

WALES OVERTAKE ENGLAND IN FIFA WORLD RANKINGS

LONDON: Propelled by an impressive European Championship campaign, Wales climbed 15 places to move into 11th, two places ahead of England, in the FIFA world rankings released yesterday.

Chris Coleman's charges reached the last four in France in Wales' first major tournament since 1958 and lost to eventual winners Portugal. England, the 1966 World Cup winners, exited in the round of 16 after a humili-

ating defeat to Iceland which saw them drop two places to 13th.

Iceland, the smallest nation ever to have qualified for the European Championship, with a population of 330,000, saw their fairy-tale run end in the quarter-finals but saw their rankings jump 12 places to 22.

There were no changes in the top five rankings with Copa America finalists Argentina retaining top spot, followed by

Belgium, Colombia, Germany and Chile. Five times World champions Brazil, who failed to progress past the group stages of Copa America for the first time since 1987, are on the brink of dropping out of the top 10, ranked at ninth, ahead of Italy.

European Championship finalists France jumped 10 places to move to 7th, one place behind winners Portugal.

Top 10 (last month's positions in brackets)

1. Argentina (1)
2. Belgium (2)
3. Colombia (3)
4. Germany (4)
5. Chile (5)
6. Portugal (8)
7. France (17)
8. Spain (6)
9. Brazil (7)
10. Italy (12). — Reuters

DEMPSEY SPARKS SURGE, SOUNDERS BEAT FC DALLAS

SEATTLE: Andreas Ivanschitz knew a game like this was coming for the Seattle Sounders. It came in a big way Wednesday night against the best team in MLS. Clint Dempsey, Ivanschitz and Jordan Morris scored during a 15-minute span of the first half and the Sounders routed league-leading FC Dallas 5-0 to snap a four-game winless streak.

Joevin Jones and Cristian Roldan added second-half goals for the Sounders (6-10-2), who started the night with the lowest goal total in the league (14).

Ivanschitz, an Austrian midfielder, helped set up the first goal when his shot led to a Seattle penalty kick, then scored the second, and assisted on the fifth.

"It was a perfect night. It feels great for us," Ivanschitz said. "After so many games where we ended up losing and were pretty disappointed because we played great and didn't score, it was a frustrating time for us. But this win tonight is well deserved because we started pretty well, we were on our front foot, we pressed them pretty high, and we finished up our chances."

Dempsey scored in the 6th minute when he drilled a penalty kick past goalkeeper Chris Seitz for his third goal of the year. The PK was set up when defender Maynor Figueroa was called for an intentional hand ball on a shot by Ivanschitz just outside of the 6-yard box and shown the red card. Dempsey's kick went high into the right side of the net, with Seitz leaping the opposite way.

That halted a 321-minute shutout streak for Dallas (11-6-4). Seattle had not scored on its home field since a 2-0 victory against San Jose on May 7 - a drought of 277 minutes.

Ivanschitz increased the lead to 2-0 in the 18th minute. Osvaldo Alonso sent a long through ball toward the top of the penalty area. Ivanschitz and Dallas' Atiba Harris both went for it, Ivanschitz got there first and chipped a shot over the onrushing Seitz and watched it bounce into the net for his third of the season. Just four minutes later, Morris pushed it to 3-0 with his team-leading seventh. Dempsey sent a ball into the box, and Morris met it at the top right corner of the 6, sending it into the far left corner.

"It was very important to have those moments to have a good start at home," Ivanschitz said. "In the last games, we always had the first chances in the game, but didn't score." Jones scored in the 61st, his second of the season, followed by Roldan in the 73rd. Roldan, who played his college ball at nearby University of Washington, notched his first MLS goal.

"We always felt if we got a goal, maybe those floodgates would open up," said Sounders coach Sigi Schmid, whose team hadn't scored that many since a 6-2 win against Columbus in August 2011. "And they opened up a little bit for us today." Dallas coach Oscar Pareja, whose team played its second game in six nights on the road, didn't start three of his leading scorers: Michael Barrios (six goals), Fabian Castillo (five) and Maximiliano Urruti (four). Barrios came in to start the second half, and Castillo entered in the 61st minute.

"We needed to choose tonight. We have a game in three days at home, and we just came from San Jose," Pareja said. "We have a (US) Open Cup game in the middle of next week, and that's an important tournament for us, and after that, we have Colorado away."

"Seattle had a lot of intensity and did a lot of good things," Pareja added. "And for those moments, we couldn't find the rhythm of the game. We have to give them credit." —AP



LONDON: Chelsea's newly appointed Italian manager Antonio Conte holds a Chelsea football shirt as he poses for photographs on the pitch at the club's Stamford Bridge stadium in London yesterday. —AFP

CONTE HOPES TO LIGHT A FIRE UNDER THE PREMIER LEAGUE

LONDON: Antonio Conte says he hopes Chelsea under his stewardship will light up the Premier League title race this season. The 46-year-old who guided Italy to the quarter-finals of Euro 2016 only losing on penalties to world champions Germany said Chelsea may not be top of everyone's list to challenge for the crown after finishing 10th in their title defence last term.

"We are under-rated a bit, and might slip under the radar, but I hope there's a small flame flickering here that can hopefully grow into a blazing inferno," said Conte at his unveiling to the media at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

The Italian who rejected the opportunity to follow the example of predecessor 'Special One' Jose Mourinho and give himself a nickname said a club the size of Chelsea shouldn't be scrabbling around in mid-table. "When you are a player, a footballer, or a manager of a great club like Chelsea, you must play to win," said Conte, who also took the opportunity to confirm Chelsea icon John Terry would be club captain. "To win. To win the title. Or to fight and, at the end, to compete with the other teams to win the title and reach your

targets. "I know that this league is very, very difficult because there are six or seven teams who can win the title. For this reason, this situation is very exciting for me. It excites me, this situation."

"We know that, this year, it won't be easy for us because if we think about the last season and 10th position... Last season was a bad season, yes? "I know, that there is only one team who wins the title. But we must stay there at the end of the season, to fight for the title and be there for the Champions League. Chelsea belongs in the Champions League, and we must stay there." Conte, whose animated behaviour on the touchline was one of the more memorable features of the Euro, refused to compare himself to Mourinho. "It's always tough to compare people," said Conte, who as a hard-working midfielder helped Juventus win five Serie A titles and to the Champions League trophy.

"There are certain managers who are winners. On that I would agree with you. "Regardless of the job they do, some coaches have a winning mentality besides their working methods and philosophies. "There are winners in

football, but not everyone has that in them. Those who do are, indeed, special." Conte, though, dismissed the suggestion with Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp also managing Premier League teams-Manchester City and Liverpool respectively-the coming season would be dominated by personalities in the dug-out.

"In this league there are many, many players with great talent. Fantastic players. Also there are good managers," said Conte. "For me, I'm very happy to be compared with them, but in this tournament it's not a challenge between managers. Between great teams, between great players... these are the most important things."

"There are also great managers, good managers, but the most important things when there is a game, Chelsea v United, City, Liverpool, Arsenal... Tottenham also. All teams."

Conte, who guided Juventus to three successive Serie A titles before assuming the Italy role after the 2014 World Cup, said he didn't know whether the challenge he faced at Chelsea was any greater than the one he had taken on at Juventus.—AFP