

UK ATHLETICS: RESET WORLD RECORDS AMID DOPING CRISIS

LONDON: All world records in track and field should be reset and lifetime bans should be imposed on serious drug cheats to clean up the sport amid its global doping crisis, the governing body of British athletics said yesterday.

UK Athletics published "A Manifesto for Clean Athletes" containing 14 proposals aimed at restoring credibility to a sport battered by allegations of widespread doping, cover-ups and corruption.

"The integrity of athletics was challenged as never before in 2015," UK Athletics chairman Ed Warner said. "Clean athletes and sports fans the world over

have been let down. Trust in the sport is at its lowest point for decades."

One of the federation's proposals is to "investigate the implications of drawing a line under all pre-existing sport records ... and commencing a new set of records." Triple-jumper Jonathan Edwards and marathon runner Paula Radcliffe are current British world-record holders.

UK Athletics also proposed a lifetime ban for British athletes guilty of a serious anti-doping violation, rather than the current standard of four-year suspensions. The British Olympic Association previously had a lifetime ban for drug cheats, but the policy

was struck down after the World Anti-Doping Agency found the rule non-compliant with its code. "Greater transparency, tougher sanctions, longer bans - and even resetting the clock on world records for a new era - we should be open to do whatever it takes to restore credibility in the sport," Warner said. UK Athletics also proposed: Creation of a public register of athletes being tested. Sponsors should withhold support of athletes caught doping.

Member federations should be accountable for loss of prize money to athletes of other nationalities if their own athlete's medal winning result is later annulled.

Minimum bans for serious doping offenses should be extended to eight years to ensure cheats miss two Olympic and Paralympic cycles. The supply or procurement of performance-enhancing drugs should be criminalized. "UKA believes the time has come for radical reform if we are to help restore trust in the sport," Warner said. "Athletics needs to act very differently if we are to move on from the crisis facing the sport." Russia is currently banned from international track and field after a report commissioned by WADA alleged widespread doping and cover-ups in the country. Last week, two Russian officials and the son of

former IAAF president Lamine Diack were banned for life last week for engaging in blackmail, bribery and extortion to cover up a Russian doping case. Lamine Diack also is under criminal investigation in France over allegations he took payments for deferring sanctions against Russian drugs cheats.

The IAAF said it welcomed the proposals from UK Athletics, adding: "We look forward to reviewing the recommendations in full over the coming days."

Dick Pound, chairman of the WADA's independent commission, will announce the second part of the findings of his investigation on Thursday. — AP

MARADONA OFFERS PRAISE ON GOLDEN DAY FOR NAPOLI

MILAN: Diego Maradona offered glowing praise as Napoli boosted their hopes of a first Serie A title since 1990 by going two points clear of champions Juventus and Inter Milan. The last time Napoli were top of the table at the halfway stage of the season in Italy was 26 years ago, when Maradona led the 'Partenopei' to the second of their two league titles in 1990.

But Fiorentina's shock 3-1 defeat to Lazio on Saturday whet Napoli's appetite, and it grew considerably earlier Sunday when Inter suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to Sassuolo at the San Siro.

Napoli pounced on those setbacks to hammer league new boys Frosinone in a one-sided encounter that saw Gonzalo Higuain hit a brace, including one from the spot, to take his goals tally to 18 goals from 19 games. Sarri has consistently played down Napoli's title hopes and has every reason after Juventus beat Sampdoria 2-1 in Genoa to claim their ninth victory on the trot to move two places up to second.

Paul Pogba broke the deadlock on 17 minutes with an angled strike and Sami Khedira found himself in acres of space to double the champions' lead on 46 minutes before Antonio Cassano hit a consolation just after the hour. Inter dropped to third due to inferior goal difference, while Fiorentina are in fourth place at three points behind and Roma are seven points off the pace in fifth after being held 1-1 by AC Milan on Saturday. Only four months ago Maradona publicly embarrassed Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri following an inauspicious start to the campaign. On that occasion Sarri, a lifelong Napoli and Maradona fan, soaked up the criticism and on Sunday it was time for payback.

"It's with great joy that I heard about Napoli's result, which we've all been waiting on for many years," said Maradona in a message sent to Sky Sport Italia. "Knowing that the city of Naples and my Neapolitan fans

can enjoy such emotion makes me even more happy for them. Go on Napoli. Now I want us to win the league title."

Against a Frosinone side fighting for top flight survival, Napoli took a 20th minute lead when Raul Albiol coolly flicked a volley into the net at the back post following a corner.

Higuain doubled Napoli's lead from the penalty spot on the half-hour and claimed his second in two crazy, second-half minutes that saw captain Marek Hamsik on target. Frosinone's defence backed off as Hamsik ran towards the edge of the area before unleashing a drive that beat Massimo Zappino down low in the 59th minute. Barely 60 seconds later, Higuain muscled his way through two defenders to beat Zappino down low as the 'keeper came rushing out to block. The goals took the Argentinian's tally to 18 from 19 games, an impressive return given the league's 'Capocannoniere' (top scorer) award has been won the past two seasons with 22 goals.

Sarri replaced Higuain with Manolo Gabbiadini 20 minutes into the second half, and six minutes later the striker hit Napoli's fifth, a superb curling effort that sneaked into the far top corner.

Napoli looked to be heading for their second 5-0 win of the season having routed Lazio by the same scoreline in September, but with nine minutes remaining Paolo Sammarco swung at a short pass on the right side of the area to beat visiting 'keeper Pepe Reina with an angled drive. Sarri, who celebrated his 57th birthday on Sunday, was quick to underline the persistent threat of Juventus. "They've won four titles in four years, so you could say they've got something extra we don't," he said.

"I'm the only one who's been consistent in saying that, even when Juve were down near the bottom of the table, they would come fighting back with a series of wins and that's what they're doing." — AFP



VIGO: RC Celta's Sergio Gomez challenges for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Yannick Carrasco during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Celta Vigo and Atletico Madrid at the Balaidos stadium in Vigo, Spain Sunday. — AP

ATLETICO MADRID BEAT CELTA TO REGAIN SPANISH LEAGUE LEAD

MADRID: Atletico Madrid returned to the top of the Spanish league on Sunday after second-half goals from Antoine Griezmann and Yannick Carrasco secured a 2-0 win against Celta Vigo.

Griezmann scored from close range in the 49th minute after a nice exchange of passes with Luciano Vietto and Carrasco sealed the victory in the 80th after getting past a couple of Celta defenders outside the area.

Atletico has 44 points, two more than Barcelona, which beat Granada 4-0 with a hat trick by Lionel Messi on Saturday. Barcelona has a game in hand after playing in the Club World Cup late last year.

Real Madrid, which routed Deportivo La Coruna 5-0 on Saturday in club great Zinedine Zidane's first match as coach, is third with 40

points after 19 rounds. There were few significant scoring chances in bad weather at the Balaidos in Vigo, but Griezmann's goal was enough for Atletico to start relying on its solid defense. Atletico has the league's best defense at the halfway stage of the season, having conceded only eight goals. It was the 14th league victory for Diego Simeone's team, and seventh in its last eight matches. Its only setback was a 1-0 loss at Malaga three rounds ago. Celta was coming off two straight league losses, but had defeated Cadiz 3-0 on Wednesday in the first leg of the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey. It remains fifth in the standings despite Sunday's loss, but 13 points behind leader Atletico Madrid.

Celta was without forward Manuel "Nolito" Agudo, who has been nursing a muscle injury in

his right leg. Earlier Sunday, striker Cedric Bakambu scored a goal in each half as fourth-place Villarreal defeated Sporting Gijon 2-0 to reach 39 points.

Bakambu scored in the 26th and 51st minutes at the Estadio El Madrigal to give Villarreal its sixth consecutive league victory.

Real Sociedad won 2-0 against visiting Valencia with goals by Brazilian striker Jonathas in the 79th and 82nd.

Valencia remains winless in the league since signing former Manchester United defender Gary Neville as its coach. The team has drawn three matches and lost twice since the former England player took over. Valencia's winless streak in the league reached eight matches, and it's 11th in the 20 team standings. — AP



KUWAIT, SALMIYA CLASH TODAY IN CROWN PRINCE CUP FINAL

KUWAIT: The final match of the Crown Prince 23rd Cup between Kuwait and Salmiya sporting clubs will be held today at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Kuwait Club is looking forward to win its sixth title in the competition's history after winning it five times in 1994, 2003, 2008, 2010 and 2011, while Salmiya is hoping to get its second title after the first achievement in 2001.

The qualification of Salmiya and Kuwait for the final competition which includes a football festival and valuable gifts for people attending the match, came after winning on Sulaybiyah and Al-Arabi counterparts. The last competition between the two teams was in November 27 last year during VIVA League and ended in a positive draw. Qadsia Club holds the record for the number of times win-

ning the competition for eight times, followed by the Al-Arabi seven times and then Kuwait, Salmiya, along with Kazma, which won the title once in 1995. Meanwhile, Kuwait Sport Club Manager Mohammad Ibrahim, and Salmiya Manager Salman Al-Sarbel said the match will be difficult, adding during the press conference that was held at Kuwait Football Association that opportunities must be utilized efficiently. Ibrahim said the match brings the two best teams in the country together based on their results both in this tournament and the league.

He said his team, Kuwait, is suffering from injuries. Al-Sarbel said Kuwait team has enough experience in dealing with final matches, though his team, Salmiya, is ready for the match and does not have any injured players as Musaed Nada is ready to play.



MARSEILLE: Marseille's French goalkeeper Steve Mandanda, in action during the League One soccer match between Marseille and Guingamp, at the Velodrome Stadium, in Marseille, southern France, Sunday. — AP

FALLEN FIFA CHIEF BLATTER TO APPEAL EIGHT-YEAR BAN

PARIS: Fallen FIFA chief Sepp Blatter will appeal against his eight-year ban, his lawyer said Sunday, joining fellow suspended official Michel Platini in a fight to clear his name.

"We will appeal it, of course," Blatter's US-based attorney Richard Cullen confirmed to AFP in an email. The confirmation came after FIFA's ethics tribunal on Saturday revealed it had provided Blatter and UEFA president Platini with the reasons for imposing the ban, clearing the way for both men to appeal. A lawyer for Platini, who has also been banned for eight years, had earlier confirmed an appeal would be launched. In December, FIFA's ethics tribunal ruled both men had abused their positions over a 2 million Swiss francs (\$2 million, 1.8 million euros) payment made to Platini in 2011 for work carried out between 1999 and 2002.

Blatter, who has headed FIFA since 1998, was also fined 50,000 Swiss francs while Platini, a FIFA vice-president, was fined 80,000 Swiss francs. The court insisted there was "no legal basis" for the payment that Blatter authorized for Platini in 2011.

Platini's lawyer Thibaud d'Ales said Saturday that his 60-year-old client had indeed received the reasons behind the ban. "We'll read them, analyse them and launch an appeal on Monday," d'Ales said. The tribunal did not provide further details of the reasoning behind its decision.

Instead it stressed it had now "fulfilled its commitment to provide the grounds for the respective decisions to Mr Blatter and Mr Platini within the first half of January 2016."

"After receiving the grounds for the decisions, both officials may lodge an appeal with the FIFA Appeal Committee," the statement said.

If that appeal is rejected, the two men can appeal further to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the highest tribunal in sports. At the time of the verdict, both men angrily vowed to fight the bans, which started immediately.

The tribunal decision promises to end 79-year-old Blatter's four decades with FIFA in disgrace. It also dealt a devastating blow to Platini's hopes of taking over as head of FIFA in an election on February 26. The UEFA president pulled out of the

race earlier this week, saying the ban has made it impossible for him to put together a campaign to take on the sport's most powerful job.

He told French sports newspaper L'Equipe that he no longer had "the time nor the means to go to the voters, to meet people, to fight against the oth-

er candidates. "In withdrawing, I am dedicating myself to my defence." FIFA has since last May been rocked to its core by a cascade of corruption charges and arrests that culminated with the implication of the two long considered world football's most powerful men. — AP



GENOA: Juventus' Sami Khedira center, is celebrated by his teammates after scoring a goal during a Serie A soccer match between Sampdoria and Juventus Milan, in Genoa, Italy, Sunday. — AP