



LONDON: Combination of photos shows some footballers covering their mouths while talking to their teammates during soccer games.

Why do footballers cover their mouths while talking?

Mouth-covering 'used as a tactic in many sports'

LONDON: As far as habits go, professional footballers sure do have some weird ones. Spitting is one, as is the slapstick tumble knee-hug 'ouch that hurt' roll, and of course, sliding on the ground with arms in the air. But fans watching soccer games have noticed another one, which defies easy explanation - the covering of the mouth when they are talking.

Why do they do this such a lot, and are there different reasons for the move (apart from camp disbelief)? Footballers are not paid thousands of

pounds a day to speak, though occasionally, and grudgingly, they do. But speaking to team mates on the pitch to discuss tactics is essential for most pro players. They cover their mouths to make sure that the other team, cameras, and spying managers can't see what they're saying.

Yet this does not go far enough to explain the extent of hand-to-mouth action seen in football. Quite often you'll see members of opposing teams covering their mouths when they speak to each other. Messi and Ronaldo once did this on the pitch

while playing for their respective countries, Argentina and Portugal. This makes them look as if they are so disgusted by the other player they're trying not to breathe their air.

However, the common belief is that actually they are hiding their mouths so that their words cannot be interpreted via lip reading from footage. When you're a high-profile player, one of the world's most famous, you don't want to have the press asking you about why you called Ronaldo "a bellend". Some players have also been known to use the covering of

the mouth as a signal, to indicate to team mates what they're about to do.

Occasionally a player will even cover their mouth while training, if they think photographers or video cameras are around. And talking to a referee behind your hand can be an easy way for them to hear you and keep your perspective on the action a secret as well. Therefore, while mouth-covering is used as a tactic in many sports, most notably tennis and badminton, footballers use it in a much wider context. —Agencies

Farah relieved at govt support after a shock revelation

LONDON: Olympic great Mo Farah expressed relief Wednesday after receiving fulsome backing from the UK government despite his admission that he was illegally trafficked into Britain as a child. The revelation in a new BBC documentary could have raised questions about Farah's UK citizenship, but the interior ministry said it was taking no action. A spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: "He is a sporting hero, he is an inspiration to people across the country. "It is a shocking reminder of the horrors that people face when they are trafficked. And we must continue to clamp down on these criminals who take advantage of vulnerable people."

The 39-year-old distance runner, one of Britain's best-loved and most successful athletes, revealed his real name is Hussein Abdi Kahin, and he was forced to work in domestic servitude after entering the country aged eight or nine. London's Metropolitan Police said it was "assessing" the allegation that Farah was trafficked, after his mother sent him away to escape civil war in their native Somalia. Asked in a follow-up interview on BBC radio how he felt about the government's response, Farah said: "I feel relieved: this is my country."

"No child would be in that situation. I had that choice made for me," he said. "And I'm just grateful (for) every chance I got in Britain and... proud to represent my country the way I did, because that's all I could do, in my control. I had no control when I was younger." Farah was later helped to obtain UK citizenship by his physical



Britain's Mo Farah

education teacher at school, Alan Watkinson, while still using the assumed name Mohamed Farah given to him by a woman who trafficked him to Britain.

"I don't think Alan did anything wrong there," the athlete told BBC radio. "Alan did go to social services. We did report it, we did tell them exactly what was my name... So we went through the right channels, but I don't know why nothing was ever done," he said. Rather than moving to the UK as a refugee from Somalia with his mother and two of his brothers to join his IT consultant father as previously claimed, Farah said he came from Djibouti with the woman he had never met, and then made to look after another family's children.

In fact, he said, his father was killed in civil unrest in Somalia when Farah was aged four and his mother, Aisha, and two brothers live in the breakaway state of Somaliland. He was encouraged to speak out now by his wife and children, after burying the truth for decades. "I honestly don't want to be talking about it because I told myself I would never talk about it. I'm gonna lock it up," he said. —AFP

Ten Hag off to great start as Man United thump Liverpool 4-0

BANGKOK: Erik Ten Hag said he was "satisfied" Tuesday after getting off to a perfect start as Manchester United manager, but insisted he would not be getting carried away after a 4-0 thumping of arch-rivals Liverpool in a preseason friendly in Thailand. United started strongly against an unfamiliar Liverpool line-up, cruising to a 3-0 half-time lead through goals from Jadon Sancho, Fred and Anthony Martial at Bangkok's Rajamangala Stadium, despite being without the unsettled Cristiano Ronaldo who missed the trip for family reasons.

Both managers made wholesale substitutions throughout the 90 minutes and Jurgen Klopp's stronger second-half Liverpool line-up dominated possession before Facundo Pellistri grabbed United's fourth on the break, 14 minutes from time. It gave Ten Hag and his new side a morale-boosting win in their first warm-up outing ahead of the new Premier League campaign beginning next month. "I am satisfied today," said Dutchman Ten Hag, who took the reins at Old Trafford less than two months ago. "It was a team with a great spirit and we know we are just getting started. "We made some mistakes in the press, we conceded some chances, but we created a lot."

Liverpool were unlucky not to get on the scoresheet, hitting the woodwork three times after Sancho opened the scoring in the 12th minute, the England winger slotting home to capitalise on a sloppy clearance from Isaac Mabaya. Fred's instinctive, measured chip over the unsighted Liverpool goalkeeper Allison Becker and a crowd of defenders extended the lead in the 30th minute. And it took just another three minutes for man-of-the-match Martial to make it 3-0 with a fine finish over Allison, after another Liverpool defensive mistake had allowed the striker a clear run at goal.



BANGKOK: Manchester United's Tyrell Malacia (right) and Liverpool's English defender Trent Alexander-Arnold (left) fight for the ball during the exhibition football match between English Premier League teams Manchester United and Liverpool FC at Rajamangala National Stadium in Bangkok. - AFP

'A bit early for us'

"The game came up a bit early for us. But I saw some good things," said Klopp. "That is just the start of the pre-season. "It is all a learning process and we are at the start of it." More substitutions after half-time saw Liverpool bring on experience and flair in the shape of Virgil van Dijk at the back and Mohamed Salah up front.

Big-money signing Darwin Nunez, bought for nearly 100 million euros from Benfica, played the last half an hour, the Uruguayan coming close to opening his account for Liverpool in the 70th minute. Four minutes from time the lively Salah curled a trademark left-footed shot goalbound, only to see it cannon off the post with Nunez blazing the rebound over the bar when it seemed easier to score. By then Pellistri had slotted home the fourth after a flowing counter-attack. "We have to work hard to cut out the mistakes but of course we are happy," said Ten Hag. "I know we have good players. We have started to build a team and I am happy with the first game," he added. "It will take a lot of time. I have seen a lot of mistakes. Liverpool played three teams, they were not at their strongest. We will not overestimate this result." —AFP