

Mueller apologises for kick on Ajax defender

Bayern Munich's forward was shown a straight red for this kick on Nicolas

● Thomas Muller's flying kick left his opponent needing medical treatment

AFP | Amsterdam

Thomas Muller has apologised for his kung fu-style kick to the head of Ajax defender Nicholas Tagliafico which saw the Germany star being sent off in Wednesday's six-goal thriller in Amsterdam.

"No, no - of course I didn't mean to do it," the 29-year-old told reporters over the first straight red card of his career in 462 appearances for Bayern in the thrilling 3-3 draw as both teams progressed to the last 16 of the Champions League.

Muller said he went to the hosts' changing room to apologise to Tagliafico after the match, but the defender, who scored the home side's 95th-minute equaliser, had already left.

Instead, Muller wrote "@tagliafico3 - I am very sorry for that what happened yesterday! Was not intentionally (sic). Get well soon" on his Instagram account.



Bayern Munich's German forward Thomas Muller (L) kicks the back of Ajax's Argentine defender Nicolas Tagliafico

Muller was sent off 15 minutes from time after trying to control the ball with his out-

stretched boot, but succeeded only in kicking the head of Tagliafico, who needed treatment, in a bad-tempered game.

Both Muller's team-mates and coach said the foul warranted a straight red card.

"Thomas didn't see him," said Bayern boss Niko Kovac, "but it was a clear red - he should have been aware of the opponent."

Earlier in the fixture Ajax had Maximilian Woeber sent off for horror foul on Bayern midfielder Leon Goretzka, who

witnessed Muller's head-high tackle on Tagliafico at close quarters.

"I saw the scene as it happened. You only have to see how the lad looked afterwards - it wasn't good," said Goretzka.

"As I saw it, it was a clear red." It was a bitter end to the night for Muller, who made his 105th Champions League appearance, putting him level with ex-Bayern captain Philipp Lahm, who skipped Germany to the 2014 World Cup title.

462

appearances have been made by Thomas Muller for Bayern Munich but earned his first red card on Wednesday

Brave CF strengthens opportunities in the Indian sports sector

TDI | Manama

Brave Combat Federation partnering with Mercury Sports and Entertainment will host Brave 20 on 22nd December in the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad, India.

The initiative will bring together athletes representing eleven nations for the first time in the history of Mixed Martial Arts in India.

Brave 20 marks the first Indian Mixed Martial Arts event covered live by Abu Dhabi Sports, Combate, Fite TV and Brave TV. The event will be the martial arts event in India with the highest global reach.

The UK based GreenHill Sports confirmed as the offi-

cial merchandise partner for the event providing fight gear and combat apparel for the athletes. Mercury Sports and Entertainment have partnered to support future editions of the event and derivative projects or Brave Combat Federation in India.

Brave 20 provides the opportunity for 8 Indian athletes to compete professionally in a global platform. Brave Combat Federation based in the Kingdom of Bahrain is the fastest growing Mixed Martial Arts organization in the world and have confirmed to expand its global footprint in the coming years by adding more venues across global destinations.

Brave Combat Federation is the first global Mixed Martial Arts organization to host an event in India. Brave 5: Go for Glory hosted on 23rd April in Mumbai opened the opportunity for Indian athletes to compete in a global platform in India.

Following the footsteps of Brave Combat Federation, multiple local promotions and events were organized. Two Indian athletes secured medals in the Brave International Combat Week 2018 held in Bahrain which is till date the most by Indian team during World Championships.



There is a significant increase in the number of Indian athletes compared to our first initiative in India and this is a testimony for the influence the organization had upon the growth of the sport in India

MOHAMMED SHAHID, PRESIDENT OF BRAVE CF

Pakistan cricket captain calls on squad to play 'without fear'



Pakistani cricket captain Sarfraz Ahmed (R) and teammates take part in a practice session (file photo)

AFP | Karachi

Pakistan skipper Sarfraz Ahmed yesterday urged his fellow teammates to play "without fear" during their tour of South Africa -- a country where they have won only two Tests during their past five tours.

The Pakistani side is en route to South Africa to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and three Twenty20 internationals, with the first Test starting in Centurion on December 26.

Pakistan head into the series after losing 2-1 to New Zealand in the United Arab Emirates last week. In the wake of the tough loss, Sarfraz said he still had high hopes of earning a good result against the Proteas.

"Conditions in South Africa are tough with bouncy and seaming pitches so anyone who plays without fear and with a big heart will succeed," Sarfraz told AFP.

Pakistan's two wins out of 12

Tests in South Africa came in 1998 and 2007, having lost nine with just one draw.

On their last tour in 2013, Pakistan were routed 3-0 and bowled out for their lowest Test score of 49 in the first Test in Johannesburg, with both senior batsmen Yousif Khan and Misbah-ul-Haq in the line-up.

Now without the two stalwarts, Pakistan will look to Azhar Ali and Asad Shafiq to help guide the squad.

"We need big innings from both Azhar and Shafiq and they are capable of doing that, so if we put good totals on board we have a good bowling attack to win the match," said Sarfraz, who also singled out recalled paceman Mohammad Amir as key to any success.

"Amir is back after a good performance at the domestic level so we hope he gets us key wickets in Tests," said Sarfraz of Amir, who was dropped from the series against Australia and New Zealand due to poor form.

Alleged racist abuse of Sterling 'disgusting', says Sarri

Reuters | London

Maurizio Sarri has described the alleged racist abuse of Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling by Chelsea fans as "disgusting" and condemned discrimination in any form in his first public comments on the incident.

Chelsea said on Monday they had banned four supporters from their matches pending a police investigation into the incident which occurred during City's Premier League defeat at Stamford Bridge last Saturday.

"First of all, I want to say that I condemn any form of discrimination, of course. I think that I have to stop here," the Chelsea manager told reporters ahead of Thursday's Europa League match against Vidi in Budapest.

"Because there is an investigation so I think it's better not to say something more. Of course, my opinion is that I condemn every sort of discrimination.

"It was disgusting. You know very well my opinion, the opinion of the club, but now we have to go on."

Sarri posted a statement on Instagram last Sunday in which he said newspapers were fuelling racism in soccer due to their negative portrayal of young black players in comparison to their white counterparts.

Mourinho disappointed by fringe players in Valencia loss

Reuters | Manchester

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has demanded more from his fringe players after he was forced to bring on regular starters in an attempt to stage a late rally in the 2-1 Champions League defeat at Valencia on Wednesday.

United went into the final Group H match having already qualified for the last 16 of the competition, a luxury that allowed Mourinho to rotate his squad, but the manager found little comfort in a performance that lacked energy and drive.

"I expect more from my players," Mourinho, who made eight changes to the side that beat Fulham 4-1 in the league

last weekend, told reporters.

"Especially players that week in, week out, they ask why they don't play, why they don't start... it was a good match to play, without any kind of pressure, in a competition that everyone likes to play in."

Paul Pogba returned to the starting side after being benched for the last two Premier League games but the French international midfielder failed to seize his opportunity.

United then introduced striker Marcus Rashford, and midfielders Jesse Lingard and Ashley Young as they chased the game after falling 2-0 behind.

"In the end, my team improved when I made changes I didn't want to make, which

is frustrating because I didn't want to play the three players I played in the second half," Mourinho added.

Defeat meant United missed the chance to top group after leaders Juventus were surprisingly beaten 2-1 by Young Boys.

"Before the game I told the players that, if we win tonight and Juventus win, we did our job. If we don't win and Juventus don't win, we can blame ourselves," Mourinho said.

"But finishing second in this group is a success and I don't think that finishing first or second -- apart from a couple of clubs who are clearly much better than the others (means that) the draw will be significantly different."



Phil Jones of Manchester United reacts after his own goal