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Platini backs 'best fit' Giroud for France

It has no form of importance. I'm not an accountant. I'm happy for Giroud, I'm happy for Thierry. I hope there will always be players who score a lot of goals for France. Records are there to be beaten. If Giroud beats my record, I'm happy for France and for him.

Former UEFA President Michel Platini

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Serbian beats Khachanov to level quarter-final appearances record in Paris

Top seed Djokovic keeps title bid on track

AFP - PARIS

Novak Djokovic defeated Karen Khachanov in straight sets to make the French Open quarter-finals for the 11th consecutive year yesterday while Petra Kvitova returned to the last eight at Roland Garros for the first time since 2012.

Top seed and 2016 champion Djokovic won 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 against Russian 15th seed Khachanov to draw level with Rafael Nadal on a record 14 quarter-final appearances in Paris.

Djokovic faced his toughest assignment so far but Khachanov was unable to derail his bid to become the first man in half a century to win all four Grand Slam titles twice.

The Serb hit 44 winners and has yet to drop a set in the tournament, losing only 25 games in four rounds. He improved his record in 2020 to 35 wins against just one loss.

"It was a very even match, perhaps more difficult than the result showed," said Djokovic, who is chasing an 18th Grand Slam title.

He will face Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta, the man who benefited from Djokovic's US Open disqualification, or German qualifier Daniel Altmaier for a spot in the last four.

World number 186 Altmaier is just the fourth man in 20 years to reach the round of 16 on his Grand Slam debut.

Stefanos Tsitsipas overcame an eye problem to become the first Greek man to reach the last eight of the French Open with a 6-3, 7-6 (11/9), 6-2 win over Grigor Dimitrov.

The 22-year-old will now take on Andrey Rublev in a repeat of the recent Hamburg final which was won by the Russian.

Fifth seed Tsitsipas has won 12 successive sets at the tournament having been two sets down to Jaume Munar in the opening round.

Rublev, the 13th seed, also advanced to the quarter-finals for the first time after battling past Marton Fucsovics of Hungary 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

In a match which featured 12 breaks of serve, the



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his French Open fourth round match against Russia's Karen Khachanov, yesterday.



Russia's Andrey Rublev celebrates after beating Hungary's Marton Fucsovics.



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates after winning against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov.

Tsitsipas overcomes an eye problem to become the first Greek man to reach the last eight of the French Open.

Rublev, the 13th seed, advances to the quarter-finals for the first time.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova through to the last eight at Roland Garros for the first time in eight years.

22-year-old Rublev had been a break down in the second and third sets. He also had to save three set points in the fourth.

"I knew it would be tough," said Rublev who arrived in Paris having reached his second US Open quarter-final last month.

"I had a little bit of luck today. There was a lot of wind so you are going to lose your serve a lot in those conditions."

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova advanced to the last eight at Roland Garros for the first time in eight years. Her best run in Paris came when she reached the semi-finals in 2012.

Seventh seed Kvitova, who

FRENCH OPEN RESULTS

MEN'S SINGLES: 4TH ROUND
Andrey Rublev (13), Russia, def. Marton Fucsovics, Hungary, 6-7 (4), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (3).
Stefanos Tsitsipas (5), Greece, def. Grigor Dimitrov (18), Bulgaria, 6-3, 7-6 (9), 6-2.
Novak Djokovic (1), Serbia, def. Karen Khachanov (15), Russia, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3.

WOMEN'S SINGLES: 4TH ROUND
Petra Kvitova (7), Czech Republic, def. Zhang Shuai, China, 6-2, 6-4.
Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Paula Badosa, Spain, 7-5, 6-2.
Sofia Kenin (4), United States, def. Fiona Ferro, France, 2-6, 6-2, 6-1.

missed last year's tournament due to an arm injury, defeated China's Zhang Shuai 6-2, 6-4 and will next play German veteran Laura Siegemund.

"After eight years to be in the quarter-final again, it's great. I'm really happy for that,

that I'm still able to play on all surfaces," said Kvitova.

"When the roof is closed it's like being indoors and I really love to play." Only four seeds remain in the women's draw, with No. 4 Sofia Kenin the second highest left behind third

seed Elina Svitolina following the exit of title favourite Simona Halep.

Australian Open champion Kenin, who defeated Serena Williams in the fourth round last year, will later face unseeded French player Fiona Ferro.

"I feel like I'm playing well at the Slams," said Kenin, who has made the last 16 or better at the three majors this season.

"It's not easy, everyone is playing their best tennis at the Grand Slams. But I definitely feel like I should get deep in a tournament."

Ons Jabeur is targeting a second quarter-final in three Slams after becoming the first Arab woman to make the fourth round here.

The Tunisian 30th seed next faces 57th-ranked American Danielle Collins, although their match was delayed by persistent rain that restricted play to just Court Philippe Chatrier for much of the day.

Siegemund, 32, advanced to her first Grand Slam singles quarter-final after defeating former junior champion Paula Badosa of Spain 7-5, 6-2 before the weather delay.

She became the fourth unseeded player to make the last eight this year, joining Iga Swiatek, Nadia Podoroska and Martina Trevisan.

Siegemund won last month's US Open women's doubles titles alongside Vera Zvonareva.

Ooredoo Cup: Al Arabi top Group B with win over Umm Salal; Al Gharafa beat Al Rayyan

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

Al Arabi topped their group with a brilliant 3-0 win over Umm Salal 3-0 in their Ooredoo Cup Round 2 fixture at the Al Arabi Stadium yesterday.

Mehrdad Mohammadi (11th minute), Sebastian Soria (19th minute) and Hamdi Harbaoui (30th minute) scored the goals as Al Arabi moved on to six points with an all-win record, having beaten Al Ahli 5-1 in the opening round.

Al Arabi were straightaway in offensive mode and they were up 3-0 in half an hour.

Mehrdad started the scoring act with a long-range shot. Soria doubled the lead with a header off a pass by Abdulla Al Marafi and Hamdi was on target with an assist from Soria.

Al Arabi took their foot off the pedal in the second half, where Umm Salal were more in the game compared to their performance in the first half.

Earlier, Al Kharaitiyat defeated Al Ahli 2-0 in another round 2 clash in Group B at the same venue.

Evans Mensah (59th minute) and Abdulhadi Amin (90+3) scored for Al Kharaitiyat, who raised their points tally to six, whereas Al Ahli have yet to open their account as they had lost 1-5 to Al Arabi in their opener.

In fact, Al Kharaitiyat, who were promoted to this season's top flight by virtue of being the Second Division champions, continued from where they left off in the opening round, where they defeated Al Rayyan by a 4-1 margin.

Moroccan spearhead Tiberkanine, who had scored two goals in Al Kharaitiyat's opening-round win over Al Rayyan, was the architect of their victory this time around as he gave assists for both goals.

Al Kharaitiyat, who are enjoying their return to the First Division this season, seemed a determined lot and dominated possession with 66 per cent.

Elsewhere, at the Qatar SC Stadium, Al Gharafa defeated Al Rayyan 2-0 with the help of goals from Ahmed Mohamed Al Janahi (5th minute), and Gachul Kuo (42nd minute).

OOREDOO CUP ROUND 2 RESULTS

GROUP B
Al Kharaitiyat 2 - 0 Al Ahli
Umm Salal 0 - 3 Al Arabi
Al Rayyan 0 - 2 Al Gharafa

TODAY'S FIXTURES

GROUP A
Al Duhail vs Al Sailiya
At Qatar SC Stadium (17:45)
Al Sadd vs Qatar SC
At Qatar SC Stadium (20:00)
Al Khor vs Al Wakrah
At Al Arabi Stadium (20:00)

Action during the Ooredoo Cup Group B Round 2 match between Al Arabi and Umm Salal, yesterday.

Chiesa joins Juventus in €60m deal

AFP - ROME

Juventus have signed Italy winger Federico Chiesa from Fiorentina in a deal worth up to €60m (\$71), the Italian champions announced yesterday just hours before the close of the transfer window.

Juve revealed that Chiesa had signed on an initial two-year loan deal worth €10m, after which they would buy the now 22-year-old for €40m "subject to the achievement of certain given sporting objectives by the end of the season 2021/2022".

The Turin-based club added that the fee could rise by up to a further €10m "upon achievement of further performance objectives over the duration of the employment contract with the player".

He is considered one of Italy's hottest prospects and Juve's interest in the player has been no secret over the last couple of seasons.

Will most unpredictable PL season produce surprise champions?



REUTERS - LONDON

The most astonishing set of results yet, in an already very unpredictable Premier League season, and the different environment in which the English top flight is operating have raised the prospect of unexpected champions.

With Manchester City having conceded five goals at home for the first time in 438 games at the Etihad Stadium

last weekend against Leicester City, champions Liverpool continued the trend of extraordinary results at Aston Villa.

In their remarkable 7-2 defeat on Sunday, Liverpool became the first reigning English top-flight champions to ship seven goals in a league match since Arsenal against Sunderland in 1953, but goals flowing this season are anything but abnormal.

The result came hours after Manchester United suffered their joint-heaviest Premier League defeat against Tottenham Hotspur, a 6-1 drubbing, with both games contributing to a total of 41 goals in a single Premier League round of matches.

It is just three short of the Premier League record for goals in a single game week -- which was set last month. This season has been anything but predictable, but it has only enhanced the excitement.

"I want the Premier League to be a bit more like this season," former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher told *Sky Sports*.

"When you are talking about 95 points to win the league, it is remarkable, but in some ways it kills the Premier League.

"I'd like to go back to when winning the league was mid-80 points. It just means you lose more games and there is more excitement, and the teams who

finish fourth, fifth and sixth are not as far behind.

"I think this season could be unique."

With no fans in stadiums to add pressure as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, home advantage is not as important this season as fewer matches, on average, are being won by home teams than in any of the last five seasons.

Also, with less time to fit fixtures in, clubs are going from game to game, with little time to regroup, ensuring matches in the empty stadiums have a distinct training-ground game feel, which has helped increase the volume of goals.

Carragher believes if teams like Villa, who only just avoided

relegation in the Premier League last season, can humble Liverpool like they did on Sunday, with Everton remaining top of the table, we could be in for more surprises to come.

"There was no pre-season, it is a condensed league to get all the fixtures in," Carragher added.

"There is no time for coaches to work with their teams on the training pitch to iron out defensive frailties, as we have seen with almost every team this season. We might get a Leicester season (they won Premier League title in 2015-16) and get a new champions, and even a strange top four, and I think that bodes well for the Premier League this season."

Villa defeat unacceptable: Robertson

REUTERS - BIRMINGHAM

Liverpool defender Andy Robertson has said their embarrassing 7-2 thrashing at Aston Villa in the Premier League on Sunday was unacceptable and vowed that the players will react positively after the international break.

Ollie Watkins' hat-trick coupled with a double from Jack Grealish gave Villa a remarkable victory as Liverpool became the first reigning English top-flight champions to ship seven goals in a league game since Arsenal in 1953.

"At times we couldn't believe it. We weren't good enough... That result as a Liverpool player is embarrassing," Robertson told the club website.

"We never won our second balls, we never won our challenges, we never scored from the chances. All credit goes to Aston Villa, unfortunately. They were better than us." Liverpool started badly at Villa Park after a poor pass from stand-in keeper Adrian gifted Watkins a fourth-minute opener.

Watkins went on to complete his hat-trick inside 39 minutes, becoming the first player to score a Premier League treble against Liverpool in over a decade.

Mohamed Salah got Liverpool's two goals - to make it 2-1 and 5-2 - but the visitors were outplayed by Dean Smith's side in both halves.

"We were 4-1 down in the first half and this Liverpool side believes that we could have come back - of course we did," 26-year-old Scotland international Robertson added.

"But the fact we then go out and concede (almost) as many goals in the second half as well, that scoreline becomes embarrassing when you play for this club, it's not acceptable and that's something we all have to deal with.



Jurgen Klopp



The big screen at the Villa Park displays the score after Liverpool were beaten 7-2 by Aston Villa in their Premier League match on Sunday.

Klopp admits Liverpool 'lost the plot' in thrashing at Villa

REUTERS - BIRMINGHAM

Stunned Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said his side did "all the things you should not do in a football match" as they "lost the plot" to play into Aston Villa's hands in their 7-2 humbling at Villa Park in the Premier League on Sunday.

Following on from Manchester United's 6-1 defeat to Tottenham Hotspur, Liverpool added to a remarkable day as they became the first reigning English top-flight champions to ship seven goals in a league match since Arsenal in 1953.

Ollie Watkins' first-half hat-trick set Villa en route to an astonishing victory, as Liverpool slipped to a first defeat of the season thanks to a w o e f u l



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah and teammates look dejected after conceding their seventh goal.

showing at the back in the Midlands.

"We played into their hands, with all the goals," Klopp said. "Then the game has a specific direction.

"We had still good moments, but our good moments lead to nothing, other than Mo's (Mohamed Salah) two goals.

"All their good moments lead to a big chance or goals, and that makes all the difference. All the things you should not do in a football match we did tonight, but all credit to Aston Vila, as they forced us to do those things.

We played into their hands, with all the goals. Then the game has a specific direction. We had still good moments, but our good moments lead to nothing, other than Mo's (Mohamed Salah) two goals.
Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp

"The first goal had an impact but it shouldn't. We conceded goals like that in the past, but the reaction wasn't good, and we lost the plot." Aston Villa

boss Dean Smith hailed the effort from his side, as they made it three wins from three in extraordinary fashion, to move up to second in the table, ahead of Liverpool in fifth.

"It was just sheer hard work and effort," Smith told *Sky Sports*. "The work ethic, when Juergen Klopp says 'wow' to you know you've done something right. The lads were superb, they executed the game plan perfectly. We were at our best today.

"It's a good start, an exceptional result and a really good start. We won't get complacent but we'll enjoy tonight because results like that don't come around too often. We've got a lot of pride and confidence going into the international break."

Rashford apologises to fans after 1-6 hammering

REUTERS - LONDON

Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford has apologised to the club's supporters following their 6-1 hammering by Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday.

Spurs' Son Heung-min and Harry Kane each scored twice as manager Jose Mourinho celebrated a victorious return to the club which sacked him 22 months ago.

The result at Old Trafford equalled United's worst defeat in the Premier League era. They were previously beaten 6-1 by local rivals Manchester City in October 2011.

"First and foremost I'm a United fan. This is my club. I'm so proud to wear this shirt but there are no excuses, it's just not good enough and to every single fan around the world that tuned in today, I'm just so sorry," Rashford tweeted.

"You deserve so much better than that. I would have stayed away from social media tonight but you deserve to hear from me during the highs and the lows, there is no hiding.

"I feel horrible but I promise you we will do better." Defender Luke Shaw said the result was "embarrassing" and that the players had to take more responsibility.

"A club like United shouldn't be losing, but losing in this way ... it really hurts and it is kind of embarrassing because I feel like we have let a lot of people down today who were watching at home," Shaw told *Sky Sports*.

"We're the players on the pitch and we need to have very high standards. The players we have, have quality but it hasn't been showing.

"We need to look at ourselves in the mirror as individuals but as a team ... we're nowhere near it at the moment."

United visit Newcastle United in the league on Oct. 17 after the international break.

Spurs would have put 10 past United with 'attacking coach': Mourinho

REUTERS - LONDON

Tottenham Hotspur's Jose Mourinho delivered a sharp riposte to critics of his "defensive" style on Sunday, saying after their 6-1 Premier League win over Manchester United that they would have scored 10 if only they had a more attacking coach.

Mourinho came in for criticism last season due to some defensive displays and disappointing results after he took over from the sacked Mauricio Pochettino in November.

However, Sunday's victory, which followed a 7-2 win over Maccabi Haifa in Europe on Thursday, saw Spurs join Premier League top scorers Everton and Leicester City on 12 goals from four games.

"Imagine if they have an attacking coach," Mourinho told

With a defensive coach, they scored ... six. With an attacking coach they'll score 10, 11, 12. We were more convinced about our power, our qualities and our gameplan than about United's weaknesses, because I don't think that they have many: Tottenham Hotspur's Manager Jose Mourinho

beIN Sports. "With a defensive coach, they scored ... six. With an attacking coach they'll score 10, 11, 12.

"We were more convinced about our power, our qualities and our gameplan than about



Tottenham Hotspur's Serge Aurier speaks with manager Jose Mourinho during their Premier League match against Manchester United on Sunday.

United's weaknesses, because I don't think that they have many."

Victory was especially sweet for Mourinho, who was returning to the club which sacked him 22 months ago.

"The mentality is great. The players are playing very well. Everyone is giving everything. The squad is of course full of quality, talent and in this moment numbers," Mourinho added.

"Now the players are going to go to their national teams and we keep working."

Spurs return to action after the international break and host West Ham United on Oct. 18.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Sunday's results

Arsenal 2 (Saka 61, Pepe 64), **Sheffield United 1** (McGoldrick 83)

Aston Villa 7 (Watkins 4, 22, 39, McGinn 35, Barkley 55, Grealish 66, 75), **Liverpool 2** (Salah 33, 60)

Leicester 0, West Ham 3 (Antonio 14, Fornals 34, Bowen 83)

Manchester United 1 (Fernandes 2-pen), **Tottenham 6** (Ndombele 4, Son 7, 37, Kane 31, 79-pen, Aurier 51)

Southampton 2 (Djenepo 41, Romeu 69), **West Brom 0**

Wolves 1 (Neto 56), **Fulham 0**

Played on Saturday

Chelsea 4 (Chilwell 50, Zouma 66, Jorginho 78-pen, 82-pen), **Crystal Palace 0**

Everton 4 (Calvert-Lewin 16, Mina 45+2, Rodriguez 52, 70), **Brighton 2** (Maupay 41, Bissouma 90)

Leeds 1 (Rodrigo 59), **Manchester City 1** (Sterling 17)

Newcastle 3 (Saint-Maximin 14, Wilson 65, 77-pen), **Burnley 1** (Westwood 61)



PIC: TWITTER / @PSG

PSG sign Pereira on transfer deadline day

AP - PARIS

French champion Paris Saint-Germain signed midfielder Danilo Pereira (pictured) from FC Porto on Monday on a season-long loan, a move likely to appease tensions between coach Thomas Tuchel and sporting director Leonardo.

PSG announced the deal with an option to buy on the transfer window's deadline day after Leonardo criticized Tuchel last week for suggesting that the club had been weakened by failing to recruit new players.

Following their public spat, PSG also secured 20-year-old

forward Moise Kean, who on Sunday signed on loan from Premier League club Everton until the end of June.

While Kean's signing was not seen as crucial given PSG's attacking riches, the recruitment of a defensive midfielder like Pereira was Tuchel's priority.

At 29 and 1.88 meters tall, he will bring both his experience and physical strength in midfield alongside smaller-built Marco Verratti and Idrissa Gueye.

Pereira won the 2016 European Championship and the 2019 Nations League with Portugal and has made 39 appearances with his national squad.

"It's a new challenge for me, and to be part of Paris Saint-Germain fits my ambitions," Pereira said.

"Joining one of the biggest clubs in Europe and in the world is a huge moment in my career, and I hope to be able to bring a lot to Paris and its supporters."

Tuchel, now in his third season at PSG, regretted the departures of many important players, including Thiago Silva, Thomas Meunier and Tanguy Kouassi.

He said the defending French champions and Champions League runners-up might need to lower expectations this season.

Following its 1-0 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League in August, PSG endured a shaky start to the French league season with two losses.

Tuchel's team has since bounced back with four straight wins, moving up to fourth overall.

Once hailed as prodigy, Keane has struggled since leaving the Serie A in 2019.

Trained at the Juventus academy, he turned professional in 2017 and won two Italian championships before moving to England. He scored only two goals in 31 Premier League with Everton.

Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann (centre) in action during the La Liga match against Sevilla at Camp Nou, on Sunday.



Griezmann continues to struggle in new season with Barcelona

AP - MADRID

After a full year to adapt to his new club, Antoine Griezmann was hopeful of a breakthrough season with Barcelona.

He came in looking to show that he can still meet the high expectations of his transfer from Atlético Madrid, even though the much-hyped partnership with Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez never produced the results everyone expected.

The trio never clicked, and Griezmann endured a lackluster first season with the Catalan club.

His chances of succeeding improved this season after Suárez departed and left him as the team's most experienced forward other than Messi. It gave him the perfect opportunity to take a more prominent role in attack.

But three games into the new season, there are no signs of a turnaround for the 29-year-old Griezmann. The Frenchman has yet to produce a good performance, being held scoreless and being substituted by coach

Ronald Koeman in every match so far.

Instead of gaining a bigger role, he has been losing space to some of the team's youngsters and newly signed players.

He disappointed again in the team's 1-1 draw against Sevilla in the Spanish league on Sunday, being replaced in the 61st minute by 20-year-old Francisco Trincão, who just joined the club.

Griezmann had been substituted by the Portuguese forward in the 78th minute in the opener against Villarreal, when it was 17-year-old Ansu Fati who thrived by scoring two goals in a 4-0 win. Fati also scored in the 2-0 victory at Celta Vigo, when Griezmann again didn't finish the match. He was Koeman's first choice to leave the field when the coach had to put in a defender because of a red card to Clément Lenglet before halftime.

Koeman promoted several changes after replacing Quique Setién following the team's 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich in quarter-finals of the Champions League.

But three games into the new season, there are no signs of a turnaround for the 29-year-old Griezmann. The Frenchman has yet to produce a good performance, being held scoreless and being substituted by coach Ronald Koeman in every match so far.

Griezmann had not been among them, though, and was kept as starter on the flanks.

But it was unknown how much more time he would get from Koeman, who wasn't happy with the missed chances by Griezmann against Sevilla.

"The substitution the other day was a tactical one," Koeman said.

"Ansu Fati gives you more depth, more speed, and we needed that while playing with a man down. (Griezmann) had his moments today, he had a couple of chances and should have scored

a goal from them considering his quality."

Koeman said he was happy with Trincão's work so far, saying he gives the team a fresher look, and didn't guarantee Griezmann as a starter after Barcelona returns from the international break. Koeman also has Ousmane Dembélé and Martin Braithwaite available for the attack, and more players could arrive by the end of the transfer window.

Barcelona, three points behind league leader Real Madrid with a game in hand, resumes its campaign in two weeks at Getafe.

"In the end, these are decisions that we have to make," Koeman said.

"Each player has to perform as best as possible." A little over a year ago, Griezmann was throwing glitter into the air to imitate LeBron James' chalk toss routine in the celebration of his first goal with Barcelona, raising expectations about his future with the club.

Now, he is just trying to keep his spot in the starting lineup.

Platini backs 'best fit' Giroud for France

AFP - PARIS

Former France captain and coach Michel Platini defended Olivier Giroud ahead of tomorrow's friendly with Ukraine, saying the out of favour Chelsea forward "has the quality" to lead the French line.

Giroud, 34, has played just 17 minutes out of Chelsea's three Premier League games this season with Frank Lampard preferring Tammy Abraham or Timo Werner but is tipped to feature in France coach Didier Deschamps' starting line-up in spite of criticism for his overly physical style.

"Giroud, if he plays up front it's because more than anything else he has the quality to play centre-forward," former UEFA President Platini told AFP.

"And if Deschamps plays him, it's because he thinks Giroud deserves to play. It doesn't interest me that he is criticised. Deschamps knows how to do his job, he knows what he should do and if he thinks Giroud is the best fit, then he plays him. After all, if Giroud's criticised, we have all been criticised, even Pele!" Platini added.

Giroud is in line to make his 100th appearance for les Bleus this week and is likely to line up alongside Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann in a game where the



Giroud, 34, has played just 17 minutes out of Chelsea's three Premier League games this season with Frank Lampard preferring Tammy Abraham or Timo Werner but is tipped to feature in France coach Didier Deschamps' starting line-up in spite of criticism for his overly physical style.

visitors will be without six players who are in self-isolation due to coronavirus cases at their club Shakhtar Donetsk.

Griezmann has scored just 15 times in 51 games since joining the Catalans from Atletico Madrid in July 2019.

Platini said the Barca attacker would benefit from featuring in an attack with a physical presence as was the case at Atletico with Diego Costa.

"I think Griezmann needs a Giroud, a Costa, a guy in front of him," said Platini.

"Griezmann's intelligence means that he's always where the ball lands. You can say the opposite, the ball always lands where he is. It's the mark of anyone with an instinct for the game.

"However, Giroud is someone

stronger, bigger, up on the coalface. But Griezmann needs a Giroud," he added.

Giroud, meanwhile, is closing in slowly on Thierry Henry's record for France of 51 international goals.

Going into the Ukraine game, he has 40 to his name which is just one shy of Platini who ranks second behind Henry for the national team with 41.

Platini, however, shrugs his shoulders at the likelihood of slipping down that particular ranking.

"It has no form of importance. I'm not an accountant. I'm happy for Giroud. I'm happy for Thierry. I hope there will always be players who score a lot of goals for France," he said.

"Records are there to be beaten. If Giroud beats my record, I'm happy for France and for him."

Giroud, if he plays up front it's because more than anything else he has the quality to play centre-forward. And if Deschamps plays him, it's because he thinks Giroud deserves to play. It doesn't interest me that he is criticised. Deschamps knows how to do his job, he knows what he should do and if he thinks Giroud is the best fit, then he plays him. After all, if Giroud's criticised, we have all been criticised, even Pele! Former UEFA President Michel Platini



Barca post €97m loss for 2019-20 due to COVID-19

REUTERS - BARCELON

Barcelona have announced a loss of €97m (\$114.28m) after tax for the 2019/20 financial year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while a projected estimate of breaking the €1bn mark in revenues was also scuppered.

The Catalan club also said in a statement on Monday that they had made revenue of 855 million euros, 14% down on the €990m they posted in 2018/19, while their overall net debt has more than doubled to €488m.

The club said €47m of losses was due to lost matchday revenue, 35 million to reduced club shop sales and 18 million on stadium tours, with further losses expected until fans can return to stadiums in Spain.

Predicted revenue for 2020-21 is €791m.

The players took a wage cut in order to help combat the deficit while football was suspended due to the coronavirus.

The club has also sold players who were on lucrative contracts, such as Luis Suarez, Ivan Rakitic and Arturo Vidal, in the close season in a bid to get salary expenditure within La Liga guidelines, which directly relate to projected income.

This has also meant a fairly quiet transfer window for new coach Ronald Koeman, with local media saying Olympique Lyonnais' Dutch forward Memphis Depay could only join if they sold forward Ousmane Dembele, who has been linked to Manchester United.

Southgate given another off-field issue before England games

AP - LONDON

England manager Gareth Southgate has another off-field issue to deal with.

Chelsea striker Tammy Abraham has apologized after a party was held at his house over the weekend in contravention of the British government's coronavirus guidelines limiting people to gatherings of groups of six or fewer when meeting those they don't live with.

According to footage shared by *The Sun* newspaper, Ben Chilwell and Jadon Sancho - called up by England last week, along with Abraham - were at the party.

The three players were scheduled to link up with the England squad yesterday, but their arrival at the country's training base at St. George's Park has been delayed "to understand if there is any risk to the wider group," the Football Association said in a statement yesterday.

"This is to allow time to gather further information of a social gathering that all three players reportedly attended over the weekend," the FA said.

Abraham turned 23 on Friday and said he returned to his house on Saturday - after playing a Premier League game for Chelsea - "to find a small surprise gathering."

"Though I was totally unaware this was planned, I would like to wholeheartedly apologize for the naivety shown for the organization and attending of this gathering," the striker told *The Sun*.

"All I can do now is learn from it, apologize to everyone and ensure it never happens again."

England plays Wales in a friendly on Thursday before Nations League matches against Belgium and Denmark at home.

When England's players met up for international matches against Iceland and Denmark last month, Harry Maguire was withdrawn from the squad ahead of the games after being convicted of assault in Greece. The defender has since been granted a retrial.

Then, youngsters Mason Greenwood and Phil Foden were dropped from the squad for breaching coronavirus restrictions after playing against Iceland by meeting women from outside the team's bio-secure bubble.

Southgate left Greenwood and Foden out of his latest squad, but recalled Maguire.

Raheem Sterling has been ruled out of all three games because of an unspecified injury, England said yesterday.

ICC forging ahead with 1st World Test Championship despite virus

AP — DUBAI

Cricket's global governing body is forging ahead with plans to stage an inaugural World Test Championship final in 2021, despite the disruption caused to the international game by the coronavirus outbreak.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) devised the championship to give some context to dozens of Test series taking place around the world every year, finally giving the five-day game its own standalone showpiece to go with World Cup finals in the ODI and T20 formats.

Having been forced to cancel its inaugural competition in both 2013 and '17, there were concerns the ICC would shelve its latest attempts to hold the WTC final next year because of so many Test series being called off amid the pandemic.

The World Twenty20 finals, scheduled for October this year, have already been canceled.

However, Tom Harrison, Chief Executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), said he has been notified by the ICC that the WTC final is "proceeding as

scheduled. Now they are working out what to do with the points from the series that haven't been played," Harrison said yesterday.

"And how to distribute those points, which is obviously going to be completely material in terms of who ends up playing in that final," he added.

The nine Test countries playing the competition were scheduled to play six series home and away over a two-year period starting in 2019. The top two teams in the standings would then meet in the final in June 2021. These are currently India and Australia.

While England, India and Pakistan have played four series each, four countries - Sri Lanka, West Indies, South Africa and Bangladesh - have only played two. Australia and New Zealand have played three series each.

With coronavirus restrictions in place globally and varying from country to country, all fixtures are unlikely to take place.

Bangladesh, for example, has seen matches against Pakistan, Australia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand postponed, and recent attempts to revive

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a three-Test tour of Sri Lanka failed because the countries' two cricket boards couldn't agree to a 14-day mandatory quarantine period.

The ECB chief said England was keen to stage the final and that the ICC's preference would be that it took place at Lord's, where the 50-over World Cup final was staged last year.

"It's the home of cricket on an international level, and it certainly has a role to play in the positioning of Test cricket," Harrison said.

"But we are talking about a COVID environment and when you put COVID into a negotiations like this, it changes everything.

"If you are taking part in that fixture and you have potentially two neutral teams

playing a world final in the UK, I'm pretty sure you'd want to know you are safe and protected when it comes to the health environment you are heading into."

After successfully hosting Test, ODI and T20 matches in isolated environments across the English summer, the ECB faces a challenging task arranging England's winter fixtures.

It is hoped England can travel to South Africa, Sri Lanka and India over the next seven months, but Harrison said the relationship between the governments and cricket boards in those countries were different to that in England.

"Not everyone enjoys the collaborative relationship we have enjoyed with our

government this year in order to secure waivers for elite sportspeople coming into this country," he said.

"What I want to say is that we will not sign off plans that we are not comfortable with in terms of the health and wellbeing of our players and staff."

The ECB's chief medical officer, Nick Peirce, said there was a concern that players and staff being moved between "endless bubbles" could affect people's mental health.

"More importantly I don't think what's helpful will be the imposed prolonged quarantines or unknown ways in which governments will handle a positive test or people who have come from a perceived high-risk country," Peirce said.

"And, unfortunately, Britain is escalating in terms of the way it's perceived is a risk."

The ECB said it lost about £100m (\$127m) because of the coronavirus this year, leading to a 20% cut in its workforce.

Harrison said the financial impact for 2021 could be as much as £200m (\$254m) if home and away tours are disrupted.

The final of the first World Test Championship is scheduled in June 2021.



Botham introduced as a peer in the House of Lords

AP — LONDON

Ian Botham swapped Lord's for the House of Lords when he was introduced as a peer yesterday.

The England cricket great donned the traditional scarlet and ermine-trimmed robe and swore the oath of allegiance to Queen Elizabeth II in a ceremony that didn't go according to plan initially.

Technical problems delayed the start of proceedings, with the speaker saying Botham's words could not be heard outside the House.

"I think rain has stopped play just for the moment," Lord Fowler said - in a nod to cricket parlance - to laughs in the chamber.

Botham is a Brexit supporter who was one of 36 new peers nominated by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in August.

He will sit as a non-party

peer in the Lords, whose members are mostly political appointees, with a smattering of hereditary nobles, judges and clergy.

Referred to as Baron Botham of Ravensworth, his home village, in the chamber, the former cricketer will be known as Lord Botham.

"I, Ian Lord Botham, do swear by almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and her successors, according to the law. So help me God," he told the House.

Botham is one of England's greatest sport stars, retiring in 1992 with 102 matches, 383 wickets and 5,200 runs in Test cricket.

He is best known for career-defining displays in the comeback victory over Australia in the 1981 Ashes series.

He has been a TV commentator since retirement.



A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows former England cricket legend Ian Botham taking his seat in the House of Lords in London, yesterday.

Rabada, Stoinis earn Delhi big victory over Bangalore

AP — DUBAI

Kagiso Rabada grabbed three wickets in four balls and Marcus Stoinis bludgeoned a half-century as Delhi Capitals surged to the top of the Indian Premier League with a 59-run victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore yesterday.

Stoinis hit 53 runs off 26 balls to propel Delhi to 196-4 after Bangalore captain Virat Kohli won the toss and elected to field. Rabada then took 4-24 to restrict Bangalore's reply at 137-9.

"Delhi Capitals are playing some really good cricket," Kohli said.

"Their batting is fearless, they have got pace, they have got good spinners. I won't say they are unbeatable, but they will be hard to beat. Against this side, you have to bring your A game. We didn't tonight."

Stoinis made Bangalore pay for a dropped catch on 30, and together with Rishabh Pant (37 off 25 balls) they put up 89 runs off 41 balls for the fourth wicket.

Brief Scores

Delhi Capitals 196/4 wkts in 20 overs (M Stoinis 53 not out, P Shaw 42, R Pant 37, M Siraj 2/34) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 137/9 in 20 overs (V Kohli 43, K Rabada 4/24, A Patel 2/18, A Nortje 2/22)

Bangalore came back with three quick wickets after Prithvi Shaw blazed 42 off 23 balls at the top of the order and provided a quickfire start of 63-0 in the first six overs.

But Stoinis' arrival in the 12th over at 90-3 revived Delhi. He hit six fours and two sixes as fast bowler Navdeep Saini finished with expensive figures of 48-0 off his three overs.

Delhi Capitals captain Shreyas Iyer's bold decision to introduce spinners Axar Patel

(2-18) and Ravichandran Ashwin (1-26) inside the first six overs paid off.

Devdutt Padikkal holed out in the deep in Ashwin's first over and Aaron Finch, who was twice dropped in the first two overs, was brilliantly snapped up by Pant behind the wickets in Patel's first over.

Top-scorer Kohli (43) became the first Indian batsman to score 9,000 runs in Twenty20s when he reached 10, but the skipper couldn't push the scoring rate against the spinners and was one of Rabada's wickets.

Rabada found the inside edge of Kohli's bat and then claimed Washington Sundar, Shivam Dube and Isuru Udana in the space of four balls to earn Delhi's fourth win in five games.

"Kudos to the boys ... it is really important for us to get good recovery after the games," Iyer said.

"It is not easy when you are in the bio-bubble. We try to get into team activities and get to know each other well," he added.

Mishra out of IPL after injury

AFP — NEW DELHI

India and Delhi Capitals' leg-spinner Amit Mishra has been ruled out for the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season after injuring his finger against the Kolkata Knight Riders, his team yesterday.

The 37-year-old, who last played for India in a Twenty20 match against England in February 2017, has been one of the

top performers in league cricket.

"(Mishra) sustained a flexor tendon injury to the ring finger of his bowling hand whilst attempting to take a return catch off his bowling (this Saturday)," IPL side Delhi Capitals said in a statement issued yesterday.

"Mishra will now consult with a specialist over the next few days to determine the most appropriate course of

management for this unfortunate injury."

The world's richest T20 league is being played in the United Arab Emirates after being shifted out of India due to rising numbers of coronavirus cases.

Other players, including Mishra's Delhi teammate and Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, have also faced injury scares during this year's IPL.

F1: Turkish GP to be held without fans due to COVID-19

REUTERS — ANKARA

Formula One's Turkish Grand Prix next month will be held without spectators due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Istanbul governor's office said yesterday, as the event returns to Istanbul after an absence of almost a decade.

The Turkish Grand Prix, scheduled for November 13-15, was put back on the Formula One calendar in August.

Turkey last hosted a race in 2011 at the Istanbul Park circuit, which was popular among drivers but attracted small crowds.

In order to boost attendances, Istanbul Park's operators Intercity had sold tickets at record-low prices for the 2020 weekend and announced that as many as 100,000 fans would be allowed in.

However, the Istanbul Governor's office announced on Monday that the race weekend would be held without fans amid a rising trend in coronavirus cases and deaths in Turkey, based on a recommendation by the Istanbul Provincial Pandemic Council.

"It was decided that the race be held without fans," the governor's office said in a statement.

Tickets went on sale in early September, with organisers and officials saying there was great interest in the race. Intercity Chairman Vural Ak said in a statement yesterday that all tickets would be fully refunded, and added "human health is all of our priority."

"I am sure that even if it's without fans, after the perfect hospitality we will show here, we will bring the races here next year and fill the stands together," Ak said.

Italian Karter who threw bumper at rival says he's quitting

REUTERS — LONDON

An Italian who threw part of his go-kart at a rival during a world championship final, prompting 2009 Formula One champion Jenson Button to call for a life ban, apologised yesterday and said he was leaving the sport.

Coverage of the KZ final on Youtube showed 23-year-old Luca Corberi crashing out and then waiting by the side of the track for rival Paolo Ippolito before hurling his kart's bumper at him. Nobody was hit.

Footage posted on social media showed further fisticuffs after the race at the South Garda circuit in Lonato, northern Italy.

The *Gazzetta dello Sport* website said Corberi had posted an apology on Facebook, before deleting it.

"There are no excuses to explain why I did something so shameful," it quoted him saying.

"I have decided not to take part in any other motorsport competition for the rest of my life."

Button suggested on Twitter that the Italian deserved a life ban: "Luca Corberi just destroyed any chance he had at a racing career after his disgusting behaviour at the FIA World champs," said the Briton.

The governing FIA said it had launched an immediate investigation.

Relentless Butler propels Heat to win over Lakers in game 3

AFP — MIAMI

The Miami Heat, fueled by a 40-point triple-double from Jimmy Butler, clawed their way back into the NBA Finals with a 115-104 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.

The under-manned, under-sized, underdog Heat turned the tables on the Western Conference champions in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, cutting the deficit in the best-of-seven championship series to two games to one.

"I think we realized that we belong," Butler said.

"They can be beat, as long as we do what we're supposed to do."

Butler scored 40 points, pulled down 11 rebounds and handed out 13 assists to power a Heat team missing injured Bam Adebayo and Goran Dragic for the second straight game.

The injuries to Adebayo and Dragic were a huge blow to the Eastern Conference fifth-seeded Heat's hopes of pulling off a title upset, but Miami, with Butler leading the way, declined to back down.

Superstar LeBron James led the Lakers with 25 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists.

But it was a tough night



Jimmy Butler of the Miami Heat dunks the ball during the first half against the Los Angeles Lakers in Game Three of the 2020 NBA Finals.

for Anthony Davis, who was in foul trouble early and finished with 15 points and just five rebounds in the defeat.

An 8-0 scoring run capped by Rajon Rondo's driving layup saw the Lakers take a 91-89 lead with 8:56 left in the game.

The Heat responded with an 8-0 run of their own launched by Butler's fadeaway jumper under pressure in the paint.

After James was whistled for traveling, Butler cut through the Lakers defense

and fired a pass to Kelly Olynyk on the perimeter for a three-pointer and the Heat were on their way.

"They continued to make shots," James said.

"We had some turnovers, we didn't make shots. They came out and executed after we took the lead.

Butler added two blocks and two steals as he did a stellar job defending James, but said individual numbers are meaningless at this stage.

Rookie sensation Tyler Herro and reserve Kendrick

Nunn added 17 points apiece for the Heat. Duncan Robinson scored 13 and Jae Crowder chipped in 12 for Miami.

With their backs against the wall and plenty of pundits predicting a Lakers sweep, the Heat surged out of the gate and led by as many as 13 in an impressive first quarter.

In the face of stifling defense, Davis had four turnovers and didn't get a shot off in the first period while collecting two

personal fouls. James also turned the ball over four times as 10 Lakers turnovers led to 11 Heat points.

"You just can't turn the ball over against this team," said James, who finished with eight of the Lakers' 20 turnovers on the night.

"And I take full responsibility for that."

Despite their sloppiness, the Lakers trailed by just three after the first quarter.

Markieff Morris drained a three-pointer to knot the score less than a minute into the second period.

Davis's first points of the night, a three-pointer off an assist from Rondo put the Lakers up 32-30, and Rondo found Davis for an alley-oop dunk that made it 34-33.

It looked like the Lakers were poised to mount the kind of comeback they put together in game one, when they surged back from a 13-point first quarter deficit to win by 18.

But the Heat kept the pressure on. Butler scored 11 points in the second quarter, Davis picked up his third personal foul and the Heat took a 58-54 lead into halftime.

Miami opened the third quarter on a 10-0 scoring run, and less than two minutes into the third Davis was whistled for his fourth foul.



England coach Eddie Jones

Rugby: Jones calls up 12 uncapped players for early England camp

REUTERS — LONDON

England coach Eddie Jones, restricted in his options by the ongoing Premiership season, has included 12 uncapped players in an initial 28-man training squad to begin preparations for the delayed Six Nations game away to Italy on October 31.

England will also have a non-cap match against the Barbarians the week before, and later roll into the new Autumn Nations Cup tournament. The new squad will convene on Tuesday for a three-day training camp at a London hotel. "Our preparation to build the team for the Italy game starts now," Jones said in a statement.

"We have a three-day camp this week and another one next week. We'll be slowly building up, working on the basics and working on team cohesion."

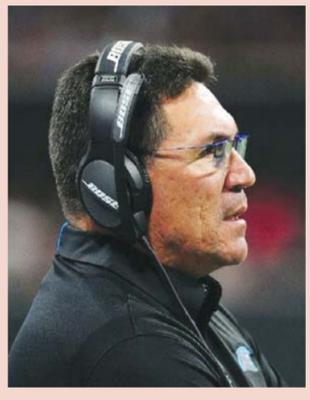
Jones's options have been limited by many players still being involved in the Premiership playoffs as well as European finals. An updated squad will be confirmed ahead of England's next training camp from Oct. 15-17. After the Rome trip, where a win could secure the Six Nations title, England face Georgia, Ireland and Wales and then a "decider" against a team from the other Nations Cup pool.

England training squad:

Backs: Ali Crossdale, Saracens* Elliot Daly, Saracens Fraser Dingwall, Northampton Saints* Nathan Earle, Harlequins* Owen Farrell, Saracens George Ford, Leicester Tigers Piers Francis, Northampton Saints George Furbank, Northampton Saints Willi Heinz, Gloucester Rugby Joe Marchant, Harlequins Jonny May, Gloucester Rugby Alex Mitchell, Northampton Saints* Ollie Thorley, Gloucester Rugby* Ben Youngs, Leicester Tigers

Forwards: Jack Clement, Gloucester Rugby* Alex Dombardt, Harlequins* Ellis Genge, Leicester Tigers Jamie George, Saracens Joe Hayes, Leicester Tigers* Maro Itoje, Saracens Simon Kerrod, Harlequins* Lewis Ludlow, Gloucester Rugby* Alex Moon, Northampton Saints* David Ribbans, Northampton Saints* Jack Singleton, Gloucester Rugby Billy Vunipola, Saracens Mako Vunipola, Saracens Mark Wilson, Newcastle Falcons

Rivera to coach Washington through treatment



REUTERS — WASHINGTON

Washington football team head coach Ron Rivera (pictured) plans to remain on the sideline through the final three weeks of his ongoing cancer treatment.

Rivera appeared to be physically exhausted during Sunday's loss to the Baltimore Ravens.

He was diagnosed with squamous cell cancer in August, but has missed only two practices and part of another.

Rivera said doctors told him his prognosis is very good and a full recovery is expected.

He shared his story with ABC's "Good Morning America" yesterday.

"It's who I am," Rivera said of his plan to remain in his head-coaching role the rest of October during treatment.

"Listening to the doctors talking about how important it is to try and do as much of the routine as possible, but they also tell you, 'Hey, be careful, listen to your body.' And also, there's other people watching me, so I'm just trying to set the example."

Rivera has former NFL head coach Jack Del Rio, Washington's defensive coordinator, to rely on

if he misses practices or eventually is not well enough for game day.

Friends and family purchased 400 cardboard cutouts for a section of the stadium on Sunday to show their support through the American Cancer Society.

The head coach said he didn't know anything about the gesture, which caused an emotional reaction.

"As [ESPN anchor] Stuart Scott said, 'I have it; it doesn't have me.' And it's not how far I have to go, but it's how far I've gone," Rivera said.

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Thomas sunk, Yates dropped in third Giro d'Italia stage

REUTERS — MOUNT ETNA, ITALY

Geraint Thomas's Giro d'Italia challenge was effectively over before the first climb yesterday after the Ineos-Grenadiers rider was dropped during the third stage following an early crash.

Britain's 2018 Tour de France champion hit the ground in the neutral zone before the start and lost touch with the main pack ahead of the final ascent to Mount Etna, an 18.8km effort at an average gradient of 6.6%.

Thomas ended the 150km stage some 12 minutes behind stage winner Jonathan Caicedo of Ecuador, who crossed the line 51 seconds ahead of overall contenders Jakob Fuglsang and twice winner Vincenzo Nibali and 39 seconds before Dutch challenger Wilco Keldermann.

On a bad day for British riders, Simon Yates of the Mitchelton-Scott team was dropped about nine km from the finish, losing 3:31 to the other leading overall contenders.

"It was about limiting our losses," said Mitchelton-Scott sports director Matt White.

"It's a long race, everyone has a bad day. Unfortunately for us it's early in the race."

"We're looking at the race from a different angle. Now we're coming from behind," he said.

Portugal's Joao Almeida took the overall leader's Maglia Rosa a fraction of a second ahead of Caicedo, who might



Team Education First rider Ecuador's Jonathan Caicedo celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the third stage of the Giro d'Italia 2020, yesterday.

regret celebrating his stage win before crossing the line.

"I cannot describe this feeling," said Deceuninck-Quick Step rider Almeida, who will have to be closely monitored by the top contenders in the coming days.

"It's a dream come true. I tried to do my best on the climb and stay with the main favourites for the general classification."

It has been an eventful start

to the rescheduled grand tour after Fuglsang's Astana team were hit when key climber Miguel Angel Lopez crashed out in the opening time trial and co-leader Aleksandr Vlasov abandoned with a stomach bug on Sunday.

Bad memories resurfaced for Welshman Thomas as he pulled out of the 2017 Giro injured five days after hitting the ground in a crash involving a race motorbike.