

Firmino good enough with one eye, says Liverpool's Mane



Roberto Firmino (centre) scored the decisive goal for Liverpool in their 3-2 Champions League win against Paris Saint-Germain

AFP | London

Sadio Mane said he had urged Liverpool match-winner Roberto Firmino to declare himself fit for the Champions League opener against Paris Saint-Germain, insisting he didn't "need his eye to play".

Firmino sustained an abrasion to the cornea in his left eye in the weekend win at Tottenham after a clash with Jan Vertonghen and did not train on Sunday or Monday.

Even manager Jurgen Klopp admitted he thought the 26-year-old had "no chance" of playing when he saw him on Monday, but Mane was not prepared to give up on his teammate.

"I think Bobby doesn't need his eye to play so I told him," said Senegal international Mane after the thrilling 3-2 win over PSG at Anfield.

"I sent him a message on Monday saying, 'Hey Bobby, come on, we need you'.

"You've all seen the 'no look' goals so I think he doesn't need his eye to play. I texted him saying, 'You don't need your eye'."

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SADIO MANE

Klopp put Firmino on the bench but brought him on with about 20 minutes to go and he scored the added-time winner to extend Liverpool's 100 percent record to six matches.

"It's a great start. It is too early to speak about anything, but it is very important for us to focus more because we are Liverpool, we are a stronger team, and we will try to do our best every game," said Mane.

Firmino's rare absence from the team gave Daniel Sturridge the chance for his first Champions League start for the club more than five years after joining them and he repaid Klopp's faith with the opening goal.

India rout Pakistan by eight wickets

PTI | Dubai

India ticked all boxes as they clinically decimated Pakistan by eight wickets in a lopsided Asia Cup group league encounter yesterday.

It was a superlative effort from the bowling unit that saw them shoot out Pakistan for a paltry 162 in 43.1 overs before Rohit Sharma (52 off 39 balls) and Shikhar Dhawan (46 off 54 balls) added 86 for the opening wicket to ensure a smooth chase for the 'Men In Blue' in only 29

overs.

This was India's most comprehensive victory in terms of balls remaining (126).

After a wake-up call against Hong Kong, the Pakistan match was a near perfect performance for India as Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/15 in 7 overs) and Kedar Jadhav (3/23 in 9 overs) were perfectly complemented by Jasprit Bumrah (2/23 in 7.1 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/37 in 8 overs).

If Kuldeep's googly to snuff out Babar Azam was the turning



Indian cricket team captain Rohit Sharma (L) and Shikhar Dhawan runs between the wickets as Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Amir (R) looks on

Pakistan	
Imam-ul-Haq c Dhoni b Kumar	2
Fakhar Zaman c Chahal b Kumar	0
Babar Azam b Yadav	47
Shoaib Malik run out	43
Sarfraz Ahmed c sub (Pandey) b Jadhav	6
Asif Ali c Dhoni b Jadhav	9
Shadab Khan st Dhoni b Jadhav	8
Faheem Ashraf c Dhawan b Bumrah	21
Mohammad Amir not out	18
Hasan Ali c Karthik b Kumar	1
Usman Shinwari b Bumrah	0
Extras (lb6, nb1)	7
Total (all out; 43.1 overs)	162
Fall of wickets: 1-2 (Imam), 2-3 (Zaman), 3-85 (Azam), 4-96 (Sarfraz), 5-100 (Malik), 6-110 (Asif), 7-121 (Shadab), 8-158 (Ashraf), 9-160 (Hasan)	
Bowling: Kumar 7-1-15-3, Bumrah 7.1-2-23-2, Pandya 4.5-0-24-0, Chahal 7-0-34-0, Yadav 8-0-37-1, Rayudu 0.1-0-0-0, Jadhav 9-1-23-3	
India	
R. Sharma b Shadab	52
S. Dhawan c Azam b Ashraf	46
A. Rayudu not out	31
D. Karthik not out	31
Extras: (nb2, w2)	4
Total: for two wkts; 29 overs	164
Did not bat: K. Jadhav, M. Dhoni, H. Pandya, K. Yadav, Y. Chahal, B. Kumar, J. Bumrah	
Fall of wickets: 1-86 (Sharma), 2-104 (Dhawan)	
Bowling: Amir 6-1-23-0, Shinwari 4-0-27-0 (1nb), Hasan 4-0-33-0, Ashraf 5-0-31-0 (2w, 1nb), Shadab 1.3-0-6-1, Zaman 6.3-0-25-0, Malik 2-0-19-0	
Result: Indian win by eight wickets	

point, Kedar Jadhav's unconventional side-arm off-breaks broke the lower middle-order as Pakistan never recovered from the batting collapse.

With the pressure of scoreboard virtually non-existent, Rohit and Dhawan showed why they are one of the most formidable opening pair in white-ball cricket.

The eighth over from Usman Khan enabled India to cut loose as Rohit first hooked him for a six using the pace of the delivery and followed it up with a pull shot for boundary and then short arm pull in front of

square for another six. With 19 runs coming off that over, there was no looking back for India.

Rohit's third six was another hook shot off Hasan Ali followed by a drive through mid-off to complete his 35th half century in ODIs. He was fooled by a googly from Shadab Khan but by then India were on course for a comprehensive victory. Ambati Rayudu and Dinesh Karthik both contributed 31 to take India past finish line with consummate ease.

The two teams will now meet in Super Four on September 23.

Messi shine but work still to do for Barca

AFP | Barcelona

Lionel Messi had said it was time Barcelona won the Champions League again and he played like a man on a mission on Tuesday, scoring a hat-trick in a 4-0 demolition of PSV Eindhoven.

It was his eighth treble in the competition, taking him above the record of seven he shared with Cristiano Ronaldo to sit unmatched at the top of the list.

Messi marked other milestones too. He has now scored in 14 different Champions League campaigns, with only Raul and Ryan Giggs ahead of him on 15 and 16 respectively. Three times, Messi has hit hat-tricks in his opening game.

"He makes the extraordinary look ordinary," said Barcelona's coach Ernesto Valverde.

"Messi is a man of his word," wrote Marca. "He said he wanted this Champions and he led by example."

The first goal was impressive enough. Ousmane Dembele had earned a free-kick, the reward for a weaving run forward, a yard outside of the penalty area and slightly right.

PSV's wall edged forward, desperate to close the gap, but Mes-



Lionel Messi curls home a free-kick to open the scoring

si arced the ball over all of them, spinning it away from Jeroen Zoet's left hand and into the top corner.

"He has an incredible left foot," Ivan Rakitic said. "A lot of the time when he takes free-kicks you may as well go directly to the place where you're going to celebrate them."

Marca described it as a "Mara-

donian touch". Eight free-kicks converted this year, another personal record broken.

If the World Cup proved anything, however, it is that Messi cannot do it alone and Barcelona will need others to shine if they are to end their Champions League hiatus.

After three straight quarter-final exits, the last a humbling

collapse against Roma, this was a clean slate, a chance, at least to start to put things right.

Turbulent debut season

Andres Iniesta has gone but he was not too much missed on this occasion at the Camp Nou, where Philippe Coutinho sparkled and could have had his own hat-trick had his shoot-

ing been more precise, while Dembele might have been man of the match before Messi stole the show.

With a turbulent debut season, blighted by injury, behind him, Dembele looks like a player back on track.

He won the free-kick for Messi but his goal was a peach too. Turning between two PSV midfielders, he drove into the space and curved the ball into the bottom corner from 25 yards.

"In a team there is room for everyone, good passers and also for those that can break through," said Valverde. "That's where we need Dembele."

The 21-year-old has five goals, already one more than his total last term. "He was dazzling," wrote AS. "Those five goals in six games have buried the worst year of Dembele's life."

Messi, Dembele, Coutinho, and Luis Suarez too, caused havoc but four goals still flattered Barcelona. "4-0 is too heavy," PSV's coach Mark van Bommel said afterwards, and he was right.

They had three good chances to take the lead and Hirving Lozano might have equalised in the second half too, had Gerard Pique not made a scrambling last-ditch block.

CONMEBOL asks FIFA to hold Copa America in same years as Euros

AFP | Asuncion, Paraguay

South American football confederation CONMEBOL announced that it wants to change its calendar so that Copa America is held in the same year as European Championship from 2020.

The Copa America is usually played the year after the World Cup, with the next edition to be hosted by Brazil in 2019.

"I want to make public that we have submitted a request to FIFA to have the Copa America played in even years from 2020," said CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez.

As the world's oldest international football tournament is part of FIFA's calendar, the sport's governing body must give the proposal the green light.

The Copa America was held in 2016 as a one-off to celebrate the event's centenary, when Dominguez proposed to UEFA the possibility of holding a four-team tournament between the Euro and Copa finalists.