



FEDERER

On Course to Become First Billionaire in Tennis This Year



Roger Federer will join the likes of Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and Floyd Mayweather as billionaire sportspersons by the end of the year.

Roger Federer, the 20-time Grand Slam Champion and currently the third-highest ranked male tennis player in the world, is expected to join the club of billionaire sportsperson by the end of 2020. According to the official ATP figures, Federer has won over USD 129 million prize money from wins in singles and doubles competitions.

At present, there are only three male sportspersons in the billionaire club - Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and Floyd Mayweather.

The total figure that Federer has earned in as a sportsperson is comparatively lesser than his earnings from endorsements and appearances that he has made.

According to a report by Forbes, Federer's annual earnings, including prize money and sponsorships, have reached the mark of USD 93.4 million.

Federer has been sponsoring for brands including Barilla, Credit Suisse Group (ADS), Mercedes-Benz, Rolex, Uniqlo, Wilson Sporting Goods.

A report by TENNIS.com mentioned that for his association with Nike, the shoes that Federer wears on the tennis court, the sports star earnings has neared to USD 900 million.

The report further said that if Federer becomes a billionaire, it would be for the first time a tennis player will make it to the club.

The 38-year-old tennis legend is in Melbourne prepping for the

Xavi on top of Barca wishlist with Valverde under pressure

LONDON: Barcelona have asked former captain Xavi to take over from the under-pressure Ernesto Valverde as head coach, Spanish media reported on Friday.

The club's sporting director Eric Abidal has reportedly spoken to the boss of Qatari side Al Sadd about arriving on a two-year-deal, with radio station Cadena Ser claiming the former midfielder could return this season if Valverde is sacked.

Al Sadd's general manager Turki Al-Ali refused to rule out a move back to Barca for Xavi.

"The issue of Xavi going to Barcelona is normal and expected because he will be at his club and it's his first home and he must return there in the future, but as of today, Xavi is the coach of Al Sadd," Al-Ali said in a statement.

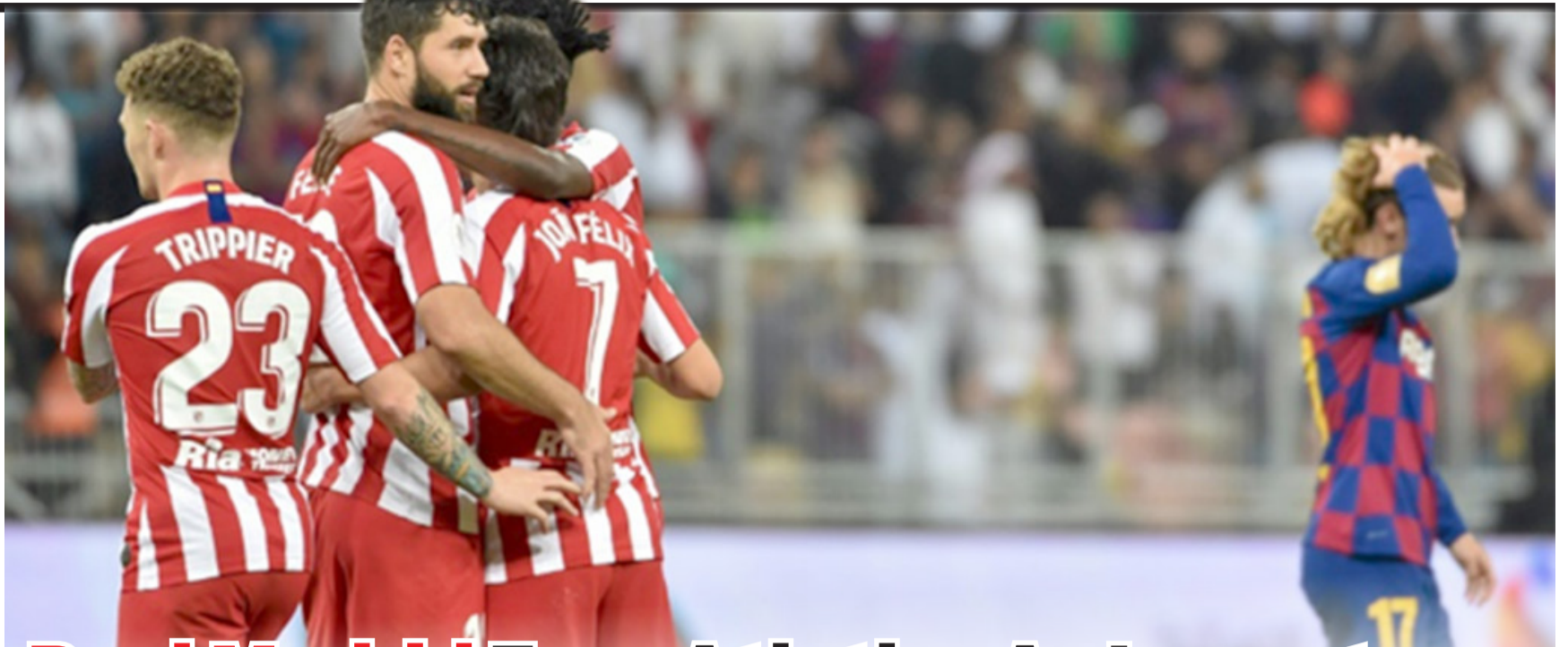
"Xavi and his team are focusing on tomorrow's match against Al-Rayyan, and we know that a club with the size and professionalism of Barcelona will take to official channels to speak of such matters," he added.

World Cup winner Xavi came through the Catalans' academy and played 855 senior games for the Camp Nou side.



He joined Al Sadd as a player in 2015 before being appointed coach last July.

Valverde's position is reportedly under threat after the Spanish



Real Madrid Face Atletico As Imposters Gatecrash Super Cup Final In Saudi

LONDON: Lionel Messi has predictably been the star attraction but there will be no Clasic in Saudi Arabia this weekend, as Atletico Madrid's defeat of Barcelona set up a clash with rivals Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday.

Messi was cheered by fans at the King Abdullah Sport City Stadium from the moment he jogged out to warm up, yet Atletico were the ones celebrating at the end of Thursday's semi-final in the competition that has been expanded and controversially shipped to a different continent, to a country with a long-condemned record on human rights.

Atletico scored two late goals to beat Barca 3-2, with a derby final now to come against Real Madrid.

When the Spanish Football Federation signed a three-year contract worth 120 million euros (\$133.4 million) to move the tour-

namment to Saudi, a title showdown between Real and Barcelona would very likely have been top of the organisers' wishlist.

The draw kept the clubs apart in the semis and a new four-team format ensured Real and Atletico were able to participate at all, given they would not have qualified for the traditional two-legged showdown between league champions and winners of the Copa del Rey. Including the two other highest-placed finishers in La Liga all-but ensures entry for Barcelona and Real Madrid every year but, as this competition has shown, there is no guarantee of progress.

"The Super Cup will be decided by its guests," read Catalan sports daily Mundo Deportivo on Friday. "Second in the league against semi-finalist in the cup."

An all-Madrid final in Jeddah offers both Atletico and Real the chance to claim a first trophy of the

campaign and perhaps a valuable psychological boost too.

Certainly, Barcelona and Valencia will resume in La Liga with their rhythm jolted and confidence knocked.

- Gaining momentum -

After seven games unbeaten, Valencia were outplayed in their 3-1 semi-final defeat by Real while Barca's late collapse against Atletico brings doubts around coach Ernesto Valverde rushing back to the surface.

Already on Friday, reports in the Spanish press were linking the club's former midfielder Xavi Hernandez -- who has been coaching in Qatar -- with taking his job in the summer.

"There is always instability when you lose," admitted Valverde.

Just as defeat to a rival creates instability, victory could prove affirming for Real, who look to convert form into a lead

in La Liga's title race, and Atletico, who are trying to close a five-point gap.

Atletico have been gaining momentum in the league and their victory over Barcelona will be a major boost ahead of what promises to be a tough second half of the season.

They sit third in the league table with trips to Camp Nou and the Santiago Bernabeu to come while in the Champions League they face Europe's most feared team, Liverpool, next month.

Yet even if they were on the back foot for long spells of their 3-2 win on Thursday, Atletico defied their creative problems with three goals and at least two good chances for more.

"It is important for the club, we beat the best attacking team in the world," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "You saw our bite, our belief, our desire. It's what this club is all about."



As runs flow again, Maxwell says has banished demons in head

MELBOURNE (REUTERS): Australia's Glenn Maxwell attributed his red-hot form in the ongoing Big Bash League to the break he took to address his mental health issues and said he has banished his demons.

The explosive all-rounder flagged his struggle with mental health in October and spent much of the subsequent seven weeks with friends and family before quietly returning to action.

The Melbourne Stars captain hammered 83 not out off 45 balls to pull off a tricky chase against Melbourne Renegades, sealing the victory with his seventh six at the Marvel Stadium on Friday.

"I think I'm starting to see the

benefits now, I've got no demons in my head," Maxwell told Cricket Australia website.

"I've been able to get everything off my chest and been able to deal with things better."

"I'm still talking to people about managing different parts of my life and making sure I've still got that balance."

Maxwell is the second highest run-accumulator at this edition of the tournament, 20 runs behind team mate Marcus Stoinis (331) and has scored 182 runs without being dismissed in his last three innings. "It's nice to be a bit more relaxed when I'm batting," said the 31-year-old.

"I don't have anything going in

the back of my mind, I don't have any of these other thoughts. It's been nice and calm out there."

He has been left out of the upcoming one-day series in India after an underwhelming 12 months of 50-overs cricket, including a poor World Cup outing in England.

Maxwell doesn't believe his Big Bash purple patch would pave the way back into the Australian one-day squad.

"This is T20 cricket. They're playing one-day cricket."

"One-day cricket is completely different. They will probably write that my World Cup wasn't good enough. I'll just try to keep doing as well as I can for the Stars."

US World Cup star Rapinoe slams IOC 'no protest' policy

LONDON: United States World Cup icon Megan Rapinoe Friday vowed that athletes "will not be silenced" after the International Olympic Committee warned against political protests at the Tokyo Games.

"So much being done about the protests," Rapinoe said in an Instagram post. "So little being done about what we are protesting about."

"We will not be silenced."

Rapinoe's comments were accompanied by a graphic showing fists raised through the interlocking rings -- under the crossed out words "kneeling, hand gestures, signs."

The post comes after IOC chief Thomas Bach reiterated that athletes, coaches, trainers and officials are banned from political protests on the field of play, at the Olympic Village, during the opening and closing ceremonies



and on the medal podium.

"If this political neutrality is not respected, then the Olympic Games will divide, and not unite, the world," Bach insisted.

No changes to S A team despite defeat

CAPE TOWN (REUTERS): South Africa have kept the same team for the last two tests against England despite their 189-run defeat at Newlands this week that left the series level at 1-1.

The starting team from the Cape Town test, which England won in a thrilling finish, plus bowler Dane Paterson will travel to Port Elizabeth for the third test, which starts on Thursday. The rest of the squad members will stay with their franchise teams and continue to compete in domestic four-day competition. "The selection panel are placing an emphasis on the importance of game time for non-starting players and prefer that

they are available to their teams to help boost the competition," Cricket South Africa said in a statement on Friday. "They will join the national team if and when required." The third test at St George's Park is followed by the last at the Wanderers in Johannesburg from Jan 24-28. South Africa won the first test in Pretoria by 107 runs.

Squad: Faf du Plessis (captain), Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock, Dean Elgar, Zubayr Hamza, Beuran Hendricks, Keshav Maharaj, Pieter Malan, Anrich Nortje, Dane Paterson, Andile Phehlukwayo, Vernon Philander, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Rudi Second, Rassie van der Dussen.

central venue on a 'single-leg' league system. Eventually, the winners will qualify to the next edition of Hero I-League i.e. Hero I-League 2020-21.

All the eighteen teams have cleared Hero Second Division League club licensing process of 2019-20 season except Lonestar Kashmir, who have been granted a special exemption by the league committee as they could not fulfil the criteria entirety due to reasons beyond their control.

Meanwhile, six teams including reserve teams of four teams are slated to make their debut in the Hero Second Division

League this season. They are as follows: FC Bengaluru United, Rajasthan FC, Indian Arrows (reserves), Punjab FC (reserves), Hyderabad FC (reserves) and Mumbai City FC (reserves).

The Groups of the preliminary round are as mentioned below:

Group A: Lonestar Kashmir FC, Punjab FC (reserves), Garhwal FC, Rajasthan FC, ATK (reserves), Jamshedpur FC (reserves).

Group B: Mohammedan Sporting, Bhawanipore, Indian Arrows (reserves), Hyderabad FC (reserves), Bengaluru FC (reserves), Chennaiyin FC (re-

Eighteen teams to compete in Hero Second Division League 2019-20

NEW DELHI: Eighteen teams comprising of reserve teams of eight Hero Indian Super League clubs (Except Northeast United FC and Odisha FC) and two Hero I-League clubs (Punjab FC and Indian Arrows) will compete in the preliminary round of Hero Second Division League 2019-20.

The Preliminary round will kick-off in the last week of January 2020. Teams will play on a home and away basis against other teams within a group.

The winners of each group along with the best second-placed team between Group



A and C would qualify for the final round. However, if reserve teams of ISL clubs finish

as winners or runners-up in any group, the position will be passed on to the next non-ISL

team. In the final round, four qualified teams will play at the