

COUTINHO BID A WASTE OF TIME, KLOPP TELLS BARCA

HONG KONG: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has told Barcelona they are wasting their time trying to sign Brazilian playmaker Philippe Coutinho no matter the offer. Klopp has already rejected a \$93 million bid for Coutinho, who scored a superb winner in Liverpool's 2-1 Premier League Asia Trophy victory over Leicester City in Hong Kong on Saturday.

Barca are set to test Liverpool's resolve with an improved offer but Klopp has told the Catalan giants not

to bother. "If I say he is not for selling, he is not for selling," the German told British media.

"There is nothing else to say. It's a club decision, it's my decision. That's how it is." Liverpool sold Luis Suarez to Barca and Raheem Sterling to Manchester City in recent years but Klopp bristled when asked if he had received assurances from the board that Coutinho would not be next. "I can say 20 times, he is not for sale," said Klopp, who has been frustrated so far

in his attempts to sign Leipzig midfielder Naby Keita and Southampton defender Virgil van Dijk during the transfer window. "If you ask the other question the other way and I say, 'there has been no assurance', you make the story the other way. 'With Suarez I was far away,' added the former Borussia Dortmund coach, who joined Liverpool in 2015.

"When the club sold Sterling I was maybe the last to know about it. Those situations have nothing to do with this

one. "We are approaching a very important moment and we want to get better. For this we have to keep our key players," said Klopp, insisting his word was final. "There is no story for me," he added. "Whatever happens from their side, I say he is not for sale. You can say whatever you want. The answer is 'not for sale'."

Klopp confirmed he had spoken to Coutinho in private at the team's hotel in Hong Kong before Saturday's game but refused to reveal what was said.

The German did, however, explain the reason for his first-half rant at referee Bobby Madley following some heavy challenges on Coutinho. "I was not too happy about two decisions around Phil," said Klopp. "He (Madley) told me if I behave like I behaved today (in the Premier League) then I would have to go in the stands. "I said: 'If I behave like today then I go in the stand, no problem. But you have to change how you whistle! For me, it was a clear foul, it's dangerous.'" —AFP

DE GEA 'GUARANTEED' TO STAY AT UNITED: MOURINHO

SANTA CLARA: Jose Mourinho has given a "guarantee" that David De Gea will stay at Manchester United this season, despite the long-running saga over a potential move to Real Madrid. Transfer speculation over De Gea returning to hometown club Real has stretched on for the last two years, ever since the goalkeeper was a whisker away from heading to the Bernabeu in the summer of 2015. But ahead of United's International Champions Cup pre-season encounter against Real, Mourinho has delivered an unequivocal message about the 26-year-old's future.

Mourinho implied that there were negotiations with Real which fell through last summer, yet he believes the prospect of returning to La Liga has now become less appealing for the Spanish international. "I can guarantee that he's not going this season. My feeling is that it will be very difficult for him to go," said Mourinho. "He's a very honest boy, very straight. He was contacted for a long time.

The club was closed [for negotiations]. "Then we opened [it] because I always have this feeling that when a player has the desire to go, I don't like to stop them. In the end, you don't get from them what you expect. "So we opened it and then they decided to close. "I don't think the feeling from him [towards Real] is very good. I see him really happy, focused and working better than ever. For me, 100 per cent he stays with us." Prior to the £75million (\$97.4 million) signing of Romelu Lukaku, United had been keen to do business with Real after pursuing now Chelsea frontman Alvaro Morata.

BALE NO-GO

But Mourinho has confirmed that Real's ex-Tottenham winger Gareth Bale was never a realistic target. He said: "You have contacts, you have feelings, you understand things. It was clear that Bale likes Madrid, likes the situation and is in a club with a very good situation now.

"I never felt the desire for him to leave so why use time and energy on that?" Mourinho still hopes to add a further two players to his squad before the end of the summer transfer window, despite describing the market as "very difficult."

But while Mourinho is content with the make-up of his current options, he faces going into the new season without the injured trio of Luke Shaw, Ashley Young and Marcos Rojo. The three have been recuperating with United's squad in California, yet Shaw is ruled out until September, Young until October and Rojo until December. "No chance [that any are fit] for the beginning of the Premier League," said Mourinho.

"But it's good to have them, good for them to be with us and recover with the group." Their absence does open the door for the young hopefuls at United. The likes of Timothy Fosu-Mensah, Andreas Pereira and Axel Tuanzebe are all due to feature against Real, in Santa Clara, with Mourinho keen to rest several key figures after Thursday's win over Manchester City. "I'm going to play other players and give rest for some," added Mourinho. "[For] Tim Fosu Mensah and Andreas Pereira, it's going to be a great experience for them." —AFP



PARIS: Tour de France winner Britain's Chris Froome, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, holds son Kellan as his wife Michelle looks on on the Champs Elysees avenue after the twenty-first and last stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 103 kilometers (64 miles) with start in Montgeron and finish in Paris, France, yesterday. — AP

CYCLING

FROOME WINS FOURTH TOUR DE FRANCE TITLE

PARIS: Briton Chris Froome secured his fourth Tour de France title at the end of the 21st and final stage won by Dylan Groenewegen in Paris yesterday.

Sky's Froome had previously won the 2013, 2015 and 2016 editions and sits fifth overall in the all-time list of Tour victors behind greats Eddy Merckx, Jacques Anquetil, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain.

At the end of three weeks, 21 stages and more than 3,500km, Froome rolled over the line on the Champs Elysees with a broad grin alongside his Sky team-mates, who wore a special kit for the occasion with their usual blue stripe replaced by a yellow one.

It was Froome's closest Tour struggle yet as his final winning margin was less than a minute for the first time, Colombia's Rigoberto Uran finishing second at 54sec with Romain Bardet of France, the runner-up last year, third at 2min 20sec.

The 103km final stage began with a nod to history in Montgeron, where the very first stage of the inaugural Tour in 1903 also began, at a leisurely pace giving Froome, his team-mates and the winners of the other distinctive jerseys the chance to celebrate with glasses of champagne as they rode out of the town and towards the French capital.

By the time they got there the tempo had risen to the opposite scale of the spectrum and it was a full pelt bunch that rode to the finish, where 24-year-old Groenewegen struck out for home from a long way out and held off the hard-charging Andre Greipel, winner on the Champs Elysees in the previous two years, with Edvald Boasson Hagen third.

Dutchman Groenewegen of the Lotto NL Jumbo team secured the biggest victory of his young career but the day undoubtedly belonged to Froome. Alongside the yellow jersey winner, Australia's Michael Matthews won the sprinters' green points jersey, France's Warren Barguil triumphed in the polkadot king of the mountains competition and Simon Yates of Britain succeeded twin brother Adam as the best young rider in the white jersey.

Froome's Sky finished as the best team having claimed the yellow helmets on the first stage in Dusseldorf three weeks ago and never relinquished their lead in the competition, which they won for the first time despite claiming the yellow jersey in five of the last six years.

The last remaining prize went to Barguil, a winner of two stages, who was named the most combative rider of the Tour. — AFP

SOCCER

DEMPSEY RECORD GOAL, ASSIST LEADS US INTO GOLD CUP FINAL

ARLINGTON: Clint Dempsey grew up playing youth soccer in the Dallas area, nearly 200 miles from his Texas hometown. Back in his home state and coming off the bench, Dempsey matched the American international scoring record and sparked the US to a spot in the CONCACAF Gold Cup title game.

Dempsey fed Jozy Altidore for the go-ahead goal not long after entering, then scored on a free kick to match Landon Donovan with his 57th international goal Saturday night in a 2-0 semifinal win over Costa Rica.

"This has to be the best in Texas for me, since I tied the record and it was an important game," the 34-year-old forward from Nacogdoches. Dempsey entered in the 66th minute and made a perfectly timed through pass six minutes later that allowed Altidore to break in alone and beat goalkeeper Patrick Pemberton with a left-footed shot from 10 yards. Dempsey doubled the lead in the 82nd minute with a 27-yard shot that went around a four-man defensive wall that got past Pemberton on two bounces. "I saw the keeper cheating a little bit, and it went in," Dempsey said.

Dempsey has 136 international appearances, trailing only Cobi Jones (164) and Donovan (157) among American men. The assist was his 20th for the national team. "Coming back from two heart procedures, being able to still play at this level," Dempsey said in his Texas twang, "living a dream. So I'm happy."

After starting in Wednesday's quarterfinal win over El Salvador, Dempsey moved to a reserve role against the Ticos. While the US inserted five new starters in a roster rotation, Costa Rica went with the same 11 who opened in Wednesday's win against Panama. "I know it's something that was important to Clint, and to score that goal in a big game makes it even more special for him," coach Bruce Arena said.



ARLINGTON: Clint Dempsey #28 of United States controls the ball against Yeltsin Tejada #17 of Costa Rica and Giancarlo Gonzalez #3 of Costa Rica during the 2017 CONCACAF Gold Cup Semifinal at AT&T Stadium on Saturday in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

SPURS OPEN PRE-SEASON WITH 4-2 FRIENDLY WIN OVER PSG

ORLANDO: Harry Kane's late penalty helped Tottenham Hotspur start their pre-season preparations in emphatic fashion as French champions Paris St Germain imploded in Orlando. PSG were reduced to 10 men just moments into the second half when German goalkeeper Kevin Trapp, who had endured an awful first 45 minutes, was sent off for handballing outside of the box.

And although Unai Emery's side were difficult to break down, late strikes from Belgian defender Toby Alderweireld and Kane, both on as substitutes, sealed a 4-2 triumph in front of 33,332 fans at the Camping World Stadium. It's very early days in this pre-season yet there was certainly enough on show from the London team to suggest a strong campaign in the Premier League beckons.

Both teams arrived at the Camping World stadium with tremendous uncertainty surrounding their transfer dealings this summer. The French champions are reportedly poised to land Neymar from Barcelona in a world record 222-million euro (\$256.8 million) deal, and also remain confident of landing Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez.

Emery was giving nothing away when asked about the potential transfers. "We are always looking for players who can help the team," he said. "Now for us the most important thing is to concentrate on the matches we have coming up," added the coach, who on the evidence of Saturday's game could use the infusion of talent. Tottenham, meanwhile, were once again forced to contest claims that Eric Dier, their versatile

England international, was the subject of a \$50 million bid from Manchester United. There is certain to be movement involving both teams as their respective domestic seasons draw closer, yet this was the first time Mauricio Pochettino's side had played this pre-season.

PSG beat Roma on penalties in Detroit last Wednesday after their exhibition game finished 1-1 after 90 minutes. That match saw Dani Alves, the Brazilian defender, make his Paris debut following his transfer from Juventus and he was started again here by Emery in a line-up which also included Thiago Motta and Uruguayan forward Edinson Cavani. Pochettino, whose side travel to New York on Sunday ahead of Tuesday's match with Roma at Red Bull Arena, kept star men Kane and Dele Alli on the bench, although Dier began in midfield alongside Mousa Dembele. On six minutes, Cavani powered the French side ahead. Youngster Cameron Carter-Vickers was caught out by Adrien Rabiot who raced clear and squared for the Uruguayan frontman.

Tottenham looked culpable defensively, yet just five minutes later, Christian Eriksen pulled the Premier League side level. The Danish international unleashed an unstoppable, curling effort from 30 yards which flew past Kevin Trapp into the top corner.

While Eriksen's equaliser was world class, Dier's 18th minute goal was pure luck. Trapp's poor clearance was hit straight at the Spurs player who gleefully saw the ball rebound over the line. — AFP



ORLANDO: Cameron Carter-Vickers #38 of Tottenham Hotspur leaps for the ball during the International Champions Cup 2017 match between Paris Saint-Germain and Tottenham Hotspur at Camping World Stadium on Saturday in Orlando, Florida. — AFP