

Sokratis adds to Arsenal clearout



Sokratis Papastathopoulos (L) in action during a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Arsenal announced yesterday they had reached an agreement with defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos to cancel the final six months of his contract at the Emirates.

Sokratis, 32, last played for the Gunners in March and had not been included in Mikel Arteta's Premier League squad this season.

"Working closely with Sokratis and his team, we have decided to cancel his contract by mutual consent," Arsenal said in a statement.

"This gives Papa the freedom to negotiate a contract with a new club and return to action as soon as possible."

Sokratis joined from Borussia Dortmund in July 2018 as one of former Arsenal boss Unai Emery's first signings.

He made 69 appearances for the club and was part of August's FA Cup-winning side.

His departure is the latest move from Arteta and technical director Edu to streamline a bloated squad during the January transfer window.

69 appearances were made by Sokratis Papastathopoulos who joined from Borussia Dortmund in July 2018

"On behalf of Mikel, our coaches, players and everyone at the club, I would like to thank Papa for his contribution to the club," said Edu.

"He has been an important part of our group and has been a model professional throughout. The negotiations to end his contract have been collaborative and we wish Papa and his family well for the future."

William Saliba and Sead Kolasinac have been moved out on loan deals to Nice and Schalke respectively.

Mesut Ozil's seven-and-a-half year stay is also set to come to an end as the German international has arrived in Turkey to complete a move to Fenerbahce.

Rana Singh looking for India vs Pakistan clashes

New BRAVE CF signing Rana Rudra Pratap Singh wants to prove the superiority of India over Pakistan

● Rana Singh is in pursuit for a bout against Pakistan's Mehmosh Raza

TDT | Manama

Undefeated, fearless, and ambitious. These words can accurately describe BRAVE CF's new signing Rana Rudra Pratap Singh. He has been making a lot of noise since signing with the fastest-growing MMA promotion in the world, saying that ultimately he wants to win BRAVE CF's world Bantamweight title. But, his first goal is set: to prove the superiority of India over Pakistan in the sport.

Rana has been relentless in his pursuit for a bout against Pakistan's Mehmosh Raza. One of the top fighters from Pakistan, Mehmosh poses a great level of threat to Rana. However, the undefeated fighter is not afraid to seek a challenge. It all started with a quick and simple call out from Rana. However, it was met with a brash response from Mehmosh who called the newcomer a "tea seller". Tempers have only continued to flare with both parties engaging in verbal warfare.

"Mehmosh is first in line, the



Rana Rudra Pratap Singh

remaining Pakistanis can join the line and I will beat them one by one. I want them all" Rana declared upon his signing and in the days after he created a rivalry with several fighters from Pakistan on BRAVE CF's roster.

He hinted that he is interested in fighting Shoab Yousaf, another man with a Pakistani heritage - "The Assassin" seemed interested in the idea, but has since dismissed Singh's challenge. Rana himself has since

“Mehmosh is first in line, the remaining Pakistanis can join the line and I will beat them one by one. I want them all

RANA RUDRA PRATAP SINGH

made it clear that it was Mehmosh that he wants to fight

first.

Interestingly, it was Mehmosh who first called for an India vs Pakistan showdown all the way back at BRAVE CF 17, during his record-breaking debut against Arben Escayo, in his home country. A few years later, Raza might get his wish, should BRAVE CF decide to go ahead with the much-anticipated India vs Pakistan showdown - fans from both camps have started their campaigns to make the fight happen.

'Gravity' eager to reclaim ONE flyweight world title

TDT | Manila

Team Lakay stalwart and Filipino martial arts veteran Geje "Gravity" Eustaquio is determined to take back the ONE flyweight world title.

The 31-year-old Eustaquio has conquered the mixed martial arts arena, reaching the pinnacle of the sport when he captured the ONE Flyweight World Championship in June of 2018 after defeating Brazilian rival, Adriano Moraes.

But as the former world champion embarks on his journey back to the top of the flyweight division, he dreams of adding yet another feather in his cap, and one day compete among the world's best strikers in ONE Super Series.

Eustaquio said he is focused a hundred percent on his mixed martial arts career, but wouldn't mind stepping into the ring against legends should he be called upon.

"It would be a privilege for me to compete in ONE Super Series among legends, but right now, I'm just focused on my MMA career and looking to get back on track. It's been a rough couple of years, but I still consider myself among the top in my division," said Eustaquio.

"My mind is still on the flyweight title, and that's what I'm working towards. But yes definitely, I want to test my striking against the best in the world."

And like many athletes around the world whose plans were hampered by the coro-



Eustaquio is armed with vast experience

“My wish is for Danny to take the title this year. He has a good chance at earning another shot at the belt. The kid is seriously talented and very strong

GEJE "GRAVITY" EUSTAQUIO

navirus pandemic, Eustaquio is making the most out of free time to refine his craft.

"I want to develop my wrestling and my accuracy," he said.

But while the "Gravity" is hellbent on reclaiming the ONE flyweight world title, he won't stand in the way of his fellow Team Lakay star Danny Kingad's shot at glory.

In fact, Eustaquio is more than willing to step aside and

let Kingad get his due.

"My wish is for Danny to take the title this year. He has a good chance at earning another shot at the belt," said Eustaquio. "The kid is seriously talented and very strong."

The 25-year-old Kingad is currently the No. 2 ranked flyweight behind former UFC flyweight champion Demetrious Johnson and reigning ONE flyweight king Adriano Moraes. Kingad holds a 14-2 record with two of his losses coming at the hands of Moraes in 2017 and Johnson in 2019.

But Eustaquio is convinced Kingad is not the same fighter he once was.

"He's consistently growing. He's not the same fighter who fought Adriano and DJ (Johnson) the first time. Danny is a difficult matchup for anyone at this point," said Eustaquio, who has fought Moraes thrice.

Djokovic hits back at criticism over Australian Open quarantine stance

Reuters | Melbourne

World number one Novak Djokovic yesterday hit back at criticism of his letter to Australian Open chief Craig Tiley in which he suggested easing of quarantine restrictions, saying his good intentions were "misconstrued".

As many as 72 players are confined to their hotel rooms for 14 days and unable to train for the Feb. 8-21 Australian Open after passengers on three charter flights carrying them to Melbourne tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Djokovic reportedly asked for reduced isolation periods and having players in hard quarantine moved to "private houses with tennis courts", drawing a backlash from Australians.

Tiley confirmed they were suggestions and not demands.

"My good intentions for my fellow competitors in Melbourne have been misconstrued as being selfish, difficult and ungrateful," the Serbian, who is isolating in Adelaide along with other top players, said in a lengthy statement.

"This couldn't be farther from the truth.

"... at times when I see the aftermath of things, I do tend to ask myself if I should just sit back and enjoy my benefits instead of paying attention to other people's struggles."



Novak Djokovic

Tennis coach Daniel Vallverdu told Reuters that players in hard quarantine should get preferential treatment from organisers such as prime practice times and matches scheduled in the cooler hours of the day.

Djokovic, who last year quit as the ATP Players Council chief to launch a breakaway players body, won a record eighth Australian Open title in Melbourne in 2020.

Former Australian Davis Cup player Sam Groth accused Djokovic's letter as a "selfish political move" while Nick Kyrgios called the Serbian a "tool".

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