

SPORTS
sports

Mbappe 'bombshell' places pressure on PSG as Madrid lurk

Mbappe was named the Ligue 1 player of the season

AFP | Paris

France star Kylian Mbappe has cast doubt on his Paris Saint-Germain future, cranking up the pressure on the club's hierarchy as Real Madrid reportedly attempt to lure him to Spain.

The 20-year-old Mbappe fuelled transfer speculation at Sunday's French league awards ceremony after saying that he wants "responsibilities, maybe at PSG, maybe elsewhere".

It appeared a calculated move by Mbappe, who succeeded team-mate Neymar as the Ligue 1 player of the year, after he again brought it up in front of reporters moments later.

"I said what I had to say. When you're on stage you can send messages, I think I got mine across. If I keep talking it would be too much and that's not the message I want to send," Mbappe explained.

He has been regularly linked with a potential move to Madrid since breaking through with Monaco's 2017 Ligue 1 title-winning team, but instead made the switch to PSG, initially on loan,



Mbappe became only the second teenager in history last year, after Brazil legend Pele, to score in a World Cup final during France's 4-2 triumph over Croatia

and then for 180 million euros.

But since Zinedine Zidane's return to the Real dugout earlier this year, rumours about Mbappe joining his fellow Frenchman at the Santiago Bernabeu have intensified.

French sports daily L'Equipe led with the headline "trophy for the shock sentence" following Mbappe's ambiguous remarks, while Spanish media described it as a "bombshell" after picking up on the fact it was the first time the striker has hinted he could leave Paris.

Under contract with PSG until 2023, Mbappe is said to be in discussions with the club over an extension, but was his message a play to strike an improved deal, which reportedly pays him 20 million euros per season?

Former PSG goalkeeper Jerome Alonzo, who played for the club between 2001 and 2008, believes Mbappe is angling for a greater say in the club's planning, after a disappointing season which saw Thomas Tuchel's side again fail in the Champions League.

Leadership battle

"I have more of an impression that he's someone important at the club who says, 'Guys, I want to vouch for the project but it needs to move along a little. I want to stay for a long time but give me the means to become European champion. If the project doesn't move beyond that, I'm leaving,'" Alonzo told AFP.

This term, Mbappe has stepped up another gear with Neymar out injured for much of the campaign, but his demand for further authority could place him

on a collision course with the Brazilian.

"This request for accountability poses questions because it



Kylian Mbappe

comes two weeks after the same statements from Neymar. There must not be a spat at PSG between leaders or groups with the Brazilian side of the dressing room and the others," warned Alonzo.

Mbappe backed up his excellent 2018 World Cup, where he scored four times as France won the trophy, by netting 38 times for PSG this season, although he needs to score five in the last league game of the season against Reims next weekend to snatch the European Golden Shoe from Lionel Messi.

"I tell myself that even if I lose, I lose to Messi, one of the greatest players in history," he told AFP.

"To think that maybe I kept up with him until the last game, that's a source of pride too, but it's not over."

Mbappe became only the second teenager in history last year, after Brazil legend Pele, to score in a World Cup final during France's 4-2 triumph over Croatia.

Clarke named as Scotland manager

AFP | Glasgow

Steve Clarke was named as new Scotland manager, with a brief to turn around their Euro 2020 qualifying campaign after a dismal start.

The 55-year-old replaces Alex McLeish on a three-year deal just a day after securing third place in the Scottish Premiership for his Kilmarnock team.

The former West Brom manager, who won PFA Scotland and Scottish Football Writers' Association manager of year awards, has signed a three-year contract until end of 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign.

Croatia's Dalic calls up rookie pair for Euro qualifier

AFP | Zagreb, Croatia

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic named two uncapped players in his squad for next month's crucial Euro 2020 qualifier against Wales as the World Cup runners-up look to react after a shock defeat by Hungary.

The two newcomers are Leicester defender Filip Benkovic, who has spent the season on loan with Celtic, and left-back Dario Melnjak, who has scored four goals in 15 games since joining Turkish side Rizespor in January.

BIC honours new champions at awards night

TDI | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosted its End-of-Season Awards Night over the weekend and honoured the newly crowned champions of the 2018/2019 national racing season.

Among the awardees were the winners in the BIC 2,000cc Challenge, the Bahrain Karting Sprint Championship (BKSC) and the Bahrain Karting Endurance Championship (BKEC).

BIC Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa was on hand to present the various trophies. Also in attendance were other high-ranking officials from BIC, Bahrain International Karting Circuit, Bahrain Motor Federation and Circuit Racing Club.

Shaikh Salman awarded Tareq Al Tajer for becoming the undisputed champion of the BIC 2,000cc Challenge. Al Tajer claimed his first-ever title in the series.

Shaikh Salman also awarded Shaikh Salman bin Isa bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa and Ahmed bin Khanen for finishing second and third, respectively. Mohamed Faqih, Majed Himmo and Giovanni Salerno also took home prizes for finishing in the top six overall.

The top three also had sep-



Winners with their trophies during BIC end-of-season awards night

arate trophies presented to them for ending the season first through third in the championship's Pro class; while Himmo, Salerno and Martyna Al Qassab were honoured for being the best three in the Novice category.

Shaikh Salman bin Isa bin Ebrahim had a pair of additional awards. During the season, he posted the 2,000cc Challenge's Fastest Lap and also clinched the Most Pole Positions.

Meanwhile, in the BKSC, Shaikh Salman awarded the winners in the two categories that make up the championship, namely the Bahrain Rotax Mojo Max Challenge (BRMMC) and the Bahrain Sprint Sodi World Series (BSSWS).

In the BRMMC, Luca Kane Houghton was presented with the champion's trophy in the

Micro class, where he won ahead of runner-up Gracie Rose Grantham and third-placer Louis Elnabulsi.

Santhosh Kumar was presented the winner's trophy in the Mini category ahead of Matteo Quintarelli and Jacob Topp.

Fahad Alkhaled was victorious in the Junior class where Fahad Almuqla came second and Omar Aldereyaan was third.

Mohammed Mattar was the champion in the BRMMC's Max category after a tough battle with Raed Raffii and Hussain Hasan.

Essa Aldossary claimed the title in the Max Masters class, while Fred Clark was second and Osama Azouka third.

Amongst the teams' championships, Absolute Racing took three out of five titles, winning in the Micro, Mini and Max

categories. Dojomoto Racing triumphed in the Juniors class and ED Racing Team in the Max Masters.

Along with their individual championships, the BRMMC's winners also won entries to compete in prestigious karting events in Europe in the coming months.

Houghton, Kumar, Alkhaled and Raffii all won seats in the Rotax Max Challenge International Trophy, set to take place August 20 to 29 in Le Mans, France. Mattar, on the other hand, earned a berth in the Rotax Max Challenge Grand Finals, scheduled for October 19 to 26 in Sarno, Italy.

In the BSSWS, Shaikh Salman presented Ali Baslar the trophy for being the season's champion. Abdulla Buhinid finished in second place while Rashid Almuammari came third.

Finally, Shaikh Salman honoured winners in the BKEC and handed over their trophies.

Racing Bahrain were the overall champions. They featured Mattar, Khaled Alsaedi, Khaled Alrayes and Durate Lopes. Go Bahrain were second, and they included Raffii, Buhindi, Baslar and Almuammari. Bapco Sadeem came third featuring Osama Albuflasa, Faisal Alshadii, Abdulla Althawadi, Talal Beshara and Mohammed Jalal.



Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova kisses the trophy after winning against Britain's Johanna Konta the WTA Masters tournament final tennis match at the Foro Italico camp in Rome

Pliskova climbs to second in rankings, Williams back in top 10

AFP | Paris

2017.

Karolina Pliskova climbed five places in the WTA rankings yesterday to second after her Italian Open triumph at the weekend, with Naomi Osaka's world number one spot now in the Czech's sights.

The 27-year-old saw off Briton Johanna Konta to win her 13th WTA title in Rome.

She will be the second seed at the French Open, which starts on Sunday, as she looks to improve on her previous best Roland Garros performance -- a semi-final run in

Osaka's lead in the rankings remains in peril, although reigning French Open champion Simona Halep dropped down to third.

Pliskova's rise has seen three-time Grand Slam winner Angelique Kerber and Petra Kvitova slip two places and one spot respectively.

Serena Williams returned to the top 10 after playing her first match since March in Italy, despite pulling out before her scheduled second-round match with sister Venus.