

BRIEFLY

Zidane urges fans to back under-fire Bale

Zinedine Zidane has urged Real Madrid fans to get behind Gareth Bale and insists he does not believe the Welshman is happier playing for his country than Real Madrid. Madrid play Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday, when Bale is likely to feel the frustration of the home supporters. The 30-year-old sparked outrage in the Spanish press this week after he celebrated Wales' victory over Hungary on Monday with a flag from the crowd that read: "Wales. Golf. Madrid. In that order". The slogan has been adopted by Welsh fans after an interview given by former Madrid player Pedja Mijatovic to Cadena Ser last month, in which he referred to those as Bale's priorities.

UEFA fine Celtic for illicit banners, chants

Celtic have been fined 15,000 euros (\$16,582) by UEFA for illicit banners and offensive chants by their supporters in their Europa League match against Lazio last month, European soccer's governing body said on Friday. Scottish champions Celtic beat the Italian outfit 2-1 at Celtic Park but the game was overshadowed by events off the pitch. A home supporters group displayed signs that read "Brigate Verde" - along with a white star - which bore a resemblance to Italian left-wing organisation Brigate Rosse. Another flag depicted Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini hanging with the slogan "Follow Your Leader." UEFA rules prohibit "provocative messages that are of a political, ideological, religious or offensive nature". UEFA's control, ethics and disciplinary body also hit Lazio with a fine of 10,000 euros for offensive chanting.

Reacting to racist insults costs Taison

Brazilian player Taison was banned for one game Thursday for his reaction to racist abuse in a Ukrainian league game. The Shakhtar Donetsk midfielder showed his middle finger to Dynamo Kyiv fans who had abused him with monkey chants and kicked the ball into the stands during a game Nov. 10. Taison was shown a red card. The Ukrainian Football Association ordered Taison to serve a one-game ban plus a suspended two-game ban. Dynamo has been fined 500,000 hryvnias (\$20,000) and ordered to play one game behind closed doors. Another one-game sanction is suspended. "Sanctioning a victim of racial abuse is beyond comprehension and it plays into the hands of those who promote this kind of disgraceful behavior," world player's union FIFPro said in a statement.

AGENCIES

Different pairings, same result

Panwar, Bhaker win mixed team events with partners from other countries to cap off stellar campaign



Manu Bhaker paired up with world number one Russian Artem Chernousov to win the 10m Air Pistol title at the World Cup Finals in Putian, China. *Express*

NITIN SHARMA

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 22

INDIAN SHOOTERS continued their impressive run at the ISSF World Cup Final in Putian (China) as Divyansh Singh Panwar and Manu Bhaker won paired events, though with partners from other countries.

Panwar combined with Snjezana Pejic of Croatia to top the 10m Air Rifle mixed team event, beating Apurvi Chandela and Changnong Zhang of China 16-14.

Manu paired up with world number one Russian Artem Chernousov to win the 10m Air Pistol title by a 17-13 margin over Saurabh Chaudhary and Olympic champion Anna Korakaki.

With the World Cup final featuring only the top two shooters from the four world cups of the year apart from defending champions and the top shooters in world rankings, most countries did not have a second shooter for the mixed team events and ISSF decided to pair shooters from different countries in 10m Air Rifle and 10m Air Pistol mixed team events.

"Since Indian rifle shooters have competed earlier in mixed team events, most of them now know each other's strengths and weaknesses. Anjum and Divyansh had competed earlier and Apurvi and Deepak (Kumar) have competed together as a team. The fact that the draw for the mixed teams took place on the day of the event make it more challenging. Even though no medal

ON TARGET

MANU BHAKER
Gold: women's 10m air pistol

ELAVENIL VALARIVAN
Gold: women's 10m air rifle

DIVYANSH SINGH PANWAR
Gold: men's 10m air rifle

■ India finished at the top of the medal tally at the World Cup Final in Putian, China.

■ China finished second with a total of four medals - two gold, a silver and a bronze

■ France were third with two medals - one gold and one bronze.

were awarded, it was for the ISSF president trophy," said Deepali Deshpande, the rifle coach of the Indian senior team.

Prior to the World Cup final, Panwar and Anjum Moudgill had won 10m Air Rifle title at the ISSF World Cup in Beijing in April. Two months later, at the Munich World Cup, they won their second mixed team world title beating Kumar and Apurvi in the new format where the top eight teams in qualification compete in elimination 2 with the result deciding the top two teams for the final and the

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bronze medal match. In Brazil last month, Chandela and Kumar won the title with Panwar and Anjum getting the bronze.

On Friday, Apurvi and Zhang finished fifth with a score of 627.9 in qualification while Panwar and Pejic were seventh with a combined score of 627.7. But the two pairs topped the elimination relay 2 to make it to the final round.

In the decider, the teams pocket two points for winning every two-shot series and the ones to reach a total of 16 first emerge victorious. Panwar/Pejic were trailing 0-6 at one time but made it 14-14 before taking the last series with a combined score of 21.2 (Pejic 10.8 and Panwar 10.4) compared to Chandela/Zhang's 20.8 (Apurvi 10.7 and Zhang 10.1).

In the final, Panwar was the only shooter who did not shoot below 10.0 even once and shot a score more than Pejic 10 times out of the 15 series to help the pair script a comeback. Chandela, who had shot 9.6 in the first series, which the pair won, too was in good form as she too did not a score below 10.0 in

the remaining 14 series but Zhang's four scores below 10.0, coupled with Sjejc and Panwar's brilliance in the end, cost them the victory.

"Even though Divyansh and Apurvi were shooting with different partners, they showed a lot of composure and Apurvi did not let Zhang's scores in some series bother her. Divyansh takes his time in the final and it helps him to shoot more 10s. It has worked for him and the team," said Deshpande.

In the 10m Air pistol mixed team event, three Indians including - Bhaker, Chaudhary and Shahzar Rizvi - were in the top three teams. Rizvi paired up with Zorana Arunovic of Serbia to win the bronze medal.

This year, Bhaker and Chaudhary won the 10m Air pistol title in all four ISSF World Cups and coach Jaspal Rana counts Putian also as a good outing.

"The shooters have to make minor adjustments regarding the timings in qualification. Manu takes the usual time of 45-50 seconds per shot in individual competition and it helps her in mixed team event also. Same is the case with Saurabh. Manu was bit shaky earlier in the final but this format allows one to recover and she made a strong comeback," said Rana. "The good thing is that both of them have won all the four world cups and reached the final here with partners from different countries. They had competed with different partners from other countries in Youth Olympics too. With only two world cups prior to the 2020 Olympics now, such experiences is vital for our shooters."

Serbia's Davis Cup campaign ends in tears and torment

REUTERS
NOVEMBER 22

TRY TELLING Viktor Troicki and his Serbian team mates the revamped Davis Cup Finals don't matter. The 33-year-old was inconsolable on Friday after poking a routine volley out on Serbia's third match point in the deciding doubles rubber of their quarter-final clash with Russia.

He and Novak Djokovic had three match points in the final-set tiebreak before Andrey Rublev and Karen Khachanov claimed a 6-4 4-6 7-6(8) victory at La Caja Magica to give the Russians a 2-1 win and set up a semi-final against Canada.

Troicki became a national hero in 2010 when he won the final point against France's Michael Llodra to clinch the Davis Cup for Serbia in Belgrade, sparking unforgettable scenes in which the team, including Djokovic, shaved their heads on court before partying into the small hours.

This time there was just gut-wrenching despair as Serbia's hopes slipped away in the cruellest fashion imaginable.

In an emotional news conference, Troicki could barely raise his chin off his chest.

"I probably feel the worst ever. I never experienced such a moment in my career," he said. "I let my team down and I apologise to them. We were up in the tiebreak. We had chances to finish it. We didn't do it. I messed up in the crucial moments.

"I don't know. God gave me the chance once to be the hero, to win the Davis Cup in the deciding rubber. Now he took it away. I'm really disappointed with myself."

Djokovic claimed a 15th successive Davis Cup singles win when he beat Khachanov 6-3 6-3 to level the tie after Rublev had thrashed Filip Krajinovic 6-1 6-2 on centre court. The 16-times Grand Slam champion needed treatment on his elbow in the second set of the doubles but blanked out the pain as he and Troicki had match points at 6-5, 7-6 and 8-7 in the breaker. Troicki missed a return on Russia's first match point to spark wild celebrations in the Russian camp.

"It hurts, it hurts us really badly," Djokovic said.



Novak Djokovic and captain Nenad Zimonjic console Viktor Troicki after they lost their doubles tie. *Reuters*

Top Russian officials in the dock for obstructing case

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MONACO, NOVEMBER 22

THE PRESIDENT of Russia's track and field federation and its top anti-doping official were suspended Thursday on suspicion of obstructing an investigation, in a blow to Russia's preparations for the 2020 Olympics.

The Athletics Integrity Unit, which oversees disciplinary issues in track, charged Dmitry Shlyakhtin and six others with various offenses. They are related to the case of a top high jumper, Danil Lysenko, who allegedly presented fake medical records after being accused of failing to make himself available for drug testing.

The federation as a whole is facing charges, as are Shlyakhtin and four of its senior officials, including the federation's anti-doping coordinator Elena Ikonnikova. Lysenko and his coach Evgeny Zagorulko have also been charged.

Federation spokeswoman Nataliya Yuhhareva told The Associated Press that Shlyakhtin and the federation have a deadline of Dec. 12 to respond to the charges. No date has been set for a hearing.

"We need quite a lot of time for the lawyers to study it," Yuhhareva said, adding that Shlyakhtin "intends to protect his good name."

She added that Shlyakhtin would step down while president and the federation board would soon elect a temporary replacement. Shlyakhtin doubles as a regional sports minister in Russia, and it wasn't immediately clear whether he would keep that role.

The AIU said its investigation lasted 15 months and included intensive interviews and computer analysis. It concluded that "officials had been involved in the provision of false explanations and forged documents to the AIU in order to explain whereabouts failures by the athlete."

In September, a World Athletics taskforce



Russian athletics president Dmitri Shlyakhtin was suspended on suspicion of obstructing an anti-doping investigation.

said Lysenko had confessed to providing fake documents with help from officials, but he later retracted that confession.

The case comes at a time when Russia is already facing separate allegations of providing doctored lab test records to the World Anti-Doping Agency, which could implement more sanctions next month.

Russia's track federation was already officially suspended from international competition over earlier doping cases under a 2015 ruling. The federation had been inching closer to reinstatement this year after negotiations headed by Shlyakhtin, but World Athletics officials expressed concern that anti-doping reforms weren't always being implemented on the ground.

The announcement comes the day before a council meeting of World Athletics, formerly known as the IAAF, which governs international track and field.

Russian athletes have been allowed to compete as neutrals at events like the world championships after passing vetting of their drug-testing history.

Lampard returns to Etihad as Jose takes charge

AFF/REUTERS
LONDON, NOVEMBER 22

JOSE MOURINHO will inevitably be the centre of attention as he takes charge of Tottenham for the first time this weekend while Manchester City look to get their Premier League title challenge back on track against Chelsea. The former Chelsea and Manchester United manager has been charged with rescuing Spurs' season after this week's sacking of Mauricio Pochettino, with the club desperate to claw their way back into the top four.

At the top of the table, runaway leaders Liverpool have a winnable-looking fixture away to Crystal Palace but the chasing pack cannot afford to allow the gap to widen further. City, licking their wounds after their 3-1 defeat by Liverpool earlier this month, host Frank Lampard's Chelsea, who are one point above them in the table, eight points behind Jurgen Klopp's side.

Leicester, in second place, ahead of Chelsea on goal difference, travel to England's south coast to take on Brighton.

Mourinho's first match in charge of Tottenham will be away to West Ham at the London Stadium on Saturday but he will not have the luxury of a honeymoon period.

The Portuguese boss has a number of issues to sort out, including addressing the woe-ful away form - Spurs have not won on the road in the Premier League since January.

Last season's Champions League finalists have had a shocking start to the season, languishing in 14th place in the Premier League after just three wins in their opening 12 games. With their new stadium to pay for, Tottenham are reliant on Champions League revenue but the outlook is not bright.

No team with as low a tally as Spurs have after 12 games - 14 points - has ever gone on to record a top-four finish.

Mourinho on mind

Mourinho, often labelled a cheque-book manager, has made the right noises so far, saying at his first press conference he will not demand millions to spend in the transfer



We had a couple of messages to congratulate him on his new role. I think history and results speak for themselves. He has done that consistently. It's what we measure him and us as managers. It keeps him off Sky Sports for a while! He has got a good team. They were a lot of people's favourites to be in the race.

FRANK LAMPARD

ON JOSE MOURINHO'S TAKING OVER AT TOTTENHAM

market. "I don't need players, I am so happy with the players I have, I just need time to understand them better, to know everything about them," he said.

"My gift is this squad, the squad is very, very good." Over their past 38 league games, Liverpool have tallied 101 points and lost just once, overcoming champions Manchester City in their most recent outing.

Manager Klopp last season labelled his players "mentality monsters" and captain Jordan Henderson says that is a crucial factor in their success. "Our mentality is just as important as the technical ability of the team," Henderson told the club's website.

"I think everybody sees how talented the squad is, how many good players we've got

in the team, but mentality is huge in football."

Lampard, who spent a season playing for Manchester City after leaving Chelsea, takes his young side to the Etihad for his first visit as a manager. Pep Guardiola's side host Chelsea in the unusual position of being fourth in the table, a point and place below the visitors, who have had six successive league wins.

Chelsea will also be eager to gain revenge for their 6-0 mauling by City last season - their biggest-ever Premier League defeat.

Former Leicester and Tottenham forward Gary Lineker believes Brendan Rodgers' side are better than the team that lifted the Premier League title in 2016.