

# Bolt rejects Maltese club offer

AFP | Sydney

Sprint superstar Usain Bolt has turned down a contract from Maltese champions Valletta and will remain in Australia to pursue his dream of becoming a professional footballer, his agent said yesterday.

The eight-time Olympic champion has been on trial with A-League club the Central Coast Mariners since arriving Down Under in August.

He scored two goals in a pre-season friendly last Friday but is yet to be offered a deal, with cashed-up Valletta dangling a two-year trial-free contract to entice him away earlier this week.

But Bolt's agent Ricky Simms said he had opted against a move to the Maltese Premier League team, which is backed by a group of investors from the Sanban Group in the United Arab Emirates.

"There is a lot of interest in Usain playing football," he told ESPN.

"We regularly receive similar approaches. I can confirm Usain does not wish to pursue this opportunity in Malta."

Valletta chief executive Ghas-



Usain Bolt, playing for A-League football club Central Coast Mariners, shouts for the ball in his first competitive start for the club against Macarthur South West United in Sydney



**Usain Bolt, who retired from athletics last year, has previously tried out with clubs in Germany, South Africa and Norway to no avail**

ston Slimen told the broadcaster: "We wish Usain Bolt all the best with his football career. The Valletta FC offer is always on the table."

Australia's domestic A-League season starts this weekend, with the Mariners in action on Sunday away to Brisbane Roar. With no contract, Bolt is not eligible for selection.

Club chief executive Shaun Mielekamp said this week the Jamaican "will continue his indefinite training period ... until any further notice".

Reports suggest the Mariners

are waiting for governing body Football Federation Australia to decide whether it will contribute to a potential Aus\$3 million (US\$2.1 million) offer to the 100m world record holder.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph yesterday reported Bolt and Mielekamp sat down for a coffee in the wake of the Malta offer for clarity on his future.

It said the 32-year-old, who regards Australia as a second home, might consider accepting less money if it means locking in a contract.

Coach Mike Mulvey was reluctant yesterday to talk about Bolt, saying he was not involved in contract negotiations.

"I'm really not interested in it (contract speculation) to tell you the truth," he told reporters.

"He's been great among the guys and I was very happy for him last week with the two goals he scored, but we move on."

Mariners captain Matt Simon dismissed suggestions the chronicles of Bolt were distracting the squad ahead of their A-League opener.

"He's been here for a couple of months now, so everywhere we go with Usain, everyone's talking about him," Simon said.

## Vidal fined 800,000 euros for Munich nightclub fight

AFP | Berlin

Barcelona midfielder Arturo Vidal has been hit with a 800,000 euros (\$921,812) fine by a Munich court after being found guilty of assault during a nightclub fight last year.

Munich district court fined the Chile international based on 80 days worth of wages, calculated to be 10,000 euros per day for the Barcelona player, who left Bayern Munich in August after three years with the German giants.

The 31-year-old was not in court in Munich to hear the judge's verdict as he played in Chile's 1-0 win over Mexico on Wednesday, which "professionally prevented" his appearance in Bavaria, his lawyer said.

Vidal and his half-brother were both found guilty after attacking another man at Munich's Crowns Club in September 2017, which was reportedly caught on security camera.

## Pochettino happy with Spurs squad despite no signings

AFP | London

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino has no regrets over failing to add to his squad in the close season, saying his team's impressive start to the Premier League campaign justifies the decision.

Spurs, who became the first side not to make a summer signing since the transfer window was established, have equalled their best-ever start in the Premier League, with 18 points from eight games.

Chairman Daniel Levy hinted this week in a meeting with the Tottenham fans that he was content with the club's summer activity and Pochettino agreed with him.

"It was difficult to achieve the player we needed," Pochettino said. "That was impossible. I was happy and am happy with the squad that I have, 25 players."

## Man United's Shaw agrees new five-year contract

Reuters | London

Manchester United defender Luke Shaw has agreed a new five-year contract at the Premier League club after a strong start to the season, according to British media reports.

Shaw's United career has been interrupted by poor form and injuries since he joined the club from Southampton for 27 million pounds (\$35.37 million) in 2014, but the 23-year-old has started seven league games and scored one goal this season.

The BBC reported that the left-back's new deal would see him earn 150,000 pounds a week.

## Rooney on target again as United close on playoffs



D.C. United forward Wayne Rooney (9) scores a goal on a free kick against Toronto FC

AFP | Washington

Wayne Rooney scored a stunning free-kick to keep D.C. United firmly on course for the Major League Soccer postseason on Wednesday with a 1-0 victory over Toronto FC.

Former England and Manchester United star Rooney, whose arrival in Washington has transformed the club's season, curled in a superb strike from 30 yards in the 18th minute to settle the points.

The victory leaves United four points clear of Montreal Impact, their closest rivals for a playoff spot, with 47 points from 32 games in the Eastern

Conference standings.

Montreal, who are just outside the postseason places in seventh, have 43 points from 42 games.

United are now unbeaten in eight games and are in control of their playoff destiny with two rounds of fixtures in the regular season left to play. Rooney's side face New York City FC on Sunday before closing the season against Chicago on October 28.

United's playoff charge has been traced back to Rooney's arrival in July. The 32-year-old former England captain called time on his Premier League career earlier this year after leaving Everton.

## Higuain not bitter despite Juve trading up with Ronaldo

AFP | Milan

AC Milan striker Gonzalo Higuain said yesterday he was not bitter despite being "kicked out" by Juventus after superstar Cristiano Ronaldo's arrival last summer.

Juventus signed Higuain from Napoli for 90 million euros (\$103 million) in 2016, but after the surprise arrival of Ronaldo from Real Madrid for 100 million euros (\$115m) this summer, the Italian giants could not afford to keep the Argentine.

Higuain -- loaned to AC Milan with a 36-million-euro option to buy -- said he knew something was afoot when he was left on the bench for the Italian Cup final against AC Milan in May.

"That day, I had the feeling inside me that maybe something had broken down. And then they signed Ronaldo," Higuain said in an interview with Gazzetta dello Sport.

"The decision to leave was not mine. I gave everything for Juventus, I won several titles, after which Cristiano arrived."

"The club wanted to make a leap in quality and they told me that I could not stay and

that they were trying to find a solution. The best solution was Milan."

But Higuain said that he felt no thoughts of revenge against his old club where he won two Serie A and Italian Cup trophies.

"No, not at all. I only feel affection because they treated me very well," said the 30-year-old.

"My teammates and the fans treated me really well, but I never asked to leave. Basically, as everyone says, they kicked me out."

"I immediately felt great love

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GONZALO HIGUAIN



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Arsene Wenger

## Wenger expects to be back in work by January

Reuters | London

Former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger expects to be back in work in the New Year and has fielded enquiries from all over the world, he told German newspaper Bild.

Wenger, who left Arsenal in May after 22 years in charge, said he did not know what his next job would be but he felt rest-

ed and am ready to work again.

"I believe (I will) start again on Jan. 1. I don't know (where) yet," the Frenchman told German newspaper Bild in an interview published on Wednesday.

"There are associations, national teams, it could be also in Japan," added the 68-year-old who coached Japanese club Nagoya Grampus Eight before joining Arsenal.

"From my 22 years at Arsenal, I have big experience on different levels. There are enquiries from all

over the world."

Wenger won three Premier League titles at Arsenal but his final years at the north London club were more turbulent.

He endured a barrage of criticism from fans and pundits in the latter part of his reign for his tactical approach and perceived failings in the transfer market as the London club went 14 seasons without lifting the Premier League trophy.

