

U-17s fall at final hurdle

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh had to be content with another runners-up trophy in regional youth championship following a 2-0 defeat India in the final of SAFF U-17 Championship at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu yesterday.

Mohammad Kaif and Mohammad Arbash struck one goal apiece in the second half to steer India to their sixth title in this age group.

Two-time champions Bangladesh had also suffered an identical-margin defeat to the same opposition in the final of tournament last year, which was held in under-16 format. Bangladesh had begun their campaign with a 1-0 defeat against the same opposition before squeezing through into the semifinals on goal-difference and taking the tiebreak route to enter the final.

India took a deserved lead in the 58th minute with a glancing header from Kaif on a corner-kick from captain Mate Ngamgouhou. The defending champions then wrapped up the victory by adding another goal in injury time through Arbash, who curled home from outside the box.



Barcelona's young forward Lamine Yamal shapes up to shoot with his strong left foot during a training session at the Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi ahead of tonight's UEFA Champions League fixture against Young Boys. After losing their opening match against Monaco and having seen their winning start in LaLiga ended last week, Hansi Flick will look to his teenage prodigy to spark a rejuvenation.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Enrique drops Dembele after confrontation

AGENCIES

Paris Saint Germain manager Luis Enrique is understood to have dropped Ousmane Dembele from his squad to face Arsenal in the Champions League on Tuesday after a heated clash between the pair.

Dembele has been in dazzling form this season with four goals and four assists in just six appearances in Ligue 1, including creating the opening goal in Friday's 3-1 win over his old side Rennes.

However, the game ended in frustration as Dembele, who was substituted late on, found himself embroiled in a heated clash with the coach.

Enrique is believed to have taken issue with some of Dembele's actions on the pitch and was left unimpressed by the Frenchman's response to his comments, which ended up in a feisty altercation between the two.

The PSG boss has since decided to drop Dembele from his travelling squad as punishment, meaning the French side will be without a player who sits second on both their goal and assist charts for the trip to Arsenal.

Goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, left-back Nuno Mendes and midfielders Vitinha and Desire Doue have, however, all returned to the group as PSG search for a second victory in the Champions League, having seen off Girona 1-0 in the opening round of fixtures.

Leverkusen ready for Milan, Arsenal up against PSG

AGENCIES

Bayer Leverkusen expect a typically dangerous game against Italian opposition when they host AC Milan in the Champions League and are honoured to take on a team with a massive European pedigree, manager Xabi Alonso said on Monday.

Milan made a poor start to the season, failing to earn a win in their opening three games, and while they also lost their Champions League game to Liverpool they have turned things around on the domestic front with three successive victories.

"It's one of those games when you have to play smart. With the ball, without the ball, you have to be patient, you have to be ready, you have to be focused," Alonso told reporters before Tuesday's game with Milan.

"An Italian team is always dangerous. They know how to have patience. They are ready to defend low or to play with possession.

"Milan don't have to be dominant to be dangerous. Sometimes they have good possession, sometimes they have good counter-attacks."

Milan are the most successful Italian side in the competition, with seven titles to their name, and the last time they lifted the trophy in 2007, Alonso was on the losing Liverpool team.

Two years earlier, Alonso was part of the Liverpool side which made a dramatic comeback from 3-0 down to beat Milan on penalties, with the Spaniard scoring the third goal to level the tie.

"Fundamental for my career. After 20 years we still talk about that night," Alonso said.

"Then two years later we lost to Milan but that victory in 2005 was incredible. It was 20 years ago, we have to think about tomorrow. Milan is still the history of the Champions League.



"I've always liked AC Milan, Arrigo Sacchi, Fabio Capello, and great players, and to play against them is a great honour for us."

Meanwhile, Mikel Arteta said Arsenal's dramatic last-gasp victory against Leicester will help "shape the character" of the team as he prepares for Champions League showdown against Paris Saint-Germain.

The Gunners scored twice in injury

time to win 4-2 on Saturday and finished the weekend third in the Premier League, one point behind leaders Liverpool.

Arsenal host French champions PSG in a Champions League league-phase match at the Emirates on Tuesday, seeking their first win in the competition this season after a goalless draw against Atalanta.

Arsenal manager Arteta was asked at his pre-match press conference about the importance of winning games from different positions – either by dominating games or with last-gasp victories.

"It shapes the character and the body of the team, that they have the certainty that they can win in any context and adapt to very different contexts during matches," he said.

"The Champions League demands that, you can pretend to play against this kind of opposition and dominate for 95 minutes.

"But it does not happen at this level so you have to be really good in other phases as well – to stay in the game, to be comfortable and still always have the belief and intention to win it."

Arteta, who played for PSG as a young midfielder, said he was a "huge admirer" of Luis Enrique, whose team beat Girona 1-0 in their Champions League opener.

"An unbelievable personality, huge character, huge energy, always very supportive with young players," said Arteta.

"What I love about him is wherever he's been, as a player or a manager, his fingerprints are all over the place. You can sense it's his team the way his players behave, the way they want to attack and dominate games."

Mourinho booked for laptop protest

REUTERS

Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho was booked by the referee on Sunday after he protested against a VAR decision to disallow a goal by placing a laptop in front of a TV camera, displaying a picture in an effort to show the offside decision was incorrect.

The Portuguese former Manchester United, Chelsea and Real Madrid manager told reporters he believed his striker Edin Dzeko was onside, and displayed a frame from the build-up to the strike to prove his point.

"For us, it's a good goal," Mourinho said after the 2-0 win at Antalyaspor in the Turkish Super Lig.

"I like good VAR... I just want a VAR that helps the referee to take the right decisions."

Fenerbahce chairman Ali Koc had accused Turkish Super Lig's video assistant referees of bias against his club last April, with the league deciding to hire foreign VARs for the rest of the 2023-24 season.

Last season's runners-up Fenerbahce are second in the table with 16 points from seven matches, three points behind champions Galatasaray. Mourinho's side will visit FC Twente in the Europa League on Thursday.



Griezmann ends France career

REUTERS, Paris

France midfielder Antoine Griezmann announced the end of his international career on Monday after being coach Didier Deschamps's most important player for a decade, during which he won a World Cup title.

The 33-year-old, who struggled at this year's Euros, was one of the key elements in the 2018 and 2022 World Cup campaigns as Les Bleus took the title in Russia and finished runners-up in Qatar.

"Today, it is with deep emotion that I'm announcing my retirement as a player of the France team," the Atletico Madrid player said on social media.

"After 10 incredible years marked by challenges, successes and unforgettable moments, it is time for me to turn a page and make way for the new generation.

"Wearing this jersey was an honour and a privilege."

"Grizou", a favourite among his teammates and fans, was also the top scorer at Euro 2016 when France reached the final, only to be beaten by Portugal after extra time at the Stade de France.

Griezmann won 137 caps for France, scoring 44 goals, and imposed himself as a versatile player in Deschamps's midfield.

Ten Hag on the brink

AFP, London

Erik ten Hag is familiar with negative vibes during his turbulent reign at Manchester United but Sunday's embarrassing 3-0 defeat may have changed the mood at Old Trafford irrevocably.

Brennan Johnson's early goal knocked the stuffing out of the home side, who lost captain Bruno Fernandes to a straight red card before half-time.

Dejan Kulusevski and Dominic Solanke scored in the second half to underline Tottenham's total dominance against their disjointed and indisciplined opponents.

It was United's second straight 3-0 defeat at home in the Premier League after Liverpool hammered them earlier in September – leaving them 12th in the table with just two wins from their opening six games.

The club's haul of seven points equals their worst record at this stage of a Premier League campaign, and they have scored just five times.

Former United captain Gary Neville, now a TV pundit, tore into his former team, describing Sunday as a "shocking and sobering" day for Ten Hag's men.

"It was an absolutely disgusting performance



in that first half in effort, quality, everything you would want in a football team," he said on Sky Sports.

"There will be a lot of questions to answer for that group (of players) and the manager in the next week."

Former Liverpool and Spurs midfielder Jamie Redknapp said United had "no identity".

"It gets to a point where you feel for the manager," he said. "He looks completely out of his depth and is struggling to motivate."

"It was so easy for Tottenham, they were so comfortable, so calm. Man Utd are going backwards, he can't complain any more. They have spent over £600 million (\$800 million) and have his defenders in."

"They are rock bottom and I don't see where they can go from here."

Last season Ten Hag could legitimately point to a lengthy injury list, especially in defence, as a factor in his team's struggles.

But aside from the missing Luke Shaw, they currently have few players missing and Ten Hag strengthened his squad during the summer transfer window – taking total spending during his tenure to more than £600 million.

Now into his third season at Old Trafford, the argument that the team are still a work in

progress looks increasingly weak.

Liverpool, after all, are top of the league just six matches into the Arne Slot era.

Of equal concern for United fans is that the team, as Redknapp points out, show few signs of establishing any sort of identity, often proving less than the sum of their parts.

Former England striker Alan Shearer, speaking on The Rest Is Football podcast, said: "Can anyone tell me what Manchester United are?"

"What is their system? What is their plan? Do they sit, do they attack, do they press? I don't know. I don't have a clue what they are. They are a mess."

A defiant Ten Hag, who survived a post-season review by club bosses, partly thanks to a shock FA Cup final win against Manchester City, says he is not worried about his future.

"We need some time," said the 54-year-old Dutchman. "We are all on one page or in one boat together, the ownership, the leadership group, the staff and the players group as well. I don't have that concern."

Whether he gets that time or not might depend on whether he can inspire his beleaguered men in tough matches against Porto and Aston Villa in the coming week.

United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe shows no sign of immediately pulling the trigger, with reports suggesting the club hierarchy will continue to support their embattled manager in the short term.

Ten Hag may not be "sacked in the morning" as Spurs fans gleefully predicted, but he knows it is now or never as he fights to save his job.



Brazil superstar Neymar announced his return to team training with his Saudi club Al Hilal on Monday after nearly a year out with a left knee injury. The 32-year-old moved from Paris Saint-Germain in a blockbuster deal in August 2023 but played only five matches before rupturing his meniscus and anterior cruciate ligament on international duty in October. "Happy to be back in the group," Neymar posted on Instagram, with pictures of him running and kicking the ball.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM