

BRIEFLY

Wenger pushes for rework of offside rule

FIFA's head of global development Arsene Wenger wants to see a change in the offside law which could end a run of contentious decisions in the game since the introduction of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) but no decision is imminent. Wenger, who was manager of Premier League club Arsenal for 22 years, wants a player to be deemed inside if any part of their body which can legitimately score a goal is level or behind the last defender. It will flip the current rule which states the player is in an offside position if any part of their body they can score with is beyond the line of the last defender. However, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), football's lawmaking body, does not have any concrete proposal for a law change on the agenda for their February 29, Annual General Meeting.

Trump considering Tokyo Olympics trip

US President Donald Trump says he is considering an invitation from Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to attend the Tokyo Olympics. "I was invited by Prime Minister Abe, and we'll make that determination," Trump said late Tuesday during a meeting with members of the US Olympic Committee and organizers of the 2028 Los Angeles Games. "We might. We're going to try," Trump said. The Tokyo Games are scheduled for July and August, which would mean Trump leaving the country during his campaign for re-election in November. Trump told Los Angeles organizers that he fully backs the 2028 Games, and claimed that his personal intervention as president-elect after his 2016 election victory clinched the hosting rights.

Newman back on his feet after crash



Driver Ryan Newman is awake and able to speak after a horrifying last-lap crash at Monday's Daytona 500 resulted in him being rushed to a nearby hospital in serious condition, his racing team said on Tuesday. Ryan Newman remains under the care of doctors at Halifax Medical Center in Daytona Beach, Florida. Roush Fenway Racing said in a statement on social media. "He is awake and speaking with family and doctors." After competitor Ryan Blaney tapped the 42-year-old's car from behind during the NASCAR race, Newman's vehicle careened into a wall, flipped into the air and was hit by another car on the driver's side. Newman, who won the Daytona 500 in 2008, was immediately transported to a hospital following the incident, which stunned on-lookers and fans, including President Donald Trump, who had served as the race's grand marshal. AGENCIES

# It needed Sime-one special

Argentine-managed Atletico Madrid achieve what nobody has done in the Premier League this season —beating Liverpool

REUTERS  
MADRID, FEBRUARY 18

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE holders Liverpool will need to summon another famous European comeback at Anfield next month after they were beaten 1-0 away to Atletico Madrid in their last-16 first leg on Tuesday.

Spain midfielder Saul Niguez struck the only goal of the game in the fourth minute by bundling into the net from close range following a corner, their traditional weapon of choice in recent years.

Liverpool, who have won 25 of 26 Premier League games this season and are on course for a record-smashing title win, missed a series of chances to equalise in the second half, with Mohamed Salah and captain Jordan Henderson coming closest to scoring. Jurgen Klopp's side play at home to Atletico on March 11 in the return leg at Anfield, where they produced an incredible 4-0 win over Barcelona in last year's semi-final second leg after losing the first match 3-0.

"We gave them the best possible start and that gets the fans behind them and then they start falling over and getting under the skin a bit," Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson told reporters. "We put in a decent performance and we know we can be better. We've got a second leg to put it right. They celebrated as if they won the tie after the game. They are coming to Anfield and we know our fans will be there."

Diego Simeone's men have looked nothing like the sides that reached the 2014 and 2016 Champions League finals and challenged Real Madrid and Barcelona's duopoly of La Liga for most of this campaign. They trail league leaders Real by 13 points.

But on Tuesday they produced a vintage defensive display, sitting deep and barely giving Liverpool any space for their attacking trident of Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane to work their usual magic.

"This is the result of hard work and what happens when you never stop believing but keep on going," match-winner Saul told reporters. "We have kept on working even though no-one believes in us and wants to bring us down. I celebrated the goal with so much passion because I was so up for the game, we have been criticised a lot but luckily I was able to help us out."

Atletico's Wanda Metropolitan stadium was the scene of Liverpool's 2-0 triumph over Tottenham Hotspur in last year's final but they faced a very different type of atmosphere this time around.

Clouds of billowing red smoke greeted the Atletico bus when it arrived at the ground as the home supporters stoked up a scorching atmosphere throughout the game to give their side a lift in the middle of their worst season in recent memory.

The home side were happy to let Liverpool dominate possession but despite having 73% of the ball, Klopp's side did not manage a single shot on target, although Atletico defender Felipe did block a goalbound shot from Salah in the first half. Atletico only had one other attempt aside from their goal, when Alvaro Morata fired straight at the legs of Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

Liverpool forward Mane was fortunate not to be sent off late in the first half after clashing with Simeone's side while on a yellow card and he was swiftly substituted by Klopp for Divock Origi, who scored the second goal in last year's final.

He caused little disquiet to Atletico's towering defenders, yet Salah should have levelled with a header which went wide of the near post, while Henderson also narrowly missed the target from inside the area later on.

Klopp upset with Atletico's play

Saul Niguez's scrappy goal in the fourth minute got Atletico off to an ideal start in a fervent atmosphere at the Wanda Metropolitan but Klopp was unhappy with



Atletico Madrid's Saul Niguez (far right) with teammates Koke and Alvaro Morata (left) after scoring the only goal of the Champions League game against Liverpool. Reuters

THE NUMBER GAME

**2** Out of three losses Liverpool have faced this season, in all competitions, two have come in the Champions League. They were outplayed at Napoli in September 2019.

**10** Number of goals Atletico's Saul Niguez has scored in the Champions League. Only Antoine Griezmann, now at Barcelona, has scored more (21) for the Spanish club.

**12** Simeone's Atletico have hit a purple patch, winning 12 out of their 13 home matches in all major European competitions. They have kept a clean sheet on 11 occasions.

some aspects of Diego Simeone's side's play.

"You need to be really strong as a referee in this atmosphere. Already in the first 30 minutes three of their players went to the ground. I don't know what for," Klopp told reporters. "They got a result, the stadium wasn't here to see sensational football. Atletico were here to squeeze a result out of this game, they got the result and so they are happy and we are not that happy."

The biggest flashpoint of a fiery game saw Atletico loudly appeal for Liverpool forward Sadio Mane to be sent off for a second clash with Simeone's side after being booked for an earlier incident with the Croatian.

Klopp substituted the Senegal international immediately after the interval.

"The plan today was to get Sadio out of the game with a yellow card, I was a bit afraid that his opponent would go down if Sadio only takes a deep breath or whatever," added Klopp, who was himself given a booking for protesting on the sidelines.

## Teen star Haaland powers Dortmund to 2-1 win over PSG

REUTERS  
DORTMUND, FEBRUARY 18

BORUSSIA DORTMUND's lethal teenage striker Erling Haaland scored twice in eight minutes to lead them to a 2-1 win over Paris St Germain in their Champions League last 16, first leg on Tuesday.

The Norwegian, 19, who joined in the last transfer window and has eight goals in five Bundesliga matches, stabbed in from close range after a quick-fire passing move in the 69th minute. He then thundered home an unstoppable shot for his second goal in the 77th, two minutes after PSG's Brazilian forward Neymar had levelled for the French champions. Haaland, the first Dortmund player to score in his first league, German Cup and Champions League matches, has reached 10 goals in seven games in Europe's elite competition this season, including eight for Salzburg in the group stage, faster than anyone.

He is only the second teenager to net 10 Champions League goals, after Kylian Mbappe, and is the first teenager to score 10 in a single campaign in the competition. He is also the first player to score with two different teams in the same season in the competition.

"I still need to improve, keep working," Haaland said. "I want to go far in the Champions League. With the second goal I enjoyed the moment." PSG, who were eliminated at this stage of the competition in the previous three seasons, had fit-again Neymar and French striker Mbappe back in the starting lineup but were almost completely shut out by an efficient Dortmund backline.

"Obviously, maybe we deserved the draw but Dortmund were very good," said PSG defender Thomas Meunier.



Dortmund forward Erling Haaland (right) is the first teenager to score 10 goals in a single season in the Champions League. Reuters

"They didn't lose one game here at home this season and we saw today it is so difficult. We thought they had defensive problems, but we didn't create many chances."

In a cautious first half the French side had the slight advantage in possession but Dortmund carved out the only real chance after 27 minutes with a curled shot from Jadon Sancho. Mbappe and Neymar were kept under tight surveillance, with Dortmund defenders Mats Hummels, Lukas Piszczek -- on his 350th appearance for the club in all competitions -- and Dan Axel Zagadou denying the pair any space to manoeuvre.

The Germans' main source of firepower,

the livewire Haaland, was also shackled for about an hour before finally finding some space to instinctively round off a quick Dortmund move. PSG, who will be without midfielder Marco Verratti and Meunier for the return leg after they picked up bookings, drew level through Neymar, who found the net after a fine run down the right by Mbappe. The Brazilian also later hit the post.

But the visitors could do nothing when 17-year-old substitute Giovanni Reyna found Haaland on the edge of the box and the prolific forward released a fiercely struck left-foot shot that gave PSG goalkeeper Keylor Navas no chance.

ASIAN WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

## Meet Aditya Kundu, a wrestler who is a civil inspector and wants to be a lecturer

MIHIR VASAVDA  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

ADITYA KUNDU is the very antithesis of a stereotypical Indian wrestler. He, firstly, is among the handful who aren't from Haryana. He can articulate his bouts. Did not quit studies. Is a inspector of civil works in Chandigarh. And aspires to be a lecturer.

Kundu, 23, was among the three Indian wrestlers who won Greco-Roman bronze medals on the second day of the Asian Championship - Ashu (67kg) and Hardeep (97kg) being the other two. But Kundu's journey to the 72kg podium is rather unique. "I was pushed into wrestling by my father (Ranbir Singh, a former Sports Authority of India coach). Now, I can't stay away from it," he says.

In keeping with the tradition, Kundu started out as a freestyle wrestler and even won a gold medal at the University Games. But a knee injury suffered a few years back meant he couldn't put too much stress on his legs, forcing a move to Greco-Roman, where a wrestler can only use his upper body.

A Commonwealth Championship gold medal in 2017 gave him reassurance that



Teaching is something I see myself doing after wrestling is done. I did not want a 9-to-5 desk job. That's not for me. I need to be on the field, doing something."

ADITYA KUNDU

the switch wouldn't threaten his career. And Wednesday's result, in his maiden continental event and only his second international tournament, would only enhance his reputation. Kundu defeated

Japan's Nao Kusaka 8-0 in the medal bout after losing to Kazakhstan's Ibragim Magomadov in the semifinals.

"It was disappointing but I couldn't dwell on the defeat, just like I can't go overboard with this medal. I need to cut my weight to 67kg so that I can be eligible for the Olympic qualifiers. That's my priority now," he says.

While competing at the Olympics is a 'dream', Kundu knows there's life beyond it. Unlike most, who take up sports to get a government job, Kundu completed his M.Phil last year along with the National Eligibility Test to become a lecturer. He claims to be a 'moderate student, the 75 per cent type'.

"But teaching is something I see myself doing after wrestling is done," he says. "I did not want a 9-to-5 desk job. That's not for me. I need to be on the field, doing something."

So until he becomes a lecturer, Kundu got himself a job as a civil inspector. So, in the next few days, when he isn't grappling on the mat, the Olympic hopeful will be carrying out physical inspection at construction sites in Chandigarh.

"I have Plan A, B, C, D for my life. For a living, I can do more than enough," he says. "But right now, I want to make it to the Olympics team."

IRAN'S BEHROOZ Mohammadali Hedayat received a wake-up call on Wednesday by India's dope control officers. A day before, Hedayat was leading his 87kg Greco-Roman semifinal against Kyrgyzstan's Azat Salidinov 7-0 when he suddenly held his ankle, and hobbled out of the mat with less than 10 seconds remaining in the bout. That put him on the radar of anti-doping officials, as he would have been tested for performance-enhancing drugs if he had finished on the podium.

To test anyone outside the top four, dope control officers need permission from the event organisers; in this case, the WFI. So the United World Wrestling ordered Hedayat to be tested and sought WFI's assent. By then, the Iranian had left the venue. So the dope-control officers paid a surprise visit at his hotel at around 6am on Wednesday and collected his urine sample. That will now be sent to the testing lab in Doha and it'll at least be a couple of weeks before we know if Hedayat was actually injured or was faking it, as the organisers suspect.

No rooms for Indian team

THE THREE bronze India won, though, could barely mask the series of unfortunate events that unfolded at the Championships on

Wednesday.

On the eve of the first day of women's wrestling of this thoroughly-mismanaged event, the Indian team that reached Delhi from their base camp in Lucknow did not have any rooms at the official hotel. The wrestlers and coaches were stranded for several hours before they were ultimately moved to another hotel.

The coaches, it is learnt, weren't provided transport to travel from the hotel to the stadium, where the draw for Thursday's bouts was being conducted. And since the support staff were not given a place to stay, a coach offered them his room while proposing to stay at his residence in Delhi. A source said the team had to skip their training session on Wednesday because of the confusion. However, the Wrestling Federation of India downplayed that bit.

"There was some problem today because we did not have enough rooms. We hope to move the Indian team to the official hotel tomorrow," WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar said.

Technical malfunctions

KUNDU WON a medal on Wednesday but it wasn't without a glitch. Twenty-one seconds



Aditya Kundu (R) and Loiqi Amirkhonzoda wait for their bout to restart after a technical glitch.

into his quarterfinal against Tajikistan's Loiqi Amirkhonzoda, there was a technical malfunction which led to the bout being stopped for almost 10 minutes. Both wrestlers initially stood on the mat while waiting for matters to get sorted out. Later though, they wore their tracksuits and sat on the edge of the mat as organisers got into panic mode in trying to salvage the situation. Kundu eventually won 9-0. Later, the technical officials and volunteers got an earful from WFI president Brj Bhushan Sharan Singh.