

SOCCER

SWEDEN VETERAN LARSSON HAS NO PLANS TO RETIRE

STOCKHOLM: Sweden stalwart Sebastian Larsson may have missed the autumn internationals due to a knee operation but there is no end in sight for the 31-year-old who is back in the squad aiming to increase his haul of 87 caps. With his contract at English Premier League club Sunderland set to run out in June, and a top flight club having relocated to his Swedish home town of Eskilstuna, talk has been rife that Larsson was set to either move home or quit the game entirely. However, the midfielder has no plans to end his career and is set to continue playing for the foreseeable future. "Honestly, I don't see the end of my career any time soon and I hope to play on for another few years," he told Reuters following a training session in the Swedish capital ahead of the World Cup qualifier against Belarus today.

"I feel motivated and hungry, but where that will be we'll have to wait and see. I'm not too stressed about it.

"You've got to keep your options open. I've loved England throughout my career. The Premier League has been great for me. Obviously, I wouldn't be against playing in England, but you have to keep your options open. "I'll have a look in the summer, see what's available and make a decision from there."

Larsson was his usual industrious self at Euro 2016, appearing in all three group games, but could not prevent Sweden finishing bottom of the section with one point.

But unlike other senior squad members, such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Kim Kallstrom and Andreas Isaksson, he chose not to hang up his international boots after Sweden's early exit.

With coach Erik Hamren having been replaced by Jan Andersson, Larsson is adapting to a new way of working but he won't be quitting the national team any time soon.

"I haven't been here long enough to notice any changes yet, as the days go by I'm sure there will be," he said. "Each manager has his own way of doing things, so I'll just have to try to pick it up as I go along."

FATHER FIGURE

He returns to a team who are third in World Cup qualifying Group A with seven points from four games, three off leaders France and behind second-placed Netherlands on goal difference. After playing Belarus, who are fifth with two points, Sweden face European champions Portugal in a friendly next Tuesday.

Larsson is the second-oldest player in the squad and smiles at the suggestion he is a father figure for the younger players. "I don't see myself as the granddad just yet, so we'll have to see how we go. Obviously, I've got a lot of experience and I have to use that to help the younger lads when that is needed," he said. Having spent the best part of six years at Sunderland, who are again involved in a relegation battle, the international break provides Larsson with a chance to get away from the pressure of their struggle at the bottom of the table. —Reuters



DALLAS: Dallas Mavericks guard Seth Curry (30) goes up for a shot between Los Angeles Clippers' DeAndre Jordan (6) and Austin Rivers, right, in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas, Thursday. Curry scored 23 points in the 97-95 Mavericks win. — AP

BASKETBALL

BARNES' LATE BASKET STEAL PUT MAVS PAST CLIPPERS

DALLAS: Mavericks forward Harrison Barnes buried the go-ahead jumper and made a big steal with 3.9 seconds to go to give Dallas a 97-95 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Thursday. It was a critical loss for the Clippers, who saw their three-game win streak end and also saw their chances to take over the No. 4 seed in the Western Conference playoff chase diminished. Los Angeles returns home for a Saturday matinee against No. 4 seed Utah, which holds a 1 1/2-game lead over the Clippers. Blake Griffin had a chance to regain the lead in the final seconds, but as he made his move in the paint, Barnes managed to swipe the ball away. The Clippers were afforded one last chance to win with 0.9 seconds to go, but guard J.J. Redick's leaning three-point attempt just missed off the back iron.

NETS 126, SUNS 98

Brook Lopez scored 12 of his 19 points in the third quarter as Brooklyn rallied from an early 15-point deficit and pulled away for a rout of Phoenix. Lopez saw his string of 20-plus-point games end at six as he sat out the fourth quarter. His showing helped the Nets win consecutive games for the first time since home wins over the Cleveland Cavaliers and Indiana Pacers on March 24 and 26, 2016. Reserve KJ McDaniels added a season-high 16 points and Jeremy Lin added 13 after sitting Tuesday's win over the Detroit Pistons with a sprained right ankle. Trevor Booker contributed 14 while Quincy Acy chipped in 12 as the Nets outscored the Suns 111-68 in the final 38:08 and received a season-high 81 points from reserves.

RAPTORS 101, HEAT 84

DeMar DeRozan scored 40 points, and the Raptors rallied from an early 15-point deficit to defeat the Heat. DeRozan shot 14-of-25 from the field and made 12 of 13 free throws as Toronto won its fourth straight. In one first-quarter stretch, DeRozan scored 14 consecutive points for a Raptors lineup still without starting point guard Kyle Lowry, who remains sidelined because of an injury to his right wrist. Miami got 16 points and 14 rebounds from Hassan Whiteside.

SPURS 97, GRIZZLIES 90

LaMarcus Aldridge poured in 23 points and Kawhi Leonard added 19 as San Antonio finally found a way to beat Memphis. With Memphis within 92-87 in the final 30 seconds, the Spurs' Tony Parker hit a ringing three-pointer with the shot clock winding down to give San Antonio a final bit of breathing room. The win was the third straight for the Spurs but just the first in three games this season against Memphis, which always gives San Antonio fits.

TRAIL BLAZERS 110, KNICKS 95

Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum combined for 50 points as Portland swept past New York at Moda Center. Lillard scored 30 points and McCollum added 20 for the Trail Blazers, who won for the ninth time in 12 outings. Jusuf Nurkic contributed 16 points and 10 rebounds for Portland. Kristaps Porzingis scored 18 points and Courtney Lee chipped in 16 for the Knicks, who have lost seven of their last eight contests. — Reuters

NBA Results/Standings

Portland 110, NY Knicks 95; Dallas 97, LA Clippers 95; San Antonio 97, Memphis 90; Brooklyn 126, Phoenix 98; Toronto 101, Miami 84.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Boston	46	26	.639	-
Toronto	43	29	.597	3
NY Knicks	27	45	.375	19
Philadelphia	26	45	.366	19.5
Brooklyn	15	56	.211	30.5

Central Division

Cleveland	46	24	.657	-
Milwaukee	36	35	.507	10.5
Indiana	36	35	.507	10.5
Chicago	34	38	.472	13
Detroit	34	38	.472	13

Southeast Division

Washington	43	28	.606	-
Atlanta	37	34	.521	6
Miami	35	37	.486	8.5
Charlotte	32	39	.451	11
Orlando	26	46	.361	17.5

Western Conference

Northwest Division

Utah	44	28	.611	-
Oklahoma City	41	30	.577	2.5
Denver	34	37	.479	9.5
Portland	33	38	.465	10.5
Minnesota	28	42	.400	15

Pacific Division

Golden State	57	14	.803	-
LA Clippers	43	30	.589	15
Sacramento	27	44	.380	30
Phoenix	22	50	.306	35.5
LA Lakers	20	51	.282	37

Southwest Division

San Antonio	55	16	.775	-
Houston	49	22	.690	6
Memphis	40	32	.556	15.5
Dallas	31	40	.437	24