

## Sports

# Illness, injury hinder Germany for Messi-less Argentina

## Angel Di Maria, Sergio Aguero left out of Argentina squad

**DORTMUND:** Germany are set to hand out several debuts with Joachim Loew missing a host of first-choice names for today's friendly against an Argentina without Lionel Messi.

Like the Germans, Argentina must do without some big names in Dortmund, where only two thirds of tickets have been sold for the friendly. The match is a repeat of the 2014 World Cup final, but Argentina's Manchester United defender Marcos Rojo is set to be the only survivor.

Angel Di Maria and Sergio Aguero have been left out of the Argentina squad while playmaker and captain Lionel Messi is suspended. The 32-year-old superstar is serving a three-month ban after accusing governing body CONMEBOL of "corruption" at the Copa America, where his team finished third.

The German camp has been forced into a reshuffle with 13 players dropping out for illness or injury. "It will be difficult to expect great things when it comes to the line-up, but you can expect seriousness and commitment," assured Loew.

Loew admitted wanting to use the Argentina match to test out combinations with an eye on Euro 2020, "but we won't be able to do that now". Key midfielders Toni Kroos of Real Madrid and Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan are both injured, while a knee knock means there is a question mark over Dortmund captain Marco Reus.

As a result, Loew has called up defender Robin Koch

from Freiburg and midfielder Sebastian Rudy, who played a key role in Hoffenheim's shock win at Bayern Munich on Saturday.

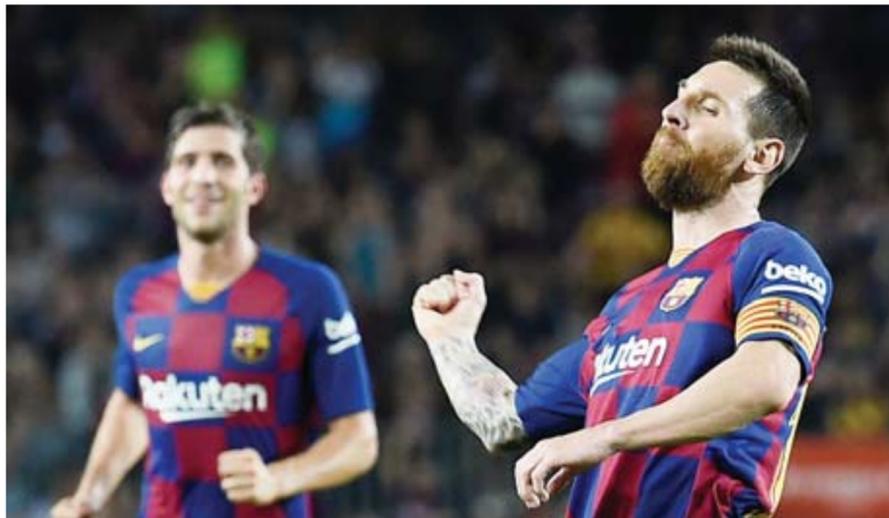
With defenders Matthias Ginter, out with a shoulder injury, and Jonathan Tah, who has a cold, also missing, Loew will test new players. Hertha Berlin defender Niklas Stark will start, as will Freiburg forward Luca Waldschmidt, in for first-choice striker Timo Werner, who has a cold.

There will be much attention on Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who will start with German captain Manuel Neuer on the bench. Loew has said Neuer will return for Sunday's Euro 2020 qualifier at minnows Estonia, but there are calls for Ter Stegen, 27, to usurp Neuer, 33, as first choice.

"I don't feel under any more pressure than usual," said Ter Stegen in Dortmund. "I want to do my best, as always, just like everyone else in the team. I think that despite the withdrawals, we're still bringing a lot of quality."

In the Argentinian camp, coach Lionel Scaloni will be without River Plate and Boca Juniors players involved in the semi-finals of the Copa Libertadores. Rising talents Nicolas Tagliafico (Ajax), Matias Vargas (Espanyol Barcelona) and Lautaro Martinez (Inter Milan) are set to get their chance.

Experience will come from Man City's Nicolas Otamendi (Manchester City), Angel Correa of Atletico Madrid or Paulo Dybala of Juventus. — AFP



**BARCELONA:** File photo shows Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi celebrates his goal during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Sevilla FC at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on October 6, 2019. — AFP

## Mane faces Brazil after starring for Liverpool

**PARIS:** Sadio Mane goes into Senegal's friendly against Brazil in Singapore tomorrow after playing a pivotal role for Liverpool in a dramatic 2-1 Premier League win over Leicester. The Senegalese was the star African performer in the major European leagues, putting the Reds ahead, before a foul on him also led to James Milner converting a stoppage-time penalty. Fellow Liverpool star Egyptian Mohamed Salah limped off after a foul that angered manager Jurgen Klopp, who fumed: "It was done to slow Mo down and that is not okay."

### ENGLAND SADIO MANE (Liverpool)

The Senegal winger was Liverpool's star as they made it 17 successive Premier League victories with a dramatic 2-1 win against Leicester at Anfield. Mane put Liverpool ahead in the 40th minute with a fine finish. It was his eighth goal of the season and 50th in the league for the Reds. Then, after Leicester equalised, it was Mane who won a penalty when he was fouled by Marc Albrighton and Milner converted the spot-kick.

### MOHAMED SALAH (Liverpool)

The Egypt forward suffered an ankle injury that forced him to limp off during Liverpool's win against Leicester. Salah was hurt in the last minute after Leicester midfielder Hamza Choudhury trapped the Liverpool star's ankle under his body with a crude lunge. Reds boss Jurgen Klopp didn't confirm the extent of Salah's injury.

### JORDAN AYEW (Crystal Palace)

The Ghana striker scored his third goal of the season to give Palace a VAR-assisted 2-1 win at West Ham. Ayeew slotted home from close range in the 87th minute, but it took a long VAR review before Martin Kelly was confirmed as onside when he headed down for the Palace forward to finish.

### ITALY KWADWO ASAMOAH (Inter Milan)

Ghana defender Asamoah struggled to contain his former club Juventus as Inter Milan lost 2-1 to suffer their first Serie A defeat this season. The 30-year-old — who won six league titles with Juventus before moving to Inter in 2018 — got his sixth start this season.

### AMADOU DIAWARA (Roma)

Guinean midfielder Diawara, playing just his third game for Roma, suffered a knee injury after half an hour in their 1-1 home draw against Cagliari. The 22-year-old, who arrived at the capital side from Napoli this season, has reportedly suffered a torn meniscus and could be out for up to two months.

### FRANCK KESSIE (AC Milan)

Kessie scored the winner from the penalty spot to get AC Milan back on the winning trail with a 2-1 victory in Genoa after three consecutive defeats. It was the Ivorian's first goal this season and extended his impressive record from the spot, converting nine of the 10 Serie A penalties he has taken, including the last four.

### CHRISTIAN KOUAME (Genoa)

Ivorian Kouame earned a late penalty for Genoa when he was brought down by AC Milan goalkeeper Pepe Reina. But Reina, a 2010 World Cup winner with Spain, denied Lasse Schone from the spot as a winless Genoa run stretched to five games.

### GERMANY

#### ACHRAF HAKIMI (Dortmund)

Morocco international Hakimi got on the scoresheet when his fierce cross cannoned off Freiburg defender Lukas Kuebler to put Dortmund 2-1 up in the second half of their 2-2 draw. Hakimi, who scored two goals in Dortmund's midweek Champions League win at Slavia Prague, was a consistent threat.

#### SALIF SANE (Schalke)

Senegal centre-back Sane helped Schalke take a late lead at home to Cologne when his towering header was nodded home by midfielder Suat Serdar. However, his side blew the chance to usurp Bayern Munich in top spot when they conceded a 91st-minute goal to draw 1-1 in Gelsenkirchen.

#### IHLAS BEBOU (Hoffenheim)

Togolese forward Bebou played a crucial role in his side's surprise 2-1 win at previously unbeaten Bayern Munich. After forcing a save from Manuel Neuer midway through the first half, Bebou's jinking runs asked questions of a disjointed Munich backline, allowing strike partner Sargis Adamyan to capitalise, scoring twice.

### FRANCE

#### VICTOR OSIMHEN (Lille)

The 20-year-old Nigerian forward grabbed his league-best seventh goal of the season to salvage a 2-2 draw against Nimes. Osimhen lashed home an equaliser from close range on 79 minutes after a goalmouth scramble. He has scored in all six home games for Lille in all competitions.

#### MOSES SIMON (Nantes)

Nantes head into the international break as the closest challengers to Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1 after Simon's 86th-minute header secured a 1-0 win over Nice. The on-loan Nigerian headed in a cross from Kader Bamba for his second match-winning goal since arriving from Spanish club Levante. — AFP

## Youth pushing England, Italy to brink of Euro 2020 qualification

**PARIS:** England and Italy are closing in on qualification for Euro 2020 as the two countries' talented young squads search for the single win that would guarantee them a place at a landmark tournament with matches to spare. The pair are two of five teams that can qualify for next summer's tournament in the coming round of matches, held over October 10-12. Spain and Group I rivals Belgium and Russia can also lock up an early place. With two teams qualifying from each of the 10 groups, England need just a win at the Czech Republic on Friday to ensure qualification from the five-team Group A after a perfect run of four victories from four that has put Gareth Southgate's side four points clear of third-placed Kosovo, who have played a game more.

Southgate has built on taking England to the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup, with his side crashing home 19 goals in a dominant qualification campaign. The England manager has been helped by the blossoming, at 24, of Raheem Sterling who after scoring four goals in his first 47 England appearances has scored six in his last six.

Southgate has also capitalised on the emergence of young players such as West Ham's Declan Rice, 20, and 19-year-old Jadon Sancho, who bagged his first England goals in the 5-3 win over Kosovo last time and is a mainstay for Borussia Dortmund.

Young Chelsea trio Mason Mount, Fikayo Tomori and Tammy Abraham are the latest players to be rewarded by Southgate for their impressive club displays, with Mount and the Premier League's joint-leading scorer Abraham among the revelations of the early-season fixtures.

Roberto Mancini meanwhile has continued his rebuilding of Italy while collecting six wins from six in Group J. His youthful Azzurri have a chance of booking their ticket against Greece on Saturday.

They need to beat the Greeks at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome and hope that third-placed Armenia fail to beat rock-bottom Liechtenstein, who have conceded 19 goals so far. Regardless, Italy are almost guaranteed a place in the Euros as they are nine points ahead of Armenia with four matches remaining. If they fail this time, they will have a second chance later in this international break, when they visit Liechtenstein on October 15 on matchday eight. Former Inter Milan and Manchester City boss Mancini has taken the broom to the side that failed to qualify for the World Cup and thrown his trust behind young talent like Inter Milan midfielder Nicolò Barella, highly-rated Roma attacker Nicolò Zaniolo and AC Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Zaniolo, 20, is back in contention after being put on an enforced exile with Moise Kean for bad behaviour during the Under-21 Euros on home turf. Inter's other young midfielder dynamo Stefano Sensi is out after suffering a thigh injury in the 2-1 Serie A defeat by Juventus on Sunday.

Also in contention to qualify on matchday seven are Spain, who have rattled off six straight wins in a tough Group F despite the turmoil that followed the death of former coach Luis Enrique's daughter.

Robert Moreno has taken over and his group leaders are eight points ahead of Romania in third. Spain need a win at Norway and the Faroe Islands to nick a result over the Romanians to book their place.

Belgium and Russia meanwhile both want a draw between Kazakhstan and Cyprus early on Thursday before they search for wins over San Marino and Scotland that would seal their qualification. The Netherlands, another team packed with young talent, will try to make their game in hand count in Group C on Thursday when they host second-placed Northern Ireland looking to join their opponents and leaders Germany on 12 points. Ronald Koeman's side, which includes Juventus defender Matthijs de Ligt and Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong and their former Ajax teammate Donny van de Beek, have bounced back in style from failing to qualify for the last World Cup and Euros and would go top of the group with a victory in Rotterdam. — AFP

## US women's team fights back against governing body's pay claims

**NEW YORK:** US women's national soccer team players pushed back in a court filing on Monday against claims by the US Soccer Federation that some members earn more than their male counterparts, as they argued for class action status in the latest chapter of their closely-watched legal fight.

All 28 members of the US women's national soccer team sued the US Soccer Federation for gender discrimination in March in a lawsuit that included complaints about wages and working conditions.

Mediation between the two parties broke down in August, weeks after US Soccer's President Carlos Cordeiro said in an open letter that the organization has paid more to the women's team than the men's in recent years.

A week ago, the organization said it opposed the women's players bid for class action status in their suit. "Over the class period, the (Women's National Team) has played far more games than the (Men's National Team) and amassed a far higher win percentage, including earning two World Cup championships," the suit's plaintiffs said in Monday's court filing. "This is the only reason why the four (Women's National Team) class representatives were able to earn more total compensation than members of the (Men's National Team)."

Those four players — Megan Rapinoe, Carli Lloyd, Alex Morgan and Becky Sauerbrunn — would have earned far more under the men's team's pay rate policy, the plaintiffs argued in the filing.

A spokesman for US Soccer said members of the men's national team have the chance to earn larger bonuses, but they do not receive guaranteed money in their "pay-for-play contract structure."

"Our men and women's national teams have different pay structures, not because of gender, but because each team chose to negotiate a different compensation package with US Soccer," the spokesman said.—Reuters

## Three years on, Southgate's stock still rising

**LONDON:** It is three years to the day that Gareth Southgate took charge of his first England game and few of the 81,000 crowd who watched his side labour to a 2-0 win over Malta at Wembley would have staked too much on him enjoying a long reign.

The job had rather fallen into the hands of the former Under 21s coach after Sam Allardyce was sacked after 67 days in charge after being embroiled in an under-cover newspaper sting.

Southgate was initially installed as caretaker manager — a "safe pair of hands" to guide England through choppy waters following a humiliating exit to Iceland under former manager Roy Hodgson at the 2016 European Championship in France.

Fast forward three years and Southgate has transformed England from laughing stock to a vibrant, free-scoring side tipped as one of the favourites to win next year's European Championship.

In 37 games in charge he has won 21, drawn nine and lost seven. More importantly he trusts young players, has encouraged an eye-pleasing and pacy style and has acted with dignity in victory and defeat. He has made England likeable again.

A man many said was "too nice" to be a success has become the most popular England manager since Terry Venables guided the national team to the semi-finals of Euro 1996 on home soil.

England have scored 19 goals in four Euro 2020 qualifiers and face the Czech Republic on Friday and Bulgaria three days later when few would expect anything other than two more emphatic wins to virtually assure their place in the finals.

A run to the World Cup semi-finals was a welcome over-achievement but the buzz that engendered has been sustained and England's fans are fully switched back on to the national team.

### NATIONAL PRIDE

Where once it attracted derision and scorn, Southgate's side has become a source of pride. "The fact the team have connected back with our fans is the



Gareth Southgate

most pleasing aspect of the last few years," he said as he prepared his players at St. George's Park.

"It was important to me that we played with a style that our supporters enjoy watching. We knew there were some good young players coming through, which we've blooded and we've been ranked fourth or fifth in the world for the last 12 months because of consistently good performances."

Under Southgate the likes of Trent Alexander-Arnold, Jadon Sancho and Declan Rice have all been fast-tracked into the first team, while Chelsea's Mason Mount made his full debut against Bulgaria last month and team mate Tammy Abraham is in line to earn his first senior cap after being called up.

With the climax of next year's tournament being staged in England there is genuine belief that Southgate's men can surpass their performance in Russia last year, but the manager knows that there could still be bumps in the road.

"We've got a much bigger emphasis on youth so there's still a lot for us to do," Southgate said.

"The challenges never stop. Every month we go back through the games we've played and review what could be better and the areas we can improve on to be considered the best team in the world. There's a lot of work to do in that regard. "But we feel we're still improving. I don't think there's been any regression, we've got to make sure we continue that." — Reuters