

Spanish soccer executive, son arrested in corruption probe

By ARITZ PARRA & JOSEPH WILSON
Associated Press

2014 FIFA report on the World Cup bidding process that rocked the sport.

A 2015 U.S. investigation into corruption in world soccer led to the eventual resignation of longtime president Sepp Blatter and other top officials.

Several hours after Tuesday's arrests, police escorted Villar into the federation offices in Las Rozas, on the outskirts of Madrid. He emerged from a Guardia Civil vehicle flanked by two uniformed agents. Two policemen guarded the entrance to the federation offices near the training grounds for Spain's national teams.

Also arrested were Juan Padron, the federation's vice president of economic affairs who is also president of the regional federation for Tenerife, and Ramon Hernandez, the secretary of that regional federation.

The four were arrested on charges of improper management, misappropriation of funds, corruption and falsifying documents as part of an inquiry into the finances of the federations.

"We have taken note of the media reports concerning the situation of Mr. Villar



AP Photo/Francisco Seco

Former President of the Spanish Football Federation Angel Maria Villar, right, is lead by Spanish Civil Guard policeman to enter the Federation headquarters during an anti-corruption operation in Las Rozas, outside Madrid, Tuesday, July 18, 2017. Villar, FIFA's senior vice president and a long-time player in world soccer, was arrested Tuesday along with his son and two more federation executives in an anti-corruption investigation.

Llona," FIFA said in a statement. "As the matter seems to be linked to internal affairs of the Spanish Football Association, for the time being we kindly refer you to them for further details."

As part of an operation called "Soule," the Guardia Civil said it raided the national federation's headquarters, the offices of the regional soccer federation on the island of Tenerife and "headquarters

gaining in return contracts for services and other business ventures in benefit of his son."

Unregulated by FIFA, friendly matches between national teams can be more easily corrupted. Scandals in recent years involving FIFA were tied to the siphoning of cash from deals struck for friendly matches, often held in North and South America.

Gorka Villar, a lawyer, worked in recent years for the South American body CONMEBOL as legal director and then as the CEO-like director general for three presidents who were implicated in the U.S. investigation. Gorka Villar left CONMEBOL in July 2016.

The prosecutor's office said it also suspects that Padron and the Tenerife secretary "favored the contracting of business" for their personal benefit.

Inigo Mendez de Vigo, minister of education, culture and sport, told national television after the raids that "in Spain the laws are enforced, the laws are the same for all, and nobody, nobody is above the law."

Calls by The Associated Press to the Spanish and Tenerife federations went

unanswered.

UEFA said in a statement it was aware of the reports regarding Villar, but "we have no comment to make at this time." The Higher Council of Sport said it will "use everything in its means to ensure that competitions are not affected" by the arrests.

In the wake of the arrests, the Royal Spanish Federation of Football postponed meetings to draw the Spanish football league schedule.

A former professional player, the 67-year-old Villar has been the head of Spain's soccer federation since 1988, overseeing the national team's victories in the 2010 World Cup and the 2008 and 2012 European Championships.

Villar won an eighth term as president in May, running unopposed after another candidate, Jorge Perez, withdrew to protest what he called irregularities in the election of the federation's general assembly.

He has been at the heart of FIFA and UEFA politics since the 1990s, and has worked closely with several international soccer leaders who have since been indicted by the U.S. Justice Department.

No home, road uniforms as NBA goes to Nike

By BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — NBA teams are making a wardrobe change, with the traditional home and road uniforms going back in the closet.

The league said Tuesday it is eliminating the old apparel designations starting with the 2017-18 season, when Nike becomes the official outfitter. Instead, there will be four primary uniforms for each team.

The host team will pick which of its uniforms will be worn for each game and the visitors will select one of the contrasting ones from their collection. Previously, white uniforms were the default for home teams.

The first two editions will debut at the start of the season. The "Association" is formerly the home white uniform and the "Icon" is the previous road jersey, featuring the team's primary color.

The other two primary uniforms will be revealed in the coming months.

Also, eight teams will have a "Classic" uniform available in the fall that they can wear at their discretion.

Nike, which is replacing Adidas, says its uniforms are the NBA's lightest ever and absorb sweat faster, with changes to the neck, back shoulder and armhole to enhance agility.

NFL

Cowboys still exploring latest Elliott incident

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said Tuesday the team is still gathering details over Ezekiel Elliott's involvement in an altercation at a Dallas bar, the latest off-field incident for the star running back.

Elliott, who was already facing a potential suspension over the NFL's investigation of a year-old domestic case, was involved in a dispute Sunday night that led to a man getting punched in the nose and being taken to a hospital. Dallas police said the 30-year-old man didn't know who punched him, and the report does not mention Elliott. Dallas police also are investigating the incident.

Jones said he didn't want to speculate about a possible suspension. An NFL spokesman said the league is looking into the latest incident "to understand the facts." One of Elliott's representatives didn't return a message seeking comment.



In this Jan. 15, 2017, file photo, Dallas Cowboys' Ezekiel Elliott (21) walks off the field after a 34-31 loss to the Green Bay Packers in an NFL divisional playoff football game, in Arlington, Texas.

AP Photo/Michael Ainsworth, File

Authorities in Columbus, Ohio, declined to prosecute the former Ohio State star over a domestic dispute with his ex-girlfriend before Elliott's first training camp with the Cowboys last year. But the NFL's investigation continued, and the league hasn't cleared Elliott.

Elliott also drew unwanted attention last season when he visited a legal marijuana shop before a preseason game in Seattle. Last spring, he pulled down a woman's shirt during a St. Patrick's Day parade.

The 21-year-old Elliott, who led the NFL in rushing

as a rookie and helped the Cowboys to the top seed in the NFC playoffs with a 13-3 record, can get suspended without any convictions.

"Because of his style, personality, (he's) like a rock star wherever he goes in terms of attention," Jones said. "Certainly Zeke is evolving and being subject to needing to learn how to deal with the media and social media the way it is today."

Jones said he had discussed Elliott's latest incident with the running back but declined to provide details. Elliott said during the offseason program

that he was going out less while understanding more the scrutiny he faces. But now he's had another incident.

"Like all of us, we do good some days and don't do good the others," Jones said. "That's not to be confused with tolerating bad behavior or illegal behavior. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about just learning that your every move will be scrutinized and how in this day and time it will be looked at from many vantage points."

Elliott was a star before the Cowboys drafted him fourth overall last year, having led Ohio State the first championship in the four-team playoff. He ran for an Ohio State bowl-record 246 yards and four touchdowns in the title game on his future home field in the NFL.

With 1,631 yards rushing last season, Elliott powered the Dallas offense alongside fellow rookie sensation Dak Prescott, who took now-retired Tony Romo's job with the best debut season for a quarterback in franchise history.

TOUR: Kittel struggles at back of pack, temper gets the better of Degenkolb



AP Photo/Peter Dejong

The pack rides through vineyards during the Tour de France cycling race over 165 kilometers (102.5 miles) with start in Le Puy-en-Velay and finish in Romans-sur-Isere, France, Tuesday, July 18, 2017.

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"Myself and Mikel Landa are feeling great," said Froome. "The next two days are the biggest consecutive days in this year's Tour de France. And the goal of my preparation for the Tour de France was to head into the third week feeling the way I'm feeling now."

The battle for the yellow jersey will resume on Wednesday during the first of two Alpine stages in high altitude. It will lead riders to the ski station of Serre Chevalier through a grueling 183-kilometer trek featuring four climbs, including the Col du Galibier — one of the Tour's most fearsome and famed climbs at 18 kilometers (11 miles), with a 10-percent gradient at the top.

Next will be the daunting Stage 18 to the Col d'Izoard

, which features a final 14.1-kilometer ascent to the top of the mountain, at an altitude of 2,360 meters.

"I'm looking forward to the Alps," Froome said.

Three days after his victory in Rodez, Matthews reduced the gap with green jersey holder Marcel Kittel to 29 points in the best sprinter's classification with his second stage win.

He made the most of a slightly uphill section 500 meters from the line and accelerated after Greg Van Avermaet launched the sprint. Matthews then resisted Edvald Boasson Hagen's late surge to prevail by a wheel's length. John Degenkolb completed the podium.

Tempers frayed after the stage. Matthews claimed Degenkolb grabbed him by the neck out of frustration and accused him of going

into his line during the sprint.

"I did a clean sprint, I did not change my line," Matthews said. "After the finish, I was waiting for the results, he came past and grabbed my neck. It was not very sportsmanlike."

On a difficult terrain with constant up-and-downs across the lush forests of Massif Central, several attacks had taken place during the first hour of racing. Kittel was dropped in the first climb and struggled at the back throughout the day.

The German ace sprinter could not count on teammate Philippe Gilbert to bring him back — the former world champion did not start the stage in Le Puy-en-Velay due to gastroenteritis. Standing 12th overall, Lotto NL Jumbo rider George Bennett had a bad day and dropped out about 100 kilometers from the finish.

BRITISH: DeChambeau earned final qualifying spot with win at John Deere Classic

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Sergio Garcia, the Masters champion who is still looking for his first Claret Jug. "It's a really high level and it doesn't matter if you've won a major or not, everybody can definitely do it."

That everybody certainly includes Garcia himself, who spent the better part of the last two decades tantalizing fans with his talent but never delivering in a major before a brilliant back nine comeback gave him the green jacket at Augusta National this year.

His Open career began as an amateur at Royal Birkdale in 1998, and he's had several legitimate chances to win the Open, only to kick

them away. But he's now a major champion and, with a wedding set for next week, he could be a storybook champion should he emerge with the iconic jug engraved with winners of years past.

"Obviously I am excited about it," Garcia said. "I am confident about my possibilities but I can't tell you if I'm going to be right up there on Sunday with a chance. I'm hoping that I will be, but unfortunately it doesn't work like that every week."

The player nicknamed Beef certainly understands that. The bearded, portly Johnston entertained the crowd at last year's Open, nearly upstaging a tremendous duel between Phil Mickelson and eventual

winner Henrik Stenson in the final round before finishing eighth.

But Johnston has struggled to make cuts ever since, as did DeChambeau until he came through Sunday with a blistering back nine to win for the first time in the John Deere Classic.

That gave him the final qualifying berth in the Open, and a chance to demonstrate some unusual theories he has about golf, including using the same length shaft in all of his irons.

A win here would be an extreme longshot, but strange things can happen in golf. That's especially true at a tournament where just a few years back 59-year-old Tom

Watson came within a par of winning before losing to Stewart Cink in a playoff.

So maybe the search for a new hero will focus on the hometown kid with the flowing bangs who used to sneak onto Royal Birkdale to play a few holes while his dad walked the dog around the course perimeter.

A win for Fleetwood — now the No. 1 player on the European Tour — might even get him noticed in the town where he grew up. So far, his appearance here has been welcomed with a collective shrug.

"There's nobody fainting in the street as I walk past," Fleetwood said. "So I'm still waiting."



AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall

Bryson DeChambeau celebrates with the trophy after winning the John Deere Classic golf tournament, Sunday, July 16, 2017, at TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Ill.