

SPORTS

New-look Germany make promising start

● Germany midfielder Leon Goretzka salvaged a draw against Serbia

Reuters | Wolfsburg, Germany

Germany's new-look team made a promising return to the international stage with a 1-1 draw against Serbia in a friendly on Wednesday, showing signs of improvement following a disastrous 2018.

The Germans, knocked out of the World Cup in the group stage and relegated in the Nations League last year, had only one player from their 2014 World Cup victory in the starting line-up and their oldest outfield player was aged 24.

More aggressive and quick-



Germany's Marco Reus in action with Serbia's Marko Dmitrovic

er than in recent games, with Kai Havertz, Julian Brandt and Leroy Sane playing behind forward Timo Werner, the hosts needed only three minutes to get a shot on target with Havertz firing the ball at Serbia keeper Marko Dmitrovic following a quick passing move.

Coach Joachim Loew sent world champions Mats Hummels, Jerome Boateng and Thomas Mueller into international retirement in a surprise decision last week as his team prepare to launch their Euro 2020 qualification campaign

against the Netherlands on Sunday.

Serbia went forward after 11 minutes and their first corner bounced off the back of two players to land perfectly for Luka Jovic to head in for his first international goal.

The 21-year-old, who has scored 22 goals in 35 appearances for Eintracht Frankfurt this season, is likely to be among the biggest transfer targets this summer, with Real Madrid and Barcelona among clubs reportedly interested.

Werner twice went close to

an equaliser before Serbia, who won promotion in the Nations League after an undefeated run in their group, wasted a chance when Adem Ljajic fired a shot over the bar.

But the Germans kept their foot firmly on the gas and wasted several chances in the second half before substitute Leon Goretzka grabbed a deserved equaliser in the 69th minute.

"In the first half the automation in this new team, playing together for the first time, did not function that well," Loew told reporters.

Juve opt for Asian pre-season amid Ronaldo US rape claims

AFP | Milan

Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus will play the pre-season International Champions Cup in Asia and not in the United States amid the Portugal star's rape investigation there, the New York Times has reported.

Most of the matches take place in the United States but organisers are planning to play Juventus' elsewhere amid Ronaldo's legal case, eliminating the risk of the Portuguese star being detained by authorities in the US as part of their investigations, the newspaper reported.

Juventus have confirmed their participation in the event with the official programme to be unveiled on March 27.

Juventus' games will "most likely be in China and Singapore", where they will be joined by Premier League teams Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur, the New York Times said.

Ronaldo, 34, has denied allegations made by former model

Kathryn Mayorga that he sexually assaulted her in Las Vegas in 2009.

Las Vegas police asked Ronaldo to submit a DNA sample in January as part of their investigation into rape allegations made against him.

Contacted by AFP, a spokeswoman for Juventus said that "going east to Asia was normal after spending recent pre-seasons in the United States".

Juventus signed the five-time Ballon d'Or winner for 100 million euros (\$117 million) last summer from Real Madrid and pay him a 31-million-euro annual salary.

The team are on track for an eighth consecutive Italian league title, while his hat-trick against Atletico Madrid sent them through to the Champions League quarter-finals.

Ronaldo, meanwhile, re-joined his Portugal teammates this week ahead of Euro 2020 qualifying, as they begin their title defence, following a nine-month absence from the national team.



Juventus' forward Cristiano Ronaldo shoots a penalty to score during the UEFA Champions League match against Atletico Madrid (file photo)

Roaming acts set to dazzle race-goers during Bahrain GP weekend

TDI | Manama

The Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix will see an army of roaming performers helping keep race-goers entertained off the track next Thursday to Sunday at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

Offering something for everyone, these acts range from musicians and dancers to magicians and stilt-walkers, and each and every one of them will contribute to the "Limitless" fun of the Grand Prix weekend.

This year's roster of roaming performers includes Dr Bubbles, Tri-Colour Walkabout, Batucada Timba, the Steam Dancers, Circolo Stilt-Walkers, Circus Parade, The Dans, Men-Alien and Rainbow Ballet. But the long list of acts taking to BIC's Formula 1 Village vending area would not be complete without the Walking Funfair, Rainbow Carnival and Steve and Tom's Circus Entertainment.

Walking Funfair, also known as Oakleaf Stelzenkunst, was founded in 2004 by Bettina Eichblatt. The following years,

they consistently participated in carnival parades in Germany. In 2010, they took a big leap, developing from an amateur group to a professional street theatre company. Since then, Walking Funfair have performed all over Europe. One of their highlights is building technical supported costumes with moving parts like Ferris Wheels and roundabouts, fire-breathing dragons and inflatable, illuminated costumes – perfect for photo opportunities and much more.



A performer who will be seen at BIC

Ayyad gets hero's welcome as he touches down after win at Brave 22



Hussain Ayyad with his teammates at the airport

TDI | Manama

Brave Flyweight contender and Bahrain's Hussain Ayyad touched down home this week after a successful trip to the Philippines, where he quickly disposed of Jason Vergara in the preliminary card of Brave 22: Storm of Warriors, which took place last Friday, in Manila, Philippines.

Ayyad's performance was praised by commentators and fans alike, as he was able to lock in a triangle choke in the very first round to make his opponent tap out.

The KHK MMA representative received a true hero's welcome as his teammates showed their appreciation for "Iron" by flocking the Bahrain Airport and receiving their friend with open arms after yet another dominant win.

The team made sure to meet a smiling Ayyad, who was delighted with the surprise and posed for pictures with colleagues and fans of his work.

Ayyad is on a two-fight winning streak as he built on his dominant performance against Mohammed Abo Ali back at Brave 18, with a flawless victo-

ry over a tough Vergara, who was fighting in front of his fans. After the fight, "Iron" showed his sportsmanship by praising his opponent's toughness, even though the fight lasted less than five minutes.

As Brave Combat Federation still waits to crown an inaugural Flyweight champion, Ayyad made sure he was inserted in the conversation for a title fight with two dominant performances in a row. "Iron" is hoping to build up to an eventual title shot in the fastest growing MMA promotion in the world.

Shaikh Khalid emerges lone candidate for BOC presidency

TDI | Manama

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa is the only candidate running to become the new president of the Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC), it was announced yesterday.

As submission of BOC candidacy campaign came to an end, it emerged that Bahrain Athletics Association candidate HH Shaikh Khalid emerged the lone presidential candidate for a four-year electoral cycle.

However, the one and only remaining seat in the board of directors is being closely contested by Bahrain Swimming Association president Mohammed Mejjel, Bahrain Martial Arts Association board member Faisal Kanoo and Bahrain Triathlon Association general secretary Mai Al Haji.

The campaign was overseen by BOC secretary general Mohammed Hassan Al Nusuf and Executive Director of Sports Affairs Abdul Jalil Asad, among others.