

Pressure rises on Infantino's World Cup investor plan as advisor resigns and Asia opposes

BY GRAHAM DUNBAR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

GENEVA — Pressure on FIFA President Gianni Infantino and his divisive plan to sell World Cup profits to private equity grew Friday as his senior advisor who sat on a White House panel resigned and Asia's soccer body joined Europe and North America in opposing it.

An expanding crisis for soccer's governing body reached into Infantino's longtime inner circle when his pick to represent FIFA on the White House Task Force for the World Cup walked away calling the Joshua Kushner-backed \$20 billion commercial subsidiary plan “a bad deal for football.”

Carlos Cordeiro is a former Goldman Sachs banker and officially Infantino's Senior Adviser yet revealed he was not involved in the secretive investment plan that has rocked the sport since media reports revealed it Tuesday.

“I cannot stand by while FIFA considers selling a stake in the World Cup,” Cordeiro said in a statement formally resigning, just hours after FIFA insisted in a statement: “Nobody is selling football.”

Cordeiro's exit — and call for other senior staff to speak out — intensified scrutiny on Infantino one day after European soccer body UEFA threatened to boycott all FIFA games and events until the plan is dropped. North America's CONCACAF also rejected Infantino's offer of one-off \$20 million payments to each member federation by a mid-September deadline.

Cordeiro often joined Infantino on working visits to meet U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in recent years, and took part in meetings of the administration's World Cup task force led by Andrew Giuliani.

“Let me be clear. I had no involvement in this proposal, and I oppose it unequivocally,” said Cordeiro, the former U.S. Soccer Federation president.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during a news conference at the stadium in Mexico City, Wednesday, June 10, a day before the opening FIFA World Cup match between Mexico and South Africa.

ASIA JOINS EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

On another seismic day in soccer politics, Asia's soccer body that has been a key ally in Infantino's 11-year presidency opposed the investor plan and said FIFA must urgently review its management style

The Asian Football Confederation said it “stands in solidarity” with UEFA and CONCACAF, the first two continental bodies to oppose Infantino whose combined 90 FIFA member countries near a majority of the 211 global total.

“Football should never have been placed in such a position,” said the Asian soccer body, which counts 46 of FIFA's 211 members

Infantino has proposed spinning off FIFA's commercial businesses — including World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women — into a \$20 billion subsidiary with 20% owned by private investors.

The “anchor investor,” described by FIFA, is a New York-based investment firm created by Joshua Kushner, the younger brother of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

“(T)he proposed (FIFA Forward Enterprise) cannot realistically achieve the necessary broad consensus and unity required to move forward” and must be reconsidered, the AFC

said.

The statement did not name Infantino yet criticized FIFA for problems beyond the content of the private equity plan plus failing to consult about the secretive proposal.

“Rather, it has exposed fundamental weaknesses in FIFA's consultation and decision-making processes that must now be addressed,” said the AFC, whose longtime president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa narrowly lost the FIFA presidential election to Infantino in 2016.

“Accordingly, the AFC calls upon FIFA to undertake an urgent review of its governance and decision-making framework,” said the organization based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

INFANTINO'S JOB AT RISK?

Infantino had seemed — 11 days ago after the World Cup final in East Rutherford, New Jersey — to have a clear path to being reelected unopposed for a fourth and final term in office through 2031.

FIFA had briefed during the tournament that Infantino had letters of support from about 200 members, despite a furor over letting United States forward Folarin Balogun play against Belgium even though he received a red

card in his previous game. Trump acknowledged asking Infantino to review Balogun's mandatory one-game ban.

FIFA has set a Nov. 18 deadline for potential candidates to declare in a presidential vote of the 211 members scheduled next March in Rabat, Morocco.

FIFA BLAMES THE MEDIA

The Asian statement came hours after FIFA blamed the media and doubled down on pursuing the project which now seems to have a majority of the 211 in opposition.

“Our planned consultation process was disrupted by incorrect media reports,” FIFA said in a statement early Friday. “We will proceed with this consultation process to ensure that each (member) has the ability to express its vote based on facts.”

The next FIFA event that would be targeted by the threatened European boycott is within weeks — the Women's Under-20 World Cup hosted by Poland from Sept. 5. The four British federations comprise FIFA's only bidder to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. That decision is due Nov. 23.

Dodgers rest Shohei Ohtani amid lingering left knee soreness

BY BETH HARRIS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani was set to return as the leadoff hitter for the Los Angeles Dodgers on Friday, a day after he wasn't in the lineup because of lingering soreness in his left knee that is keeping him off the mound.

The Dodgers open a three-game set against the Boston Red Sox.

The two-way superstar wanted to play Thursday against the Seattle Mariners, manager Dave Roberts said, but it was the team's decision to rest him. Ohtani told the training staff of renewed soreness after Wednesday night's 4-2 win.

“I appreciate the communication,” Roberts said. “I can't read minds, the training staff can't read minds, so just for him to communicate that then allows for us to make a decision.”

Second baseman Tommy Edman went 0 for 3 in Ohtani's place for the series finale, a 6-2 win.

Ohtani has been dealing with knee soreness since June 11 and hasn't pitched since July 3 while also dealing with a right biceps issue. He skipped the All-Star Game in Philadelphia to stay home and receive a lubricant injection in the knee.

He is still serving as the designated hitter. Ohtani was 5 for 7 combined in his last two games against the Mariners, with a home run, four RBIs and two runs scored.

“The last couple days he's been on base a lot more whereas the last part of the road trip he wasn't, so there might have been a little something to that,” Roberts said, adding that nothing occurred in the



SCOTT STRAZZANTE/Associated Press

Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani (17) grimaces after hitting a foul ball against the Seattle Mariners during the first inning of a baseball game Wednesday, July 29 in Los Angeles.

game Wednesday to precipitate Ohtani sitting out the next day.

The Dodgers expect Ohtani to return to pitching this season, but they're not rushing him back to the mound.

“If there was something structural, then we would be much more concerned,” Andrew Friedman, president of baseball operations, said Wednesday. “The fact that there's not and the fact that it does keep improving suggests that we're on the right path.”

For now, the team doesn't have any plans to shut down Ohtani entirely to give him time to recover from his ailments.

“We're talking about this constantly,” Roberts said. “Nothing should be off the table and nothing is set in stone. So I think it's more of how he feels. With this new information we've got to have new conversations.”

Romo on leave from CBS Sports after arrest on suspicion of operating vehicle under the influence

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tony Romo has been placed on leave from his role as the lead analyst on CBS' NFL coverage following his arrest last week on suspicion of operating a vehicle while under the influence.

CBS Sports announced Friday that the former Dallas Cowboys quarterback was on leave “until further notice.” JJ Watt will join Jim Nantz and Tracy Wolfson as CBS Sports' lead NFL team during Romo's absence.

Romo, 46, was arrested July 23 after he was stopped while driving south on Interstate 43 in Wisconsin. According to the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office report, Romo performed poorly on field sobriety tests before getting taken into custody, booked and released.

He has a court date set for Sept. 21.

CBS Sports' announcement comes after citations released by the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office indicated an open bottle of an alcoholic beverage was found in the passenger's side of Romo's black Jeep during an inventory before it was towed.

According to the citations, police stopped Romo after he was seen passing cars in a gore area, which separates interstate traffic from cars entering from an on-ramp. Police said Romo questioned what a gore



Former NFL quarterback Tony Romo, right, attends an NBA basketball game between the Indiana Pacers and the Dallas Mavericks on March 5, 2024, in Dallas.

area was during the stop.

Body camera footage released earlier this week showed Romo telling deputies he had been coming from a golf course and was on his way “to visit grandma and grandpa” when he was stopped. A deputy told Romo he suspected him of being impaired because he had “red glassy eyes” and an “odor of an intoxicating alcoholic beverage.”

Romo went to high school about 35 miles from Milwaukee in Burlington, Wisconsin.

He has been the lead game analyst for CBS' NFL coverage since 2017 after making four Pro Bowl appearances during an NFL career that ran from 2004-16 and was spent entirely with Dallas.

Romo remains the Cowboys' franchise leader in career touchdown passes with 248. He held the franchise record for career passing yards (34,183) until Dak Prescott overtook him last season.

Watt joined CBS in 2023. He was an analyst on

“The NFL Today” for two seasons before teaming with Ian Eagle on the network's No. 2 crew beginning last season.

Romo wasn't expected to have his first game until the opening Sunday of the regular season on Sept. 13. CBS will air a preseason game between the Cincinnati Bengals and Philadelphia Eagles on Aug. 28.

CBS likely will reveal its game assignments and announcer pairings for the first three weeks of the regular season in the next couple of weeks.

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