

Croatian commitment
Luka Modric returned to training with Real Madrid on Wednesday amid ongoing rumors of the Croatian joining Inter.



Iran's Mes Sungun players celebrate a goal against FC Erem of Kyrgyz Republic in the 2018 AFC Futsal Club Championship in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on August 8, 2018.

Iran's Mes Sungun storms into Asian futsal club semifinals

Iran's Mes Sungun Varzaghan convincingly booked himself a spot in the 2018 AFC Futsal Club Championship semifinals in Indonesia after securing an emphatic 8-3 win over FC Erem of Kyrgyz Republic on Wednesday.

All-Asghar Hassanzadeh opened the scoring within the first minute of the game but the Iranians had no time to enjoy the lead as Dilshat Kadyrov

scored the equalizer moments after the restart, the-afc.com reported.

Mohammadreza Sangsefidi restored Mes Sungun's lead in the third minute before Saied Taqizadeh and Abolqasem Oruji etching their names on the scoreboard in the fifth and seventh minutes respectively.

In the 12th minute, Alireza Asgari dispossessed Erem's defense and easily shot

through the keeper Kirill Ermolov's legs and then Taqizadeh scored his second a minute later to give Mes a five-goal advantage going into the break at the Gor Amongraga.

Less than 10 seconds into the second half, Asgari displayed marvelous footwork when he dribbled past the Erem backline and let loose a right-footed strike to score his second.

Baigazy Uulu pulled one back for the Kyrgyz side in the 33rd minute before Taku Pavel scored just moments later to reduce Erem's deficit.

Stunned by the two goals, Mes Sungun began experimenting with different players donning the power player jersey, looking to solidify itself a spot in the semifinals, while Erem too introduced its fifth attacking member.

However, Erem eventually fell to an own goal by Maskat Allimov in the 37th minute when he deflected Asgari's shot as it ended 8-3.

"We have reached our target, and very soon, we will reach our goal. Altogether, it was expected to have such a result. We will now plan for our semifinals match," Mes Sungun head coach Hamid Bigham said after the game.

Chelsea activates world-record €80m release clause for Kepa



Chelsea is closing in on the signing of Athletic Bilbao's Kepa Arrizabalaga having activated the goalkeeper's €80m (£71m/\$92m) release clause.

The player's representatives and lawyers travelled to La Liga headquarters in Valencia to pay the fee, with Kepa now due to travel to London to undergo a medical and finalize personal terms, goal.com reported.

Athletic confirmed that the release clause had been paid on Wednesday, issuing a statement that read, "The player Kepa Arrizabalaga has met the require-

ments for the valid unilateral termination of the contract that linked him to Athletic Club.

"Athletic thanks the player for his contribution during the time he has remained with our club."

The Kepa deal will break the club's previous transfer record, set last season when the Blues signed Alvaro Morata from Real Madrid in an initial €58m (\$75m) deal, potentially rising to €70m (\$90m).

It will also make Kepa the world's most expensive goalkeeper, less than a month after Alisson joined Liverpool in a

€65m (£73m/\$85m) move.

The move for the Spaniard will free up Thibaut Courtois to complete a switch to Real Madrid, with the Belgian having been absent from training as he looked to force through a switch to Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid has been keen to bring in Courtois in a €35m deal (£31m/\$40m) for some time now, where the funds expected from that transfer being used by the Blues to secure Athletic goalkeeper Kepa.

And the Blues' transfer business isn't likely to end with Kepa - goal.com understands Maurizio Sarri's side is in talks over a loan move for Madrid midfielder Mateo Kovacic.

Indeed, Madrid boss Julen Lopetegui has revealed that his side will attempt to find a "high level replacement" should Kovacic complete a switch to Stamford Bridge.

Time is against Sarri and Chelsea, however, with the transfer window for Premier League clubs closing at 5pm BST today.

Chelsea gets its Premier League campaign underway on Saturday with an away trip to David Wagner's Huddersfield Town.

Hughes, Asher-Smith complete European 100m double for Britain

Britain's Zharnel Hughes and Dina Asher-Smith were crowned as Europe's fastest sprinters on Tuesday, winning high-quality editions of the blue riband 100m final at the European Championships.

On a hot, still evening in the Olympic Stadium where Usain Bolt set the world record of 9.58 seconds, Hughes, an occasional training partner of the great Jamaican back in Kingston, set a Championship record of 9.95 to pip fast-finishing teammate Reece Prescod by one-hundredth of a second, Reuters reported.

The race to find the continent's fastest woman saw Asher-Smith end the 100m reign of Dutchwoman Daphne Schippers in brilliant style, clocking 10.85, equaling the world's fastest time this year and setting a British record.

The 22-year-old Asher-Smith, the reigning European 200m champion, surged clear early in the race, with Germany's Gina Luekenkemper taking silver in 10.98 and Schippers bronze in a season's best 10.99.

It is the first time Britain has been able to boast both the men's and women's champion at the same edition in the 84-year history of the Championships.

The country's sprint domination on the opening day of finals was underlined by Britain boasting three men in the top four, with Chijindu 'CJ' Ujah clocking 10.06 behind Turkish bronze medalist Jak Ali Harvey (10.01).

"I am happy and the job is done. I felt a bit of cramp so I don't think I could have

gone any faster but I'm just happy," said Hughes, who was almost overhauled by Prescod as the silver medalist dipped under 10 seconds for the first time.

The 23-year-old Hughes was born and

As for any comparisons with his illustrious friend, Hughes just shrugged, "Usain Bolt did what he did at this stadium. I did the championships record and I am happy for that."



Britain's Zharnel Hughes (R) and Filippo Tortu of Italy are in action in the men's 100m final at the 2018 European Championships in Olympic Stadium in Berlin, Germany, on August 7, 2018.

raised in the British Overseas Territory of Anguilla but has competed internationally for Britain for the past three years.

He has made rapid strides under Bolt's former coach Glen Mills but was left heartbroken in the Commonwealth Games when he was celebrating his 200m victory only to be told he had been disqualified for obstructing Trinidad's Jereme Richards.

A beaming Asher-Smith, who looks set to be one of athletics' new shining personalities, said after her win, "I'm really really happy, I knew I had it in my legs. I did everything right."

"In the heats, I sat in the blocks like I was a slug and my reaction time was 0.2 (of a second) and I was like, 'what you doing, Dina, you're here to run. I was really happy to nail it in the final.'"

Pogba keen to leave United for Barcelona



ALEXANDER NEMENOV/AFF

France World Cup star Paul Pogba is determined to end his fractious relationship with Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho and move to Barcelona, according to British media reports on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old - who scored in the 4-2 World Cup final win over Croatia - has agreed terms with Barcelona for a deal worth €89.5 million (\$115 million, €100 million) over five years, according to the Daily Mail.

The reported agreement would see him pick up €346,000 a week, almost double what he earns at United.

The Sun claims the former Juventus star - who joined United for a then world-record fee of €89 million in 2016 - has demanded the Premier League side increase his wages from €180,000 to €380,000 a week so he is paid almost on a par with Chilean star Alexis Sanchez, otherwise he will leave.

United, though, would be most re-

luctant to sell him, with the Daily Mail reporting the Red Devils have already rejected a bid by Barcelona of €44.5 million plus Colombian central defender Yerry Mina and Portuguese midfielder Andre Gomes.

Mourinho has expressed his frustration over the club's transfer policy, and Pogba's departure would leave little time for executive chairman Ed Woodward to find a suitable replacement with the Premier League transfer window due to close today.

The club has had to deny the claim that Pogba sent a text message to Woodward demanding he be allowed to leave.

The Frenchman is keen to move to Barcelona - the Spanish transfer window does not shut till the end of the month - to play with Argentina superstar Lionel Messi, while his close friend and former Juventus teammate Arturo Vidal also recently moved to the Catalan giant.

'Play your part'

Essentially, though, Pogba's unhappiness stems from the deterioration in his relationship with Mourinho, who not only does he blame for his muted performances for United since his move but also for his qualified praise of his performances for France at the World Cup.

"Paul was like the (France) team. He started average and ended top," Mourinho told beIN Sports on United's unhappy tour of the United States last week.

Pogba, though, is believed to have been more upset by what followed in the interview as Mourinho implied being in an enclosed environment over six weeks ensured he focused just on football and not on outside matters such as commercial contracts.

Pogba's super agent Mino Raiola - who was also instrumental in bringing

Romelu Lukaku to United last summer - has remained out of the fray, refusing to comment on links with Barcelona.

"I will never make declarations about Paul," said the Dutch-Italian agent, who is reported to have earned just over €40 million when Pogba moved to United.

"You have to speak to Manchester United," added Raiola.

Former United star Rio Ferdinand told Wednesday's edition of the Daily Mail that Mourinho needed to fit the team around Pogba's sublime talent, but accepted the player needed to adapt too.

"It's down to the manager to get the best out of him, setting the team up and setting Pogba up in the right way to achieve the best," said the former England central defender.

"But Pogba needs to play his part in that."

"It's a case of the player and manager getting an understanding for each other and getting the best out of the player."

Lopetegui avoids Bale, Ronaldo comparisons

Gareth Bale is under no pressure to be the new Cristiano Ronaldo at Real Madrid, said head coach Julen Lopetegui.

Bale was on target in Madrid's 2-1 International Champions Cup win over Roma after brilliantly setting up Marco Asensio's opener in New Jersey, FourFourTwo reported.

Ronaldo's departure to Juventus has placed extra onus upon the Wales star ahead of the new campaign but, while Lopetegui is delighted by his 29-year-old attacker's form, he is not in the business of placing extra pressure on his shoulders with an unhelpful comparison.

"It's not about replacing someone or filling that role. It's about being part of a team," the former Spain boss told reporters.

"Gareth is obviously a great player. He has been and he will be, but it's not for me to make comparisons. That's for you guys."

"He doesn't put the team on his back. He's a great player that gives the best for his team, but the team has to play for each other."

"It's not about him putting the team on his back. It's about the team pushing everybody. He's a great player and I'm convinced he'll have a great season."

Madrid faces city rival Atletico in the UEFA Super Cup in Tallinn next Wednesday before kicking off its La Liga campaign against Getafe.

Former world 400m hurdles champion Bett dies aged 28



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The Kenyan former world 400m hurdles champion Nicholas Bett died in a car crash at the age of 28.

Bett, the 2015 world champion, was killed in an early-morning crash on Wednesday in the country's high-altitude training region, the Guardian reported.

Bett had returned from the African championships in Nigeria on Monday.

Bett died on the road between Eldoret and Kapsabet, two of Kenya's famed distance-running training towns in the Rift Valley.

Bett's Toyota Prado SUV hit bumps in the road and rolled, his coach, Vincent Mumo, said. Mumo said the accident happened around 6 a.m.

Bett became the first Kenyan to win a gold medal in a distance shorter than 800m when he triumphed in the 400m hurdles at the world championships in Beijing in 2015.

He also won bronze medals at the African championships in 2014 in the 400 hurdles and 4x400m relay.

Bett's twin brother, Aron, was a member of the Kenya 4x400m relay team who won gold at the African championships.