



Lewandowski brace helps Bayern into Cup quarters

LONDON: Bayern Munich's insatiable striker Robert Lewandowski scored twice as they saw off fellow Bundesliga side Hoffenheim 4-3 at home on Wednesday to reach the quarter-finals of the German Cup.

Fourth-tier side Saarbrücken also reached the last eight of the competition after overcoming second-tier Karlsruher 5-3 in a penalty shootout following a goalless draw after extra time.

Union Berlin beat Verl 1-0 and Bayer Leverkusen knocked out VfB Stuttgart with a 2-1 win to make it through to Friday's quarter-final draw.

Holders Bayern fell behind when Jerome Boateng diverted a shot into his own net in the eighth minute but they soon levelled with an own goal by Hoffenheim's Benjamin Hubner before Thomas Mueller put them in front with a volley in the 20th minute.

Lewandowski stretched Bayern's lead further in the 36th minute and looked to have wrapped the game up when he struck again with 10 minutes remaining, netting for the 35th time in all competitions this season.

Yet Hoffenheim's new forward Moanes Dabour pulled a goal back for the visitors two minutes later and scored again in added time to set up a tense final few minutes.



Guardiola wanted to play keeper Neuer in midfield

LONDON: Pep Guardiola had to be dissuaded from playing goalkeeper Manuel Neuer in midfield during his days as Bayern Munich coach, according to the club's chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

"I remember when Pep Guardiola, after winning a championship, seriously considered the idea of putting him in midfield for a match," Rummenigge told the club magazine '51'.

"I had trouble getting Pep Guardiola to give up on this idea, which some might have taken as being arrogant."

Bayern were dominating the

Bundesliga at the time, however Rummenigge agreed that Neuer's ability with the ball meant that it was not such an eccentric idea.

"Manuel brought the footballer into goalkeeping and revolutionised this position," said Rummenigge — although Colombia's Rene Higuita claimed to have invented the sweeper-keeper role in the 1990s and Mexico's Jorge Campos sometimes played as a striker for UNAM.

Manchester City boss Guardiola won the Bundesliga in each of his three seasons at Bayern although Champions League success eluded him.



'OLYMPICS WILL GO AHEAD': TOKYO SLAMS VIRUS RUMOURS

TOKYO: Tokyo 2020 Olympics organisers said Thursday the Games would "go ahead as planned", slamming misinformation over the new coronavirus for triggering panic.

Chief executive officer Toshiro Muto revealed that organisers have set up a task force to combat the fast-spreading disease that has killed over 560 people and infected

at least 28,000 — the vast majority in mainland China — but promised that the Games would be not derailed.

"The Olympics will go ahead as planned," he told reporters after a Paralympic project review.

"It is important to remain objective and cool-headed. We don't want to alarm the public. The infection is still limited and there is no problem

staging the Olympics based on the current situation."

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) spokesman Craig Spence complained that scaremongering had created an "info-demic" that could skew public perception in the run-up to the Olympics and Paralympics.

"Fear is spreading quicker than the virus," he said. "It's important we

quell that fear. Only 191 of the total cases are outside mainland China, so let's put things into perspective." If you compare those rates with the common flu, they are still relatively small numbers," added Spence.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) has not declared this a pandemic. We dealt with the Zika virus in Rio and in these matters we need to rely on the experts."

"We will follow the advice of the World Health Organization. Every organising committee looks into countermeasures, and we have measures in place from previous Olympics and Paralympics here in Tokyo. It is standard practice, it's business as usual."

More than 20 countries have confirmed cases of the flu-like coronavirus.

Injured Dortmund captain Reus set to miss PSG clash

LONDON: Borussia Dortmund were dealt a blow on Wednesday after announcing that captain Marco Reus has picked up a muscle injury that should keep him out of the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie against Paris Saint-Germain.

In a statement Dortmund said the 30-year-old should be out "for around four weeks" after picking up the injury late in Tuesday's 3-2 German Cup defeat at Werder Bremen, ruling him out of the home leg of the PSG clash on February 18.

He should however be back for the return leg in Paris on March 11.

The Germany forward will be a big miss for Dortmund, as he has scored 12 goals and set up seven more this season.

Teenage striking sensation Erling Braut Haaland scored his eighth goal in just four games for Dortmund at Bremen, but could not stop his new side crashing out of the cup.



India handed third consecutive fine for slow over rate

WELLINGTON: India's players were fined 80 percent of their match fees after Wednesday's first one-day international against New Zealand for a slow over rate, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced.

It was the third consecutive match that Virat Kohli's side had been fined for

the offence, having been deducted 40 percent following the fourth T20 international against the Black Caps, and 20 percent after the fifth T20I last Sunday, when Rohit Sharma stood in for Kohli as skipper. Kohli accepted the charge after India's four-wicket defeat in Hamilton on Wednesday.

ICC rules state that teams are fined 20 percent of their match fees for every over they fall short of bowling in a specified time.

India failed to bowl four overs before the cut-off point as New Zealand chased down 348 to win thanks to Ross Taylor's unbeaten century.



ARCHER OUT OF SL TOUR AND IPL AFTER INJURY

LONDON :England fast bowler Jofra Archer has been ruled out of their upcoming test tour of Sri Lanka and the 2020 Indian Premier League season due to an elbow injury, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Thursday.

The 24-year-old was injured in England's first test against South Africa last month and underwent scans on his elbow on Wednesday that confirmed he had suffered a low-grade stress fracture.

"He will now commence an injury rehabilitation programme with the ECB medical team with a view to be ready for the international summer campaign starting in June against the West Indies in a three-match Test series," the ECB said.

England are scheduled to play two tests against Sri Lanka next month, with the first starting on March 19.