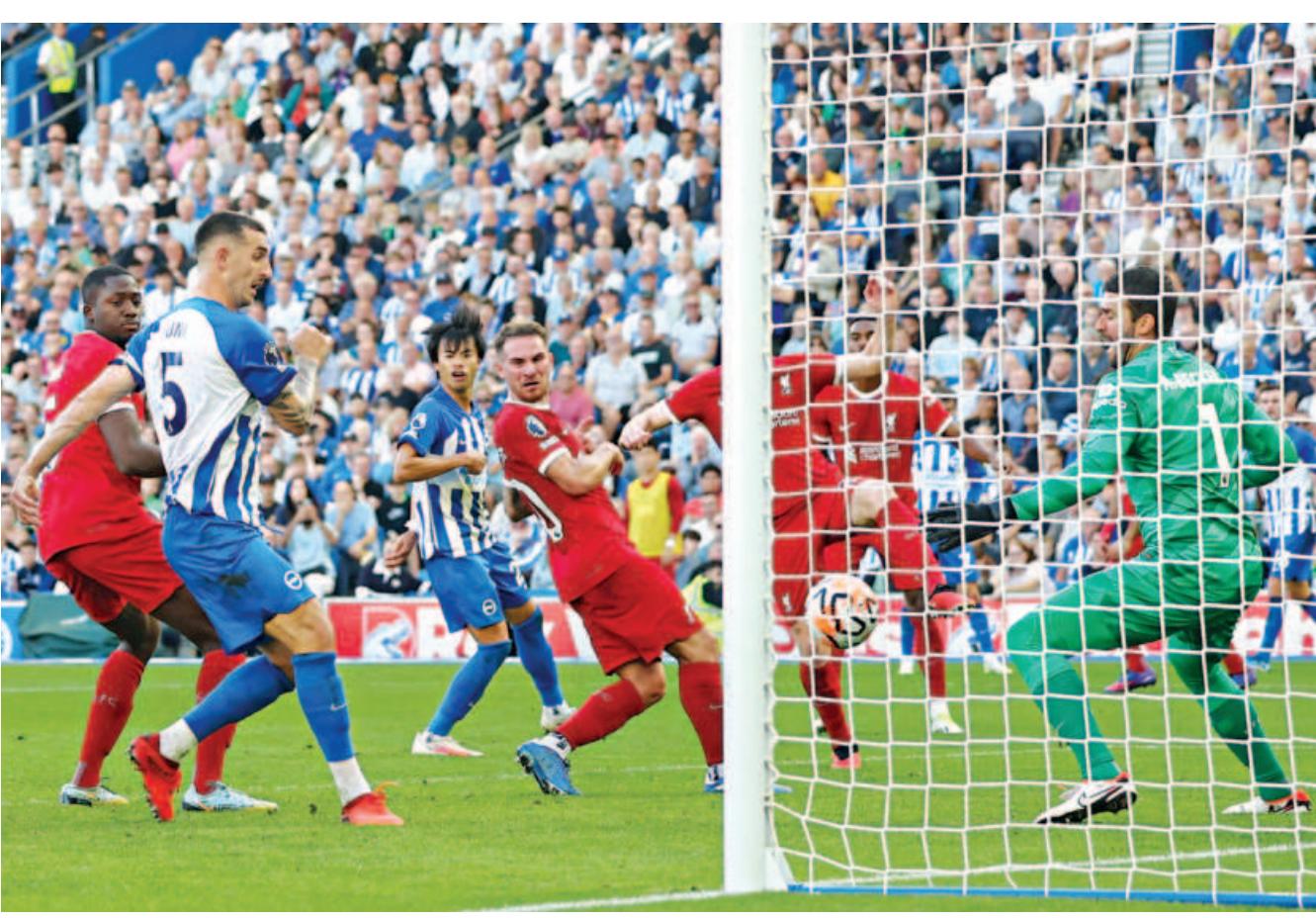
"Last night Olivier Giroud became part of Milan history by courageously defending the Milan goal in the final minutes of our match with Genoa," Milan said in a statement. "The club has decided to honour his performance in our last line of defence by putting him in the list of goalkeepers."

Milan also said that fans could buy a replica goalkeepers' jersey with "Giroud 9" on the back as an homage to an incredible ending to Saturday's tight victory.

Giroud can be seen on Milan's website smiling in the goalkeeping kit -- which on Saturday night he said he would frame -- above a perfect record of zero goals conceded in his seven league appearances this season.



Brighton captain Lewis Dunk scores from close range to cancel out Mohamed Salah's brace as the Seagulls came from behind to grab a 2-2 draw against Liverpool in the Premier League on Sunday.



Brighton's Dunk rescues 2-2 draw against Liverpool

REUTERS, Brighton

Brighton captain Lewis Dunk scored with a deft volley to cancel out Mohamed Salah's brace for Liverpool as the Seagulls came from behind to grab a 2-2 draw at the Amex Stadium in the Premier League on Sunday.

The home side took the lead in the 20th minute when Simon Adingra picked the pocket of former Brighton midfielder Alexis Mac Allister and fired home, but Salah levelled in the 40th minute, ending a flowing move with a trademark left-footed finish.

The Egyptian gave his side the lead from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time after Dominik Szoboszlai was pulled down by Pascal Gross, and Salah struck his shot to the left of keeper Bart Verbruggen.

Brighton forced an equaliser in the 78th minute as defender Dunk volleyed home Solli March's free kick to ensure his side stayed sixth on the table with 16 points, one behind third-placed Liverpool.