

SPORTS

Chelsea spoil Griezmann's debut

● Tammy Abraham and Ross Barkley spoil Antoine Griezmann's Barcelona debut as Chelsea win in Japan

● Frank Lampard's side prevail 2-1 in Saitama in pre-season friendly

AFP | Saitama, Japan

Goals from Tammy Abraham and Ross Barkley saw Chelsea grab a 2-1 victory against Barcelona yesterday in an exhibition match in Japan.

World Cup-winning French striker Antoine Griezmann and former Ajax midfielder Frenkie de Jong made their unofficial debut for the Spanish giants, pleasing some 51,126 fans who cheered every move during the star-studded game.

Chelsea striker Abraham opened the scoring in the 34th minute by pouncing on a mistake by Barcelona midfielder Sergio Busquets who attempted to clear the ball.

But with Chelsea midfielder Jorginho applying pressure, the ball rolled towards Abraham who only had to step past rushing goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and gently send it into



Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann, right, in action with Chelsea's Andreas Christensen

the net.

Chelsea coach Frank Lampard was all praise for his young striker.

"Tammy, he is a goal scorer. He is hungry for goals," he said.

Despite facing a transfer ban, Lampard said Chelsea's two-game tour in Japan showed he had a "competitive" and "determined" team.

"What I have learned about

players was that they are a good strong group, a determined group. I am very happy," he said. "There is more work to do but it's been a good trip. It's been positive in all senses," he said.

Minutes after the first goal, Chelsea midfielder Christian Pulisic showed off his speed and footwork to infiltrate the Barca defence, but his left footer went just wide.

Barcelona went on the offensive in the second half, with substitute striker Carles Perez leading the way.

But superb saves by Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga repeatedly denied Barca any attempt to equalise.

In the 55th minute Perez zipped past three Chelsea defenders but his left toe kick finish was not good enough to get past Arrizabalaga.

A few minutes later, he dashed deep into the left side to feed a high-speed cross to striker Malcom, but Arrizabalaga again denied them.

'Dangerous' Griezmann

Chelsea made it 2-0 with less than 10 minutes left as midfielder Barkley picked up a cross in front of the box and curled it into the net, with substitute keeper Neto getting a touch but unable to block it.

Just before injury time, Barcelona got a free kick just outside the box but midfielder Ivan Rakitic's shot went above the bar.

Rakitic however quickly redeemed himself in injury time, picking up a cross and firing a lightning right footer that went deep into the net for a consolation goal for Barcelona.

Barca coach Ernesto Valverde, echoing Lampard, said the match was a good test that showed signs of excellence as well as areas to improve.



Lotto Soudal rider Caleb Ewan celebrates after crossing the finish line

Ewan wins again as Alaphilippe keeps Tour lead

● Caleb Ewan won his second stage of the Tour with a thrilling sprint, after Jakob Fuglsang crashed out

AFP | Nimes, France

Caleb Ewan sprinted to his second victory on the Tour de France yesterday as Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe kept the overall lead after stage 16, where Geraint Thomas fell but finished with all the main contenders.

As France experienced a heatwave defending champion Thomas mis-timed a curb and was left with a gash on his left leg after hitting the tarmac hard on the 177km run around the southern city of Nimes.

After his third fall during this Tour, Team Ineos' sports director Nicolas Portal said Thomas felt fine.

"He's OK, he needed another bike. All his left side is a bit messed up but nothing serious," he said.

"We have to refocus after the rest day," added Portal.

Thomas remains 1min 35sec behind Alaphilippe in the overall standings ahead of three

challenging days in the Alps.

He also tumbled after flying over a barrier in the wild atmosphere in Brussels on the opening day, and again on the road to Saint-Etienne on stage eight.

This time the 33-year-old had no problem getting back to the pack on a flat stage with no wind to split the peloton.

Ewan meanwhile was following up his victory on stage 11 at Toulouse and with Nimes melting under 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) the Australian was favourite for a repeat performance, this time edging Italian Elia Viviani on the line.

Some fans stayed away due to the extreme afternoon heat on this southern French route, but the conditions failed to slow the peloton as it sped past the celebrated regional vineyards and olive groves.

One of the great pre-race favourites Jakob Fuglsang, the Criterium du Dauphine champion, pulled out with 25km to go after falling and hurting his hand.

Dehydration was a major issue as team cars were carrying an average of 200 water bottles, many of them with added minerals and saline with riders expected to drink 15 of the half litre bidons each.

Sri Lanka's Malinga to play T20s after quitting ODIs

AFP | Colombo

Veteran Sri Lankan pace bowler Lasith Malinga yesterday confirmed he will retire from one-day international cricket after the first match against Bangladesh but hopes to play T20 cricket.

Malinga invited fans to his farewell ODI at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday and said the cricket board agreed to his request to retire from the 50-over format of the game.

Posting a video message to his fans on his wife's Facebook page, Malinga said he felt no ill will towards officials and players who may have tried to push him out of the team.

The 35-year-old said he was sidelined by selectors two years ago but was able to prove his value to the national team at the recent World Cup

England's Roy looking to make Test grade

AFP | London

England opener Jason Roy will try to follow the batting example of Australia's David Warner when he makes his Test debut against Ireland at Lord's later this week.

Warner defied conventional wisdom by showing how an opening batsman who had first made his name in white-ball cricket could then make a success of his Test career.

The 29-year-old Roy is no red-ball novice, having played for county champions Surrey, but mainly as a middle order batsman, and he has nine first-class hundreds to his credit.

He comes into the Test set-up ahead of an Ashes series fresh from scoring 443 runs as an opener in England's triumphant World Cup campaign.

Roy will also have the boost of walking out to bat for his debut Test innings alongside his old school friend turned Surrey captain, Rory Burns.

The pair both attended Whitgift in Surrey, south-east England and Burns told reporters at Lord's on Monday: "You'd



England's Jason Roy plays a shot (file photo)

be hard-pushed to find a more naturally talented batsman than Jason.

"Even growing up as a kid you saw Jason hit the ball, strike the ball and do things other kids couldn't do.

"Over the last couple of years you've seen him rein it in, understand his game a bit more and sort of piece it all together."

Burns added: "We have seen what a wonderful player he is. Hopefully he can keep on doing that and he can translate his white-ball form into red ball.

"I've known Jason since he was 10, so to stride out in a Test

match with him will be a pretty cool feeling."

England got through 12 opening partners for Alastair Cook after Andrew Strauss retired in 2012, with Cook himself bowing out of the Test arena last year with a hundred against India at the Oval -- Surrey's headquarters.

But Australia one-day captain Aaron Finch, having seen Roy hit a match-clinching 85 that helped beat his defending champions in a World Cup semi-final this month, was well aware of the essentially straight hitter's quality.

Guardiola blasts 'false' report of Man City 'disrespect' in China

AFP | Hong Kong

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola blasted a report in Chinese state media as "false" yesterday after the Premier League champions were accused of showing "utter disrespect" during their tour of China.

Guardiola hit out at the lengthy commentary posted on the English-language website of Xinhua, the state news agency, which said Manchester City snubbed fans and only visited China for commercial reasons.

"I don't agree but I should say too that it's false. To make a statement like this they have to know exactly what's happening in our club," Guardiola told media in Hong Kong.



David Silva talks to fans during a promotional event

"I don't understand how people can say that. Maybe one journalist is a little bit upset, I don't know why. But it's far away from what is reality," he added.

The opinion piece, which accused City of an "attitude of arrogance" and lashed out at arrangements for Chinese media, brought a sour end to a difficult tour of mainland China.