

Federer broke down after riots in Colombia

REUTERS
LONDON, DECEMBER 16

ROGER FEDERER admits he suffered a "bit of a breakdown" during last month's tour of Mexico and South America after rioting in Colombian capital Bogota forced him to cancel his exhibition match against German's Alexander Zverev.

The 38-year-old's five-country tour is covered in broadcaster ESPN's candid documentary 'Roger Federer: Everywhere is Home' which will air on Dec. 17.

It charts the 20-time Grand Slam champion's journey, including the history-making match in Mexico City bullring when a 42,517 delirious fans watched him take on German Zverev — a record crowd for a tennis match. One of the most memorable segments of the documentary comes in Bogota when large scale demonstrations and riots led to a curfew imposed by the government, shortly before Federer and Zverev were supposed to start their match.

With a huge crowd already present, Federer reluctantly decided the situation was not safe. Footage shows Federer walking back to his locker room where he broke down in tears and was hugged by Zverev.

"We went to warm up and were having a blast on the court, but then everything started to get a bit crazy," Federer said.

"I was thinking is this the best scenario? Because people need to get home and be safe and this was honestly when I knew we shouldn't play, it was too much stress and pressure for everybody.

"I had a bit of a breakdown. It was not going to be the dream match it was supposed to have been and I could feel it all falling apart at the end. When I came back (to the locker room) I was emotionally wasted."

Throughout Federer's illustrious career, visits to South America have been rare with few big tournaments held there.

His tour took in Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

"It was an unbelievable and amazing trip, each step along the way as the fans expressed their love of the sport and appreciation for the experience," the Swiss great said.

A test for City's European ambitions

Pep's EPL side, seeking its first Champions League title, drawn with thirteen-time winners Real Madrid

ASSOCIATED PRESS
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MANCHESTER CITY'S reward for winning its Champions League group was a guaranteed last 16 pairing with a team that only finished runner-up. It got Real Madrid.

The record 13-time champions will host the first leg on Feb. 26 against the ambitious Premier League title holders, who are trying to win the European Cup for the first time.

The match pits Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane against City manager Pep Guardiola. Zidane has won three Champions League titles in three attempts with Madrid, while Guardiola has been seeking his third title for almost a decade after winning twice with Barcelona.

"The only way to be top in Europe is going forward and (playing in) semifinals and finals and winning the Champions League," City director of football Txiki Begiristain said at UEFA headquarters after Monday's draw.

City's best run in the Champions League was reaching the semifinals in 2016, losing 1-0 over two legs to Madrid. That was soon after Zidane took over in Madrid, and just before Guardiola was hired to replace Manuel Pellegrini in Manchester.

Also, Liverpool was sent back to the Spanish stadium where it won the title last season. The first leg against Atletico Madrid will be at the Metropolitano Stadium on Feb. 18.

"I think that Liverpool know (the stadium) very well," said Atletico director Clemente Villaverde, describing the unbeaten Premier League leaders as "at this moment the best team we have in Europe."

Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp said there were "pretty much four or five potential finals already in the last 16."

Spanish league leader Barcelona will face Napoli with the first leg in Italy, and Chelsea will face Bayern Munich in a rematch of the 2012 final. Chelsea won that title in Bayern's home stadium, which will host the second leg on March 18. In other matchups: Paris Saint-Germain coach Thomas Tuchel was paired with his former club, Borussia Dortmund; Lyon will take on Juventus; Tottenham will play Leipzig; and Atalanta will meet Valencia.

Lyon will face Juventus, a team led by Cristiano Ronaldo, without its own star forward. Memphis Depay left Sunday's French league game with a season-ending knee injury. The Juventus games will be played on the



Guardiola has been seeking his third title for almost a decade after winning twice with Barcelona. Reuters

CL LAST 16 DRAWS		
Dortmund	vs	PSG
Real Madrid	vs	Man City
Atalanta	vs	Valencia
Atletico Madrid	vs	Liverpool
Chelsea	vs	Bayern
Lyon	vs	Juventus
Spurs	vs	Leipzig
Napoli	vs	Barcelona

same nights. Feb. 26 and March 17, as Madrid plays Man City.

"The whole world will be watching, no doubt," Madrid director Emilio Butragueno said. "We will experience football at its best and then the fans will be lucky to enjoy this kind of game."

Two pairings feature teams playing in the knockout rounds of the Champions League for the first time. Leipzig will play the first leg at Tottenham and Atalanta will go up against Valencia.

United draw Club Brugge, Arsenal get Olympiakos in Europa League

MANCHESTER UNITED will take on Club Brugge in the last 32 of the Europa League while struggling Arsenal will face Greek side Olympiakos following Monday's draw in Nyon. United, who won the competition under Jose Mourinho in 2017, travel to Bruges for the first leg on February 20 before returning to Old Trafford a week later.

"There is no easy team at this stage but the team is doing well and hopefully we can get a good result," United club ambassador Park Ji-Sung told BT Sport.

"A couple of years ago we won the trophy and we know how beneficial it is, particularly with qualification to the Champions League."

Arsenal are languishing ninth in the Premier League after sacking coach Unai Emery but finished top of their group in Europe and are also away in the first leg.

"We are not doing so well, unfortunately in the Premier League, so this could be a route

into the Champions League next year, so I'm sure it will be one of our priorities," said Arsenal club secretary David Miles.

Ajax were drawn with Spanish outfit Getafe following their surprise exit from the group stage of the Champions League, while Serie A leaders Inter Milan travel to Ludogorets.

Antonio Conte's side will be among the favourites for the competition alongside last season's Champions League semi-finalists Ajax after failing to get past Barcelona and Borussia Dortmund in Europe's top competition.

Celtic face FC Copenhagen of Denmark while Steven Gerrard's Rangers come up against Portuguese outfit Braga.

Sevilla travel to Romanian side Cluj with the five-time winners riding high in La Liga, while fellow Spaniards Espanyol travel to Wolverhampton Wanderers, who are enjoying their first European campaign in nearly four decades.

Klopp and Liverpool to watch Liverpool play in Qatar

REUTERS
DOHA, DECEMBER 16

LIVERPOOL MANAGER Jurgen Klopp will gather with his players on Tuesday in their Doha team hotel — to watch Liverpool in action back in England in the League Cup.

The bizarre situation has come about because the European champions are in Qatar ahead of Wednesday's Club World Cup semi-final against Mexico's Monterrey. But a fixture clash means another Liverpool team, made up of youth players, will be facing Aston Villa around 24 hours earlier.

Liverpool's Under-23 coach Neil Critchley will be in charge of the team at Villa Park and Klopp said he and the first-team squad will be supporting them from afar in their quarter-final.

The runaway Premier League leaders will watch the first game of the Club World Cup last four at the Doha's Khalifa International Stadium, between Brazilian's Flamengo and Asian champions Al-Hilal of Saudi Arabia before rushing back to their hotel.

"It's good. Tomorrow night we start with watching the other semi-final live in the stadium, I think it should be possible. And then we will leave there a bit earlier and sit here in front of the television and watch that game," said Klopp.

"It will be absolutely exciting. I'm really delighted for the boys." To add to the complications, the Under-23 side has been weakened further with Curtis Jones and Neco Williams called up to be part of the team in Qatar.

But Klopp says he has faith that the youthful side will be able to put in a strong performance against more experienced opponents.

"I know how a lot of people in the public see it, but if all the football games would be decided before we start, only because of the perception of the people, then most of the games wouldn't be played. I believe, I'm a big believer in everybody has a chance," he said.

"From the boys' point of view, if I would be in their boots I would be excited like hell, looking forward to it like hell, run for my life, all that stuff."

"Just give it a proper try and we will sit and will be with them. All our thoughts are with them, the more experienced players are looking forward to it to watch the game and shout them forward from here," he added.

African athletes seek Indian boost in fight against gender crackdown

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 16

LAST WEEK, 27-year-old Ugandan Annet Negesa was granted asylum in Germany nearly three months after she travelled to Berlin. Negesa, an inter-sex athlete, feared for her life in her country where LGBTQ people are often persecuted — death penalty is being proposed.

Negesa owes her new life in Germany to athletes' gender activist and researcher Dr Payoshni Mitra.

Payoshni was an expert on the panel for defending 800 metres Olympic champion Caster Semenya when the South African challenged the rules, which put a cap on testosterone levels in women athletes. She was also the one Indian sprinter Dutee Chand turned to for support in her case against World Athletics — previously known as IAAF — over similar regulations.

When Negesa, a former world junior bronze medallist in 800 metres, wanted to break her silence about how her career fell apart in 2012 after being asked to undergo surgery to be eligible to participate, she turned to Payoshni.

"A fellow athlete who knew about my plight asked me if I wanted to speak to Payoshni as she could help. I shared my number and got in touch with Payoshni," Negesa says about the first interaction between her and the Kolkata-born activist in June.

They met in the capital of another African country and a bond of trust was built, Negesa says. "Meeting her was very helpful and important in terms of getting courage for standing in front of people and talking about what happened to me. She also helped me connect with people who could help me at a time when I felt my life was in danger in Uganda," says Negesa.

London-based Payoshni has made multiple trips to Africa to talk to athletes whose careers have come to a halt because of female eligibility rules — and its previous version, hyperandrogenism guidelines.

"Negesa felt very unsafe and fearful. Recently in October a gay rights activist was killed in Uganda. There have been several other cases of violence against LGBTQ+ people in Uganda," Payoshni says.

"Negesa identifies as an intersex person and even though we all think that internationally her story was all kept confidential (Differences in Sexual Development - DSD - athletes affected by the eligibility rules), it wasn't. In the immediate sports fraternity, people know which athlete may have a DSD or may have high testosterone. So people in Ugandan athletics community knew what happened to her in 2012, why she suddenly stopped competing. Negesa used to forward me links about incidents of violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda. She was



Middle-distance runner Negesa with athletes' gender activist Payoshni Mitra.

London-based Payoshni has made multiple trips to Africa to talk to athletes whose careers have come to a halt due to female eligibility rules — and its previous version, hyperandrogenism guidelines.

not safe," she says. Presently, Payoshni is helping several athletes from the African continent. Venues of meetings, travel plans and identities are closely guarded so as to avoid the risk of these athletes facing any threat if they are from countries which have strict anti-gay laws.

The initial conversations between the two over a social media platform was often interrupted as Negesa ran out of data and it took time for her to find enough money to get a top-up. No longer the world-class athlete she was post-surgery, Negesa was reduced to doing menial jobs.

In June, just before she reached out to Payoshni, she was working on a site where sheds were being built for cattle.

Payoshni calls athletes like Negesa as "disappeared athletes" because once they are not allowed to compete they fall off the radar and the World Athletics, the governing body for track and field, turns a blind eye to them.

"I am worried because in some conservative countries in the world, like Uganda, the DSD regulations put athletes at risk of receiving such violence. I am working with current athletes, including those in Africa, who have faced public humiliation, loss of livelihood, severe impoverishment, marginalisa-

tion by family and friends for being dropped from certain specific track events. These regulations coerce young athletes to take medical steps, which is what we notice in Negesa's case. Even if one tries to switch her events, she is still outed. This must stop," Payoshni says.

World Athletics' Eligibility Rules for Female Classification requires DSD athletes to take hormone suppressants and lower testosterone levels below five nanomoles per litre (nmol/L) to compete internationally between 400m to a mile.

Negesa is looking forward to a new life in Berlin. She has already contacted a coach to see how she can stay in touch with track and field. She hopes to travel to Uganda but currently makes do with telephone calls to her family. "I have been talking to my parents and siblings and they just keep asking me when I am coming back," Negesa says.

Seeking out Payoshni's help and being part of a documentary by German broadcaster ARD on athletes affected by DSD regulations was a turning point in Negesa's life. "I wanted the athletics body to come to know that what they are doing is not good for athletes. It not only destroys a person's life but also a person's dreams. What happened to me was not right and other female athletes who are affected by DSD regulations should not have to go through such things," she says.

After the documentary was aired, in a statement issued in October, World Athletics said: "The IAAF has never forced any athlete affected by its regulations to undergo surgery, nor paid for any of their treatment. It has in some cases paid for the medical investigation and diagnosis of the athlete by an independent medical centre so the athlete is fully aware of her condition."

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