



Harry Maguire celebrates after scoring a stoppage-time equaliser as 10-man Manchester United came out with a point against FC Porto following a 3-3 draw in their Europa League fixture at the Dragao stadium in Porto on Thursday. Meanwhile, Italian outfit AS Roma were stunned to a 1-0 defeat away from home by Swedish side IF Elfsborg at the Boras Arena.



PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

Sinner not 'comfortable' with doping cloud

AFP, Shanghai

World number one Jannik Sinner said Friday he was not in a "comfortable" situation as his doping case dragged on, but insisted he felt ready for his first match at the Shanghai Masters.

Last week the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said it would appeal a decision by tennis authorities to clear the Italian of wrongdoing after he twice tested positive for a steroid in March.

The 23-year-old fought through the controversy to reach the finals of the China Open in Beijing on Wednesday, where he lost to arch-rival Carlos Alcaraz.

"It's not in a situation where I feel comfortable in it, that's for sure, because I thought it was over... so it's not easy," said Sinner when asked at a press conference if the pressure of the appeal was affecting him.

In August, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted Sinner's explanation that the drug entered his system unintentionally when his physiotherapist used a spray containing it to treat a cut, then provided massage and sports therapy to the player.

But WADA said last Saturday it had appealed and was seeking a ban of up to two years.

"I had three hearings, which went my way, which was good, but now let's see. But I'm very confident that it comes out very positively," Sinner said Friday.

He now has to turn his attention to the Shanghai Masters, where he could end up facing Alcaraz again.

"We are quite similar as human beings off the court," said Sinner.

"Obviously on the court we try to meet, we try to put on a big fight... he pushes me to do better, which is something good."

Sinner will face Japan's 93rd-ranked Taro Daniel in his first match of the tournament this weekend.

"I had my first practice session just now, I just finished, so I feel good. I feel recovered," Sinner said.

Portugal, England name same player in squad

REUTERS

Wolverhampton Wanderers forward Mateus Mane has become hot property after Portugal named the 17-year-old in their Under-18 squad on Friday, one day after England included him in their squad.

Mane was called up for a second successive England youth camp by coach Liam Bramley before the team travel to Marbella for a four-team tournament this month.

Mane is eligible for both teams having played for the Portugal Under-17 side last season. As the Under-18 team is a non-UEFA age group, both nations are entitled to call the player up.

He made his England international debut last month against the Portugal Under-18 side who have named Mane in their squad for a four-nation tournament this month.

With both tournaments running concurrently, Mane can only play for one team and Wolves and England confirmed he would feature in Bramley's side.

Reuters has contacted Portugal's football association for clarification.

While players with multiple nationalities have played for more than one country if they are eligible, they are not allowed to switch allegiances at senior level - unless they have played only in friendly matches for the first country.

Morata returns to Spain squad

AFP, Madrid

Alvaro Morata has been included in Spain's squad for their upcoming Nations League matches, coach Luis de la Fuente announced Friday.

The Spanish captain and AC Milan forward returns to the squad after overcoming a muscular problem that forced him to miss his country's opening two encounters in Group A4 of the Nations League -- a draw and a win.

"For me he is one of the best strikers in the world. He is also a great captain, he unites a lot, he is very generous, he puts the good of the group first, he is the glue (of the team)," said De la Fuente.

"All the players respect him, the whole coaching staff loves him, he contributes a lot both on and off the field."

Missing from the squad is midfield lynchpin Rodri, who will be out for the rest of the season after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

"Rodri is irreplaceable, the best in the world in his position," said De la Fuente.

"Given the misfortune of his injury, there will be other players who can show their full potential, so I am very calm."

Into his place comes Real Sociedad midfielder Martin Zubimendi.

Midfielder Mikel Merino, injured shortly after joining Arsenal in the summer, has also made his return and features in the 25.

Spain will take on Denmark in Murcia on October 12, before hosting Serbia in Cordoba three days later.

Squad:

Goalkeepers: Alex Remiro (Real Sociedad), David Raya (Arsenal/ENG), Robert Sanchez (Chelsea/ENG)

Defenders: Pau Torres (Aston Villa/ENG), Aymeric Laporte (Al Nassr/KSA), Dani Vivian (Athletic Bilbao), Marc Cucurella (Chelsea/ENG), Alejandro Grimaldo (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Pau Cubarsi (Barcelona), Oscar Mingueza (Celta Vigo), Pedro Porro (Tottenham/ENG), Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid)

Midfielders: Aleix Garcia (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Martin Zubimendi (Real Sociedad), Alex Baena (Villarreal), Fabian Ruiz (Paris Saint Germain/FRA), Mikel Merino (Arsenal/ENG), Pedri (Barcelona)

Forwards: Alvaro Morata (AC Milan/ITA), Lamine Yamal (Barcelona), Ferran Torres (Barcelona), Nico Williams (Athletic Bilbao), Mikel Oyarzabal (Real Sociedad), Yeremi Pino (Villarreal), Joselu (Al Gharafa/QAT)

Real Madrid aiming for Villarreal rebound

AFP, Madrid

Reigning Spanish and European champions Real Madrid have started the season below their brilliant best and this week finally tumbled to a first defeat since January.

Carlo Ancelotti's side were beaten at Lille in the Champions League on Wednesday and trail Hansi Flick's Barcelona by three points in La Liga.

Madrid host Villarreal on Saturday aiming to pull level on points with their Catalan rivals at the top of the table for the first time this season.

Los Blancos began the campaign with a draw at Mallorca on the first day of the season and have been playing catch-up since then.

Barca won their first seven matches in a row but finally stumbled last weekend at Osasuna.

Madrid could not take full advantage as they were held to a 1-1 draw by neighbours Atletico Madrid, but can put pressure on Barca, who visit Alaves on Sunday, with a victory at the Santiago Bernabeu.

To achieve that against an enterprising Villarreal side just a point behind Madrid in third, they will have to raise their game significantly.

Madrid came undone in the north of France, suffering their first loss in 37 matches across all competitions.

"When we lost the derby (against Atletico) last year it was a fantastic wake-up call and hopefully this defeat can also be a fantastic wake-



up call," said Ancelotti.

"We did everything wrong -- with the ball, transitions, the intensity, we lost the duels... we have to look at things with a cool head and not throw everything away, but we have to improve."

Madrid were able to bring on Kylian Mbappe against Lille after a thigh injury and the French striker could start against Villarreal.

As strong as the Yellow Submarine have been, spearheaded by Spain international Ayoze Perez, they have conceded in every match so far this season.

Madrid still seem to be struggling without midfield maestro Toni Kroos, who retired after helping the team to a La Liga and Champions League double.

Los Blancos will also line up with Ukrainian goalkeeper Andre Lunin

between the sticks with Thibaut Courtois out injured.

"We have to analyse and improve in the next game because there is no time -- there are many games and we have to win," said Lunin after the Lille defeat.

Villarreal may be without Perez, who missed Monday's win over Las Palmas with muscular discomfort and Gerard Moreno is also sidelined, but striker Thierno Barry is finding form for Marcelino Garcia Toral's side.

The French striker scored and got an assist as Villarreal moved up to third with the 3-1 win.

Girona and Atletico Madrid also suffered Champions League defeats on Wednesday and both are in action on Sunday, against tricky Basque sides Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad respectively.

Too early to be excited, says Slot

REUTERS

League-leading Liverpool can put pressure on the teams chasing them with victory at Crystal Palace in the weekend's opening game on Saturday, but manager Arne Slot said he and his players are not revelling in their position this early in the season.

Slot's team have 15 points atop the Premier League table after six games, one ahead of champions Manchester City and Arsenal.

"We're Liverpool," Slot told reporters on Friday. "So players here are used to be on top of the table.

So would be very weird if a player at Liverpool is all of a sudden with his head in the clouds.

"These players are experienced enough to understand the league table after six games as well, and the schedule we had compared to some other teams. Second of all, (many of them) won the league here, they won the Champions

League here."

Slot has had a superb start as Liverpool manager, leading his team to eight wins in nine games across all competitions. No other Liverpool manager has ever enjoyed such a successful start.

He expects Oliver Glasner's Palace to be stiff competition, particular because it has been a busy week for Liverpool who beat Bologna 2-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"It's a difficult one for us, 12:30 kickoff after playing Wednesday evening in the Champions League, facing a team that had the whole week to prepare," Slot said.

"But that is part of working at a top club that we face those teams and we have to be ready for those teams and that's what we are (going to do) tomorrow."

Slot praised both Mohamed Salah, who set up Alexis Mac Allister's goal and scored himself, and midfielder Ryan Gravenberch for their performances against Bologna.



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