

Back to the drawing board

Alex Ferguson embarks on a three-year project to plot an end to Barcelona's domination

Alex Ferguson may be prepared to give himself as many as three more seasons at Old Trafford, which may be required to prevent the Scotsman retiring one European title short of Bob Paisley's record three.

Ferguson, who is reeling from what he said was the worst "hiding" he had suffered as Manchester United's manager is planning an overhaul of personnel aimed at dismantling Barcelona's European dynasty.

His spending this summer will be designed to close the gap on a Barcelona side whose masterclass of passing at Wembley strengthened their claim to be recognised as the greatest club side ever.

His rebuilding for next season is immediate, with United optimistic that they can wrap up the 14 million pound signature of Ashley Young from Aston Villa by the end of June, fending off Liverpool. Everton's Jack Rodwell, who has been on Ferguson's wanted list for 12 months, is another target as he seeks to reinvigorate the midfield which Barcelona ran rings around.

SNEIJDER, MODRIC ON RADAR

Even if Scholes can be persuaded to continue, however, Ferguson is aware



In a bid to stop Barcelona, Sir Alex Ferguson eyes shake-up at Old Trafford

of the need to bring in a top central midfielder. United admire Wesley Sneijder but are not certain an agreement with Internazionale will materialise. Luka Modric of Tottenham Hotspur has also been discussed at length.

United's cash balance is approaching 150 million pounds and the club should have 60 million pounds to spend as it sees fit. Club CEO David Gill signalled 12 days ago

that this would be a "busier than normal" summer. Goalkeeper David de Gea's expected 17 million pound move from Atletico Madrid to Old Trafford should also be concluded this week.

"Finding a solution is not easy but that is the challenge," said Ferguson.

"You should not be afraid of the challenge. The one thing we have shown is that we are consistent in Europe. We have got better and bet-

ter over the past few years.

"Maybe this could be the kind of stepping stone we had when we lost 4-0 (to Barcelona in 1994). We improved from that. We want to improve. Next season may see us improve even more."

Ferguson is understood to have been reflecting as recently as last week on the fact that premature retirement can be fatal for a healthy, active individual and the death of his own father, Alex, is forming an important part of his thinking. "My father retired on his 65th birthday, and one year later he was dead," Ferguson said last month.

"The worst you can do is put your slippers on. People say things like: 'I've worked for 45 years. I have the right to rest.' Not at all. One has the duty to keep active and in good shape," he said.

According to *The Independent*, Ferguson clearly feels time is running out on him. "We really need to progress quickly to get to that level," he said. He is 70 on New Year's Eve and with the prospects of surpassing Barcelona within a year looking forlorn, his pursuit of a fourth European Cup for United may require him to be the oldest manager to lift the trophy. ANI

Chaula Jagirdar to trek in Bhutan



NEW DELHI Gujarat's Chaula Jagirdar will accompany legendary Bachandri Pal in a 10-member all women contingent to a mountain trekking in Bhutan.

The expedition, named Snowman Trek, begins from Paro-Drukgyel Dzong and travels to the remote Lunana district before concluding at Sephu.

The expedition will cover 11 high mountain passes with the maximum elevation of 5,230 metres and is considered as one of the most challenging expeditions. There will be four amateur participants in the group.

An experienced customer, Jagirdar will be part of the of contingent that has got representation from different parts of the country.

While the likes of Lalmati Birully and Payo Murmu (both from the tribal areas of Jharkhand) along with Radha Rana (23) and Naina Dhakar (21) will undertake such type of expedition for the first time, the troop will have some experienced members in Vasumati Srinivasan (Karnataka) and Bimla Deoskar (Maharashtra) apart from Bachandri herself. PTI

LOCAL SPORTS

Royal's close win

Mihir Bhatt's half-century set up a thrilling one run win for RCC

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Nerves got the better of the boys from St Xavier's Loyola Hall as Royal Cricket Club (RCC) scripted a scintillating one-run victory over them in the T20 Sports Zone Cup played at the MG Science College ground on Monday.

Asked to bat first, Royal thrived on an unbeaten half-century by opener Mihir Bhatt to put on an achievable 117 for six in their 20 overs but Xavier's batting came cropper as they managed just 116 for seven in their allotted overs.

In another match, Gujarat Cricket Institute (GCI) bowled their heart out to beat Universal Cricket Academy (UCA) by 40 runs.

RCC maintained a tight leash around the Xavier's batsmen as they dried up the runs. But against all odds Bhatt launched a lone battle with 57-ball 52 that included four boundaries. He batted throughout the innings as his partners came and go without giving him the much-needed company.

For RCC Yash Naik, Zaid Shaikh and Devarshi Joshi took a wicket each as they stifled the rivals.

What should have been an easy chase became a nightmare for RCC as Xavier's bowlers responded in kind. Eshan Shenoukar (32) and Yash Naik (24) did put up some resistance but none of the others could withstand



Mihir bhatt

their rival's attack.

For RCC, Mihir Bhatt, Jay Thakker, Harshal Shukla and Dhruv Purohit took a wicket each to restrict the opponents just one run short.

The trend of low-scoring continued in the second match also when UCA restricted GCI for 117 for 3 in 20 overs. It was only a 14-ball 28 from Anmol Jhaveri that helped them overcome a sluggish opening from Het Patel (28, 42b) and Jash Patel (23, 34b).

However even that proved to be a daunting task for the UCA as their batsmen committed hara-kiri and bowled out for mere 77 runs. Kavish Panchal shone with the ball with three wickets for just 12 runs as Divya Shah and Varshil Shah too chipped in with two-wickets each.

Rathanvel, Grahesh share top spot

AHMEDABAD Third seed Rathanvel VS of Tamil Nadu and fifth-seeded Grahesh Y of Andhra Pradesh have emerged as the joint leaders with the perfect score of five points each at the end of fifth round in the 25th National Chess Championship for Under-11 (Boys & Girls) being played at the luxurious Karnavati Club of Ahmedabad on Monday.

The duo will take on each other in the sixth round tomorrow morning. In girls' category, 12th seeded Khushi Dharewa of West Bengal has shot in to the top spot with a full score of five points.

One of the joint leaders, Rathanvel playing on second board with black pieces had beaten statemate and 13th seed Aniruddh Aiyenger while Grahesh outsmarted



Elancheralathan P of TN.

Meanwhile top-seeded Puranik Abhimanyu of Maharashtra was held to a creditable draw by seventh seed Harsha Bharathakoti of AP. With this draw, both Puranik and Harsha are now sharing the second spot along with Prathish A of Tamil Nadu with an individual score of 4.5 points each.

In the girls, Khushi emerged as a sole leader by defeating Sweta Senapaty Orissa with white pieces.

SPIS win New Mental trophy

Kaushal Rathod's 63 is in vain as SPIS dismantle Phoenix Starlet

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A brilliant all-round show by Saurya Sanamdia overshadowed a defying unbeaten half-century by Kaushal Rathod as Sardar Patel Institute of Sports (SPIS) beat Phoenix Starlet by three wickets to lift the New Mental trophy on Sunday at the HL Commerce College ground.

Batting first, Startlets rode on Rathod's 63 as others struggled to

withstand some tight bowling effort from the SPIS bowlers. Sheldon Jackson was the next best with 22 as Samandia took two for 28 to restrict the opposition for 118.

It was never a daunting task but SPIS lost seven wickets in the process before overcoming the target in the 18th over.

For SPIS man-of-the-match Samandia top-scored with 30 runs while Pranjal Sutaria (23) and Venu Srinivas (22) too provided the much needed support.

CITY BRIEFS

AHMEDABAD ON TOP AGAINST BULSAR

Ahmedabad district is way ahead against Bulsar District at the stumps on day two in Reliance Inter-District cricket tournament being played at Motera 'A' ground on Monday. After bowling out Bulsar for 133 runs, Smith Patel scored 162 runs with the help 24 boundaries as Ahmedabad declared their first innings at 320 for eight. Despite Dhaval Patel's 5/56, Ahmedabad took a huge lead of 187 runs. In second innings, Bulsar managed to score 25 without losing any wicket at the stumps on day two.

EASY WINS AT SGPL

Sudarshan CC, Harikrishna, Shreeji CC and Dev XI scored comfortable wins at the Surya Gurukul Premier League on Sunday night. In the first match, disciplined bowling saw Sudarshan CC beat Aryan XI for 68 runs. After putting 112 for seven in 15 overs, Kedar Delwadi, Mahesh Tiwari and Pankaj Barot took two wickets each as they restricted Aryan XI for 48 for 8 in 15 overs. Aakash Patel took three wickets as Harikrishna restrict better of Pratham CC for 94 runs in 15 overs and then Ravi Shah shot 44 runs as Harikrishna won by six wickets. Shreeji CC and Devi XI scripted similar eight-wicket wins over Youth XI and Broker CC XI. Suraj Bhadoria's all-round show (26 & 1/5) helped Shreeji to thrash Youth XI while Ne-sarg Bhatt (44 & 2/17) led Dev XI's charge over Broker CC.