

Xabi Alonso wins Chelsea debut

Pedro scores late hat-trick as Chelsea survive thrilling pre-season test against Western Sydney Wanderers

- Chelsea triumph 6-4
- Satpaev scores on debut
- Wanderers lead three times

AFP | Sydney

Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso got his reign off to a winning start yesterday in a dramatic 6-4 victory over Western Sydney Wanderers, with Brazilian striker Joao Pedro scoring a late nine-minute hat-trick to ensure victory.

The former Real Madrid coach, who took over on July 1, is without many of his big guns for their pre-season tour and played 60 minutes with a side full of youth at Stadium Australia.

It was a see-sawing affair, with Chelsea coming from behind three times.

Kazakh 17-year-old Dastan Satpaev lashed home on his debut in the sixth minute, but Chelsea then conceded twice with their defence run ragged before Portugal youth international Dario Essugo made it 2-2.

The Sydney side then went 3-2 and 4-3 ahead in the second half



Chelsea's Joao Pedro (2nd R) reacts after scoring a goal

before Pedro's heroics.

"I think it has been a very useful friendly that we can learn a lot from," Alonso said.

"There were moments that we were struggling to find solutions, and we need to have this. The positive is that we corrected them.

"And there were moments where the game management is something that we can learn from.

"But useful for the future, and

as well for minutes for everyone, and no injuries.

"The young ones got good experience, and the senior ones they came on with good impact."

Alonso faces a huge task to get Chelsea back in the running for major honours after their 10th-place finish last season and failure to make Europe.

An even tougher test will come on Saturday when they meet London rivals Tottenham Hotspur at the same venue be-

fore further friendlies in Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Chelsea have made four key summer signings so far as they rebuild -- attacking midfielder Morgan Rogers, winger Geovany Quenda, defender Marco Palestra and striker Emmanuel Emegha.

Only Italy's Palestra, who arrived from Serie A side Atalanta, is on the tour, with World Cup players including England's Reece James and Argentina's



Seventeen-year-old Kazakh debutant Dastan Satpaev scored just six minutes into his Chelsea career, finishing a through ball from fellow academy prospect Ryan Kavuma-McQueen

Enzo Fernandes also absent.

Alonso deployed a 4-2-3-1 formation with Josh Acheampong, Liam Delap and Tosin Adarabioyo -- who began as captain -- providing experience to a team featuring several youngsters who came through the Chelsea academy.

They got off to a flyer when Satpaev raced clear after a lovely through ball by Ryan Kavuma-McQueen and finished powerfully.

But it was a fleeting lead, with the Wanderers' Anthony Pantazopoulos nodding home from a corner eight minutes later with

9

minutes was all Joao Pedro needed to score a hat-trick and turn a 4-3 deficit into a 6-4 Chelsea victory

Chelsea guilty of poor defending.

It sparked the home team into life and Aydan Hammond made it 2-1 with a cool side-footed finish after Chelsea were sliced open again at the back.

Essugo's goal was quality, finishing off a flowing move with a one-two off Reggie Walsh before stroking into the far corner to send them to the break all square.

Once again Chelsea went to sleep, and a lovely turn and finish from Dylan Scicluna put the Sydney side 3-2 ahead in the 62nd minute with Alonso making nine changes immediately after.

Cole Palmer came on and the intensity lifted to set up a sensational finale that included five more goals as Pedro staked his claim to be Chelsea's first-choice striker.

Djokovic and Sabalenka team up for all-star US Open mixed doubles pairing

AFP | Paris

Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic and women's No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka top the list of pairings entered for the U.S. Open mixed doubles.

However, both men's world No. 1 Jannik Sinner and second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz have not entered the competition, which was heavily revamped last year.

Reforms featured a shorter scoring format in the earlier rounds and a new scheduling slot -- played over two days -- before the singles draws in an attempt to encourage the top players to enter.

Italian doubles specialists Sara Errani and Andrea Pavasori, who criticized the changes, will defend the title they won last year, which came with a \$1 million winners' check.

Djokovic, 39, and 28-year-old Sabalenka are certain to feature among the initial six pairings



Aryna Sabalenka from Belarus and Serbia's Novak Djokovic play mixed-doubles together during a charity event (file photo)

selected according to world rankings when the deadline for entries closes on Aug. 17.

"Any time you can bring women and men together on the same team, you showcase

tennis at its best," said U.S. Tennis Association CEO Craig Tiley.

"This is exactly what the mixed doubles championship does.

"We are proud to again bring

the world's top players together in a format that will provide exciting entertainment for our fans."

Wimbledon champion Sinner -- who did not enter last year's mixed doubles -- is "prioritizing" his health ahead of the final Grand Slam of the year and is also bypassing the Canadian Open, which runs from August 2-13.

Alcaraz, who did play last year with Emma Raducanu, is recovering from a wrist injury that ruled him out of both the French Open and Wimbledon.

Eight teams will be determined via wild card and announced on a date to follow. Two teams will earn a main draw spot by advancing through the eight-team qualifying draw played on August 24.

The two-day tournament gets under way on August 25, five days before the men's and women's singles competitions begin.

Fritz takes 250th hardcourt win in Washington



Taylor Fritz in action

AFP | Washington

World number 10 Taylor Fritz captured his 250th hardcourt victory by defeating Belgium's Zizou Bergs in the first round of the ATP and WTA Washington Open.

The American third seed, seeking his 11th ATP tour title and first Eastbourne last year, needed only 79 minutes to complete a 6-3, 6-4 triumph.

Wimbledon quarter-finalist Fritz will next face either countryman Tommy Paul or Poland's Kamil Majchrzak.

"He had a few break chances, but when I served out the first and went up a break in the second, I felt like the momentum was on my side," Fritz said.

"It's really good to get out of those games and to finish the

match unbroken."

Britain's Jack Draper withdrew from the event with a left arm injury after also missing Wimbledon.

"These last months have felt like nothing but adversity and setbacks," the former world number four Draper wrote on Instagram.

"Most days I've spent in doubt, yet hopeful that I can keep taking positive steps forward and finding ways to progress."

American lucky loser Mackenzie McDonald replaced Draper.

Japan's Kei Nishikori, the 2015 Washington champion who will retire at the end of season, beat China's Shang Juncheng 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and 31 minutes in his first ATP tour match this year.

Spurs' Maddison says De Zerbi is the right coach for his game

AFP | Sydney

Tottenham midfielder James Maddison yesterday praised Roberto De Zerbi as the type of attacking coach that suited his game and said he was "excited" by what lay ahead.

Italy's De Zerbi took over from sacked interim boss Igor Tudor in March when Tottenham were winless in the Premier League in 2026.

He steered them to 17th place



James Maddison

and survival with a tense 1-0 win over Everton on the last day of the season and has begun building a new squad with an aggres-

sive summer of spending.

England international Maddison, who missed the majority of last season with a serious knee injury, said in Sydney he was pumped up for the next chapter.

"The manager is very clear, the goal is to be better, to play better football, to be passionate, to be proud to play for this club," said Maddison, who is reportedly set to be named Spurs' new captain.

"I'm still learning the way he plays. But as a player, he's a coach you want to play for because he loves everything with the ball. He's very attacking, and I'm really excited."

The club opened their pre-season tour with an entertaining 2-0 win over A-League champions Auckland FC in New Zealand on Sunday with goals from Dane Scarlett and Richarlison.