

SPORTS
sports**Hoffenheim sign striker Locadia from Brighton on loan**

AFP | Berlin

Striker Jurgen Locadia has joined Hoffenheim on a season-long loan from Premier League outfit Brighton and Hove Albion, the Bundesliga side announced on Thursday.

The 25-year-old moves to Germany for an undisclosed fee and will link up with Hoffenheim head coach Alfred Schreuder after the pair previously worked together at PSV Eindhoven, where he had scored 62 times in 176 appearances before being snapped up by Brighton in January 2018.

"He quickly attracted attention there (in Brighton) because of his goal-scoring ability and has been on the fringes of the Netherlands squad," said boss Schreuder.

Locadia made an impact in England by scoring on his first two appearances, but his early days were hampered by injury.

Despite limited opportunities, the Dutchman scored goals in back-to-back games last December, helping the club to a 1-1 draw with Arsenal and 1-0 win over Everton. In total, Locadia made 43 appearances for Brighton and the last of his six goals came in last season's FA Cup quarter-final win at Millwall in March.

Kyrgios advances to third-round

Nick Kyrgios sets up US Open third-round clash with Andrey Rublev after thumping win over Antoine Hoang

AFP | New York

Nick Kyrgios breezed through apparel and slow challenge controversies as easily as he dispatched 104th-ranked Frenchman Antoine Hoang on Thursday to reach the third round of the US Open.

The 28th-seeded Australian blasted Hoang 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 to match his deepest US Open run and booked a date with 43rd-ranked Andrey Rublev, who beat Roger Federer at Cincinnati two weeks ago, to decide a berth in the last 16.

"He's a young, fearless player who has been playing really well the last couple weeks," Kyrgios said. "He plays big from both sides. He's a great player."

Kyrgios won their only meeting last year in Moscow, recalling, "It was an incredibly tough match."

The 24-year-old Canberra-born product had two minor issues in his match, the first over a collar inscription "Just Do You" that officials feared violated clothing rules, forcing Kyrgios to fold down his collar.

"I think they thought it was a slogan, but it wasn't," Kyrgios said. "It wasn't anything to do with a marketing thing. I think they must have read it wrong. I think they thought it said 'Just Do It' like the slogan.



Nick Kyrgios of Australia returns a shot against Antoine Hoang of France

"It was a mix-up. It's all cleared up now. I can wear that. I can wear the collar up."

The second dispute came late in the third set when Kyrgios thought he won a point, heard umpire Nico Helwerth call the game and score, only to have it overturned on what he considered a video challenge made far

too late.

"He called game, then my opponent challenged once the umpire called game," Kyrgios said. "I just thought that wasn't right."

After arguing to no avail, Kyrgios smacked a service winner to settle the matter and seize a 5-3 lead, then made an exaggerated

squat and jump motion to look at the chair and his rival, then give the umpire one more look after walking away, just to make sure the game was truly over.

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Kyrgios called the ATP "corrupt" on Tuesday, unhappy about his record \$113,000 fine for actions at Cincinnati where he profanely insulted an umpire, but pulled back on the remark Wednesday, saying he is unhappy at what he sees as a double standard on ATP enforcements and punishments.

"I expect consistency and fairness with this across the board. To date that's not happened," Kyrgios tweeted.

The ATP has started an investigation into the comment as a major policy violation, but Kyrgios said the tour has not reached out to him about the matter and he doesn't expect them to do so.

Leclerc pips Vettel as Ferrari dominate practice

AFP | Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

Charles Leclerc bounced back to upstage his teammate Sebastian Vettel as Ferrari dominated yesterday's two free practice sessions for this weekend's Belgian Grand Prix.

The two Ferraris topped the times ahead of Mercedes duo Valtteri Bottas and Lewis Hamilton on a warm and humid afternoon at the majestic Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Ardennes.

Leclerc led the way with a best lap of one minute and 44.123 seconds to outpace four-time world champion Vettel by six-tenths of a second, as Ferrari continued in the afternoon where they had left off in the morning's action, when German Vettel led the Monegasque.

Bottas, confirmed on Thurs-



Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc drives during the second practice session

day to be staying with Mercedes next season, was just over eighth-tenths of a second off the pace, slightly ahead of Hamilton.

The session ended prematurely when Sergio Perez's Racing Point car stopped with a fire around the exhaust system. A Virtual Safety Car was de-

ployed and then the action was red-flagged, and with only two minutes remaining the session was not re-started.

Mexican Perez was running with an upgraded Mercedes power-unit, as were Vettel and championship leader Hamilton, the latter of whom had problems in the morning with his

new engine.

Perez wound up fifth, ahead of Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen, with Lance Stroll eighth in the second Racing Point ahead of Daniel Ricciardo of Renault and Verstappen's new teammate Alexander Albon, who was 10th.

Barcelona handed tough Champions League draw as Liverpool face Napoli again

Barcelona's players celebrate after Jordi Alba scored during a league match against Real Betis (file photo)

AFP | Monaco

Barcelona will have to come through a section containing both Borussia Dortmund and Inter Milan after the three former winners all came out together in Thursday's UEFA Champions League group stage draw in Monaco, while holders Liverpool will face Napoli again.

Barcelona, Dortmund and Inter, with nine European Cups between them, were drawn together in Group F along with the Czech champions Slavia Prague.

Beaten by Liverpool in the semi-finals last season, Lionel Messi and Barcelona remain favourites to advance as they seek a first Champions League crown since 2015.

Dortmund won the trophy in 1997 and lost in the final in 2013. Now coached by Antonio

Conte, Inter beat Barcelona in the semi-finals en route to winning the most recent of their three titles in 2010.

"That really is a very tough group, which makes it an even bigger challenge for us," said the Dortmund coach, Lucien Favre. His team host Barca in the opening round of matches on Tuesday, September 17.

Liverpool advanced from their group at the expense of Napoli last season on the way to lifting their sixth European Cup in Madrid, and Carlo Ancelotti's side now have a chance to gain revenge.

Beaten in Naples a year ago, Liverpool will head back to the San Paolo in their first match on September 17.

Both clubs will be fancied to progress from Group E, which is completed by Austrian champions Salzburg and Genk, the Belgian title-holders.

India's Rayudu in retirement U-turn

AFP | New Delhi

Former India batsman Ambati Rayudu reversed his decision to retire from all cricket yesterday, less than two months after he quit following his omission for the World Cup.

The 33-year-old, who was the Chennai Super Kings' most prolific batsman in their 2018 Indian Premier League triumph, was left out of India's World Cup squad in favour of the younger all-rounder Vijay Shankar.

Rayudu announced his retirement in July after he was overlooked as a replacement when Shankar was injured during the tournament.

"He has written to us that after speaking with senior cricketers like V.V.S. Laxman and others, he has withdrawn his retirement from all forms of cricket," Ratnakar Shetty, a member of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said.

"We have forwarded his letter to selectors. It is up to them now but he has made himself available for selection," Shetty added.



Ambati Rayudu