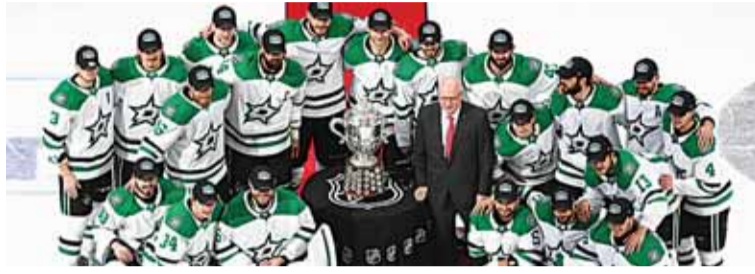


14 Padres pound Dodgers 7-2, win their eighth consecutive game



15 Never-say-die Stars stun Knights to reach first Stanley Cup final



15 Goodbye India, hello IPL: Singh Dhoni set to 'rule roost' in UAE



BRIGHTON: Chelsea's German striker Timo Werner (left) tackles Brighton's English defender Lewis Dunk during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Chelsea on September 14, 2020. —AFP

Clinical Chelsea sink Brighton

Big-spending Chelsea start with win at Brighton

BRIGHTON: Frank Lampard believes Chelsea are already showing the benefits of his £200 million (\$257 million) spending spree as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday. Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising.

Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead. Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward. "Timo's speed to win the penalty showed he is sharp and he was a threat all night. He is very mobile and I liked his performance," Lampard said.

"With Kai we saw a lot as well. To get these minutes will only be good and both of them will be huge players for this club." Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro

Trossard equalised for Brighton. But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points. It was an encouraging result for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title challenge after spending more than any other club so far in the summer transfer window.

"I think to expect everything to click on day one is very difficult. But what they did do was show a bit of determination," Lampard said. "I really liked the work ethic and the discipline of the team. We've been together as a team for four days after the international break. We had a lot of quarantines before that and new signings. "We might have dropped points in this game last season. I'm not getting excited by that on day one, but it had a little bit of determination and resilience about it I thought."

Chelsea finished 33 points behind champions Liverpool in fourth last season before a disappointing FA Cup final defeat against Arsenal, but they

are primed to improve if Lampard can gel his new signings. Lampard's other expensive recruits, former Ajax playmaker Hakim Ziyech and ex-Leicester left-back Ben Chilwell, were both sidelined by injuries, while Thiago Silva wasn't available as he returns to training following his free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain. The historians among Chelsea's fanbase will have noted this was the third time they have started a Premier League campaign with a Monday night victory, with the Blues going on to win the title on the previous occasions in 2014-15 and 2016-17.

The only frustration for Lampard was Kepa's howler. The world's most expensive keeper was already under pressure to improve after an error-strewn season and with Chelsea having spoken to Rennes about Senegal keeper Edouard Mendy, his days as first choice might be numbered. Insisting he has not written off Kepa yet, Lampard said: "I am happy with Kepa, I saw confidence in him, he is here, he is our keeper and I am happy with him."

Classy Werner

Werner was Chelsea's central striker while Havertz lined up on the right flank in the three-man attack. It was Werner who showed all his class as Chelsea took the lead in the 23rd minute. Brighton midfielder Steven Alzate surrendered possession with a wayward pass and Jorginho fed Werner, who raced through on goal and was brought down by Mat Ryan as he rounded the Albion keeper.

Jorginho stepped up to take the penalty and Chelsea's captain sent Ryan the wrong way with his trademark hop before shooting. Brighton equalized in the 54th minute when Trossard's 20-yard shot slipped under Kepa's weak attempted save. Kepa's blunder wasn't fatal for Chelsea as James restored their lead just 100 seconds later with a stunning 30-yard blast.

Chelsea sealed the points in the 66th minute when Zouma met James' corner with a volley that took a heavy deflection of Adam Webster to wrong-foot Ryan. —AFP

Messi joins exclusive club of 'sporting billionaires'



Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi

PARIS: Lionel Messi may have had to stay put at Barcelona but the Argentine legend did succeed in joining one new club this year—the one reserved for sporting billionaires, according to Forbes magazine. The Argentine striker's career earnings of over one billion dollars (840 million euros) places the six-time Ballon d'Or winner in a group of mega-wealthy sports figures containing just Tiger Woods, Floyd Mayweather and his great rival on the pitch, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Forbes said that in 2020 Messi was the best paid footballer in the world with an income of \$126 million from his Barca salary (\$92 million for the 2020/2021 season) and \$34 million from sponsors and other sources. The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place.

Forbes' top 10 earning players made a combined \$570 million this season, a jump of 11 percent despite the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic to European leagues and the global economy. Michael Jordan is also in the billionaire's club but the basketball legend's fortune has largely come after retirement through his longstanding contract with Nike and acquisition of NBA franchise Charlotte Hornets. Messi remains at Barcelona this season after conceding defeat in his attempt to leave without triggering his 700-million euro release. —AFP

Wolves' fast start subdues Blades

SHEFFIELD: Wolves showed no signs of fatigue as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 2-0 win against Sheffield United on Monday. Just 34 days after losing to Sevilla in their final game of the coronavirus-delayed 2019-20 season, Nuno Espirito Santo's side looked fresher than expected as they made a blistering start at Bramall Lane. Raul Jimenez and Romain Saiss put Wolves two goals up after just six minutes and the visitors were in control the rest of the way despite their shorter than usual close season. It was the perfect way to open the season for Nuno, who recently signed a new three-year contract, as he tries to improve on successive seventh-place finishes in the Premier League.

Surpassing Wolves' best performance in back-to-back seasons since the 1960s will not be easy, but there is enough quality in Nuno's team to challenge for European qualification. "This was the first match after a quick turnaround. I'm very pleased," Nuno said. "The character, the ways they worked, the resilience at the end. It's been an amazing three seasons. We can create something really special. We have to stay humble." Blades manager Chris Wilder added: "To recover from as poor a start as I can

remember here against Wolves it was always going to be a tough ask. "I know what I have got in my changing room, they don't go under and they didn't. They made a game of it."

There were just three minutes on the clock when Daniel Podence skipped past John Lundstram on the left flank and whipped his cross to Jimenez, who intelligently peeled away from his marker to guide a sublime half-volley into the roof of the net. Jimenez nearly scored again moments later when the Mexican striker's dipping effort was superbly tipped over by Aaron Ramsdale, who was making his second Blades debut after rejoining the club from Bournemouth in the close season. Ramsdale was unable to stop Wolves doubling their lead in the sixth minute when Saiss met an outswinging corner with a thumping header that looped over the Blades keeper.

In his 100th game in all competitions for Wolves, the prolific Jimenez was proving impossible to contain and he was close to his 32nd Premier League goal when he curled just over. After bullying most opponents at home last season, United were well off the pace and it was almost half-time before Wolves keeper Rui Patrício had to make a save from Oli McBurnie. John Fleck almost reduced the deficit early in the second half when his shot cannoned off the post before George Baldock's follow-up deflected wide. Those near misses could not revive United and Wolves finished on top as Saiss and Jimenez both hit the woodwork.—AFP



SHEFFIELD: Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Joao Moutinho (right) jumps to head the ball against Sheffield United's English striker Billy Sharp during the English Premier League football match between Sheffield United and Wolverhampton Wanderers on September 14, 2020. —AFP