

## What to WATCH

**SONY SIX**  
Australia v New Zealand  
Third Test, Day Four  
Live from 5:30am  
South Africa v England  
Second Test, Day Four  
Live from 2:30pm

**SONY ESPN**  
Serie A  
Atalanta v Parma  
Live from 8:00pm  
**TEN 1**  
Serie A  
AC Milan v Sampdoria

Live from 8:00pm  
**TEN 2**  
Serie A  
Bologna v Fiorentina  
Live from 5:30pm  
Juventus v Cagliari  
Live from 8:00pm

Lecce v Udinese  
Live from 11:00pm  
Napoli v Inter Milan  
Live from 1:45am (Tuesday)

## Lazio down Brescia

AFP, Milan

Mario Balotelli warded off the insults from travelling Lazio fans to strike the first goal of the decade in Italy but the title-chasers hit back with a Ciro Immobile double to snatch a late win at ten-man Brescia yesterday.

Simone Inzaghi's side stretched their winning streak to nine consecutive league games and with a game in hand are three points behind leaders Inter Milan and Juventus who play on Monday.

Immobile struck the winner after 91 minutes having also converted from the penalty spot before the break.

Italian international Balotelli picked up where he left off before the winter break opening the scoring after 18 minutes for the promoted side.

## Sibley, Root stretch England's lead

REUTERS, Cape Town



Opener Dominic Sibley struck a career-best unbeaten 85 as England seized control of the second Test against South Africa at the close of the third day at Newlands on Sunday, grinding down their hosts ahead of a fourth innings victory charge.

The tourists reached 218 for four at stumps, a lead of 264 that already looks substantial on a wearing wicket and with two full days remaining, providing an excellent chance to level the four-match series.

Sibley put on 116 for the third wicket with captain Joe Root (61), before the latter steered Dwaine Pretorius to Faf du Plessis at slip late on.

Nightwatchman Dominic Bess gloved a leg-side delivery from Anrich Nortje (2-36) to end the day.

Sibley will seek to take the game further away from South Africa with Ben Stokes on day four with England's travelling fans in full voice in Cape Town.

Sibley's previous best in Tests was 29

and he showed impressive patience and concentration to see off the new ball and then accumulate his runs by waiting for the right opportunities to score.

He took 140 balls to reach his 50 and batted for almost the full day, which allowed Root to score more freely at the other end.

South Africa's other two wickets in England's second innings were that of Zak Crawley (25), who edged Kagiso Rabada to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock, and Joe Denly (31), caught at long leg attempting a hook off Nortje.

It was, at times, a war of attrition that the visiting side won with risk-free, smart cricket.

South Africa's bowling attack were unable to find the movement and pace off the wicket that England enjoyed as they bowled them out for 223 early on the third day.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**ENGLAND:** First innings 269 and second innings 218 for 4 (Crawley 25, Sibley 85 not out, Denly 31, Root 61; Nortje 2-36)

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 223 all out (Elgar 88, Van der Dussen 68, De Kock 20; Anderson 5-40, Broad 2-38, Curran 2-39)



England's James Anderson celebrates after dismissing South Africa's Kagiso Rabada on the third day of the second Test at the Newlands Stadium in Cape Town yesterday. Anderson ended with first innings figures of five for 40. PHOTO: AFP

## Prospecting gone awry?

SPORTS REPORTER



With the Sylhet leg done and dusted, the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) will enter its final stretch when the tournament resumes in Dhaka tomorrow following a two-day break.

Chattogram Challengers and Rajshahi Royals have already confirmed their playoff berths while Dhaka Platoon, Khulna Tigers and Rangpur Rangers will vie for the final spot when they get back to business at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium tomorrow.

With the country's top domestic cricket league reaching its climax, now is as good a time as any to reflect on the local players' performances, especially since chief selector Minhajul Abedin said prior to the competition that they were hoping to unearth a few national team prospects ahead of the T20 World Cup.

One of the most notable aspects of the ongoing BBPL is perhaps the impressive performances of young pacers such as Mehedi Hasan Rana, Hasan Mahmud, Shahidul Islam and Mukidul Islam. However, it should be mentioned here that while the initial sparks were bright, the pacers have since lost their rhythm.

In addition, if the selectors examine how the players who featured in the three-match T20 series in India fared in the ongoing BBPL, then they would not have much to be encouraged about, other than Mushfiqur Rahim's responsible batting that is.

While true that young Mohammad Naim, Mohammad Mithun, Liton Das and Afif Hossain chipped in with runs, there was nothing extraordinary in their



Opening batsmen Afif Hossain and Liton Das scored 352 runs at average of 50.28 in the seven matches they have played for Rajshahi Royals in the ongoing BBPL. PHOTO: STAR FILE

efforts. Meanwhile, Soumya Sarkar has been seeking inspiration from his bowling, saying that 'I am now enjoying my bowling'.

Although the injured Mosaddek Hossain scores at an average of 31.66, his strike-rate of 106.14 is hardly encouraging. Young leg-spinner Aminul Islam has played in just three matches so far while Mahmudullah Riyad could only feature in the same number of fixtures due to injury. At the bowling end, pacers Al-Amin Hossain, Shaful Islam and Abu Hider, left-arm spinners Taijul Islam and Arafat Sunny made barely any notable performances.

However, Rajshahi Royals opens Liton Das and Afif Hossain have provided a glimpse of hope. The pair have so far

scored 352 runs at average of 50.28 in the seven matches where they opened the innings for Rajshahi. The right-left opening combination have exhibited some good stroke play during the Powerplay overs, which in turn drew attention to them.

"Liton bhai and I have played together for a long time and we opened the innings for Sylhet Sixers in the last BPL as well and that's why we have a very good understanding," said Afif, who has scored 306 runs in nine innings at a strike-rate of 136.60.

Afif also informed that he was ready to take on the national team challenges. "I like to bat at the top but I didn't get the chance in the national side. I will definitely try to play a big knock if I get the chance to open the innings for the national side."

## Millman guides Aus

AFP, Brisbane



John Millman stunned Felix Auger-Aliassime in straight sets to help guide Australia to victory over Canada in their ATP Group F tie in Brisbane yesterday.

Millman was called upon to play singles only hours before the opening rubber of the tie when the mercurial Nick Kyrgios withdrew with back soreness, but he had no trouble accounting for the higher-ranked Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-2.

The Australians sealed the tie when a tenacious Alex de Minaur came from a set down to beat Canadian number one Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 6-2 in three hours.

John Peers and Chris Guccione made it a clean sweep for the home side when they beat Auger-Aliassime and Adil Shamasdin with a match tiebreaker 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 10/8.

Millman said he wasn't perturbed about getting the late call-up and said he relished playing on his home court in hot and humid conditions that favoured him rather than his Canadian opponent.

"I was pretty prepared -- it's always difficult, a late call-up, but it doesn't get much easier in a difficult circumstance than when you get to play here in Brisbane, a place where you're familiar with the court and the surroundings and you know that you're going to have a vocal crowd in your corner," Millman said.

"Those humid conditions, what they do is the humidity actually creates heavier conditions."



We have three matches. It would be difficult for us if we have thought about winning all those remaining games in Dhaka, so it's important to win the next game. But we have a good chance if we can win all the matches. Although a few of our foreign recruits may have already left, we are still hopeful to accomplish something good.

**SOUMYA SARKAR**  
CUMILLA WARRIORS  
ALL-ROUNDER



Barcelona striker Luis Suarez (C) rues his missed chance while an Espanyol player smirks at his dismay during a La Liga encounter on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Barca held to 2-2 draw

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona were pegged back by La Liga's bottom club Espanyol on Saturday as Wu Lei struck late to secure a dramatic 2-2 draw in a thrilling Catalan derby.

Luis Suarez appeared to have inspired another turnaround at the RCDE Stadium after he cancelled out David Lopez's opener with a deft half-volley before digging out an exquisite pass for substitute Arturo Vidal to finish.

But a red card for Frenkie de Jong with 16 minutes left gave Espanyol renewed hope and Chinese forward Wu emerged the hero, firing past stand-in goalkeeper Neto to rescue a point in Abelardo Fernandez's first game in charge.

Barcelona remain top of the table but only on goal difference, their two-point advantage removed after Real Madrid

earlier clinched an impressive 3-0 win away at Getafe.

Barca now switch their attention to the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia next week, where a Clasico final awaits if Real Madrid beat Valencia in the last four and they can overcome Atletico.

But coach Ernesto Valverde will have much to ponder after defensive problems again undermined his team against the league's bluntest attack.

Lopez was unmarked as he headed in Marc Roca's cross in the 23rd minute while at the other end chances were few and far between, with Lionel Messi going closest with a header at the back post.

Vidal came on at half-time for Ivan Rakitic and Suarez worked his magic, angling his foot perfectly to divert Jordi Alba's cross inside the near post before picking out Vidal to make it 2-1 nine minutes later.

## Maguire in race for fitness

AFP, London



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says Harry Maguire faces a race to prove his fitness in time for the League Cup semi-final first leg against Manchester City on Tuesday.

Maguire appeared to be limping following a first-half challenge on Adama Traore during United's 0-0 draw with Wolves in the FA Cup third round on Saturday.

Phil Jones was preparing to come on for Maguire but the centre-back eventually completed the 90 minutes.

United are already missing defenders Axel Tuanzebe, Marcos Rojo and Eric Bailly and if Maguire is deemed unfit Jones will likely play alongside Victor Lindelof in the heart of the defence.

## Zlatan statue vandalised once again

AFP, Copenhagen

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's statue in his hometown of Malmö was vandalised overnight Saturday, Swedish police reported.

The statue has been the target of numerous attacks since the Swedish footballer invested in Stockholm-based Hammarby, angering supporters of Malmö FF, the club where he began his professional career.

In November, a day after his investment in Hammarby, Ibrahimovic filed a "hate crime" complaint after the statue was attacked with fire and paint.



Last week Cristiano Ronaldo attended the Globe Soccer Awards, where he was seen sporting a Rolex watch, the brand's most expensive ever at the cost of £371,000. Naturally, the 18-karat white gold timekeeper is festooned with diamonds with some 30 carats of white diamonds found across the bezel and bracelet. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Sociedad slump to 2-1 loss

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Sociedad's hopes of getting back into La Liga's top-four were hit as they slumped to a 2-1 defeat at home to Villarreal yesterday.

Willian Jose put the home side ahead midway through a first half but Manu Trigueros levelled 13 minutes into the second period from the penalty spot after Samuel Chukwueze was felled by Igor Zubeldia.

Santi Cazorla then gave the visitors the lead in the 75th minute with a strike that was originally ruled offside then awarded following a VAR review.