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Race-row Ozil fires Arsenal to a big win

In Germany, Ozil racism row sparks #MeTwo debate



SINGAPORE: Arsenal's Mesut Ozil (left) controls the ball in front of Paris Saint-Germain's Antoine Bernede during the International Champions Cup football match between Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain in Singapore yesterday.—AFP

SINGAPORE: Mesut Ozil fired Arsenal to a 5-1 friendly win over Paris Saint-Germain yesterday as he cast aside a turbulent week after quitting Germany's national team claiming racism. Ozil put Arsenal ahead in the 13th minute before Alexandre Lacazette's quickfire double and late strikes from Rob Holding and Eddie Nketiah against a youthful PSG side. The International Champions Cup win in Singapore was also a boost for Arsenal's new manager Unai Emery against his former club, now under Germany's Thomas Tuchel.

Ozil, named as captain after his torrid week, was quickly into his stride with midfield partner Henrikh Mkhitaryan against a PSG line-up shorn of its World Cup stars. He opened the scoring with a tap-in at the far post after Mkhitaryan released Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in space and the Gabonese forward passed back across the face. Ozil's exquisite flick during a length-of-the-pitch move nearly produced Arsenal's second but Gianluigi Buffon saved well from Nigeria's Alex Iwobi. The Italian great also denied Aubameyang and Mkhitaryan, while at the other end teenager Timothy Weah twice went close and Christopher Nkunku curled one over.

After the break, an Nkunku free kick drew a flying save from Arsenal substitute Emiliano Martinez, before Weah went down for a 59th-minute penalty which Nkunku converted with aplomb. But Lacazette hit back with two goals in four minutes—first a sumptuous, near-post heel-flick which sailed past the nonplussed Buffon, and then a close-range header. Substitute defender Holding added the fourth with a towering header on 87 minutes, before Nketiah swept home Arsenal's fifth with the last kick of the game. Ozil, who is of Turkish heritage, sent shockwaves through Germany this week when he quit the national team complaining of "racism and disrespect" from football authorities.

#MeTwo debate

Meanwhile, thousands of people in Germany with migrant backgrounds are sharing stories of everyday discrimination under the hashtag #MeTwo, inspired by football star Mesut Ozil's resignation from Germany's national team over racism. "When I'm the only non-white person in a crowded train and the police gets in, I'm the only one who is asked to show ID," tweeted Der Spiegel reporter Hasnain Kazim, as the discussion trended on German

Twitter Friday.

The campaign was launched earlier this week by Turkish-origin author and rights activist Ali Can, who dubbed it #MeTwo - a play on the #MeToo movement that highlights women's experiences of sexual harassment, and a comment by Ozil about having "two hearts". Ozil dropped a bombshell on Sunday when he announced in a stinging letter that he would no longer play for Germany after he faced racist abuse for posing for a picture alongside Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"I have two hearts, one German and one Turkish," wrote Ozil, who accused the German Football Federation (DFB) of failing to stand up for him after critics questioned his patriotism and singled him out for blame after Germany's World Cup flop. The controversy has prompted heated debate in German media about racism and integration. "We need a #MeToo debate for people with a migrant background," Can, who has lived in Germany since he was a toddler, said in a video posted online on Tuesday.

"I am more than just one identity. I feel at home in Germany... at the same I can feel connected to another country," he said.

"The two sides blend together, one doesn't exclude the other." The #MeTwo hashtag quickly went viral as thousands posted about their run-ins with prejudice and racism in Germany. "You're well integrated for a Turk" and "Don't you wear a headscarf?" were cited as "classic examples" of remarks endured by Twitter user Hatdische Indsche. Many also complained about discrimination from landlords in the search for a flat or house, because of their skin color or foreign-sounding names.

"When you can't get an answer, but your German girlfriend gets instant replies to the same offer. After we got married and she changed her name, she stopped getting answers too," wrote Twitter user Oguz Yilmaz. Malcolm Oscar Uzoma Odeh-Ohanwe, who tweets as MalcolmMusic, recounted being called "a monkey" at high school years ago when he was a dread-locked teenager. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas praised the campaign, saying it was "impressive and painful" to see how many stories were flooding in. "If you think racism in Germany is no longer a problem, I recommend reading through all the #MeTwo tweets," he tweeted. "Let us raise our voice with them: against racism, anytime, anywhere."—Agencies

Thomas virtually secures Tour de France title

ESPELETTE: Britain's Geraint Thomas virtually secured his maiden Tour de France triumph after finishing third in the penultimate stage time trial in the Basque country yesterday. Thomas, of Team Sky, held a 2min 05sec overnight lead on Dutch rival Tom Dumoulin (Sunweb) ahead of the 31km race against the clock from Saint-Pee-Sur-Nivelle to Espelette. Dumoulin is the world time trial champion, and he stayed true to form by powering over the technical course in a time of 40 min 50sec to leave Thomas 14secs in arrears.

But it was only enough to secure his virtual runner-up place in the race, Dumoulin's second in a Grand Tour this

year after he finished runner-up to Chris Froome at the Giro d'Italia in May. Froome, the defending and four-time Tour de France champion, produced the second best performance of the day, finishing just one second behind Dumoulin to move back up to third place overall. Froome had been pushed down to fourth, and off the podium, when Primoz Roglic's attack and consequent stage win in the final day in the mountains Friday left the Kenyan-born Briton struggling.

But Slovenian Roglic, of Lotto-Jumbo, failed to follow up his feat on the time trial. He finished seventh at 1:12 behind Dumoulin. Thomas, who has helped Froome win several of his six Grand Tour titles, celebrated at the end of the stage by jumping into the arms of his wife. Barring catastrophe today, when the peloton rides from Houilles to Paris in festive spirit before the sprinters take over for a battle on the Champs Elysees, Thomas will win Team Sky's sixth yellow jersey from the last seven editions of the race. Bradley Wiggins won their first, in 2012, while Froome won the race in 2013 and 2015-2017.—AFP



ESPELETTE: Great Britain's Geraint Thomas, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, rides during the 20th stage of the 105th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, a 31-kilometer individual time-trial between Saint-Pee-sur-Nivelle and Espelette, southwestern France yesterday. — AFP