

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

BTV & RTV

Bangabandhu Gold Cup

Mauritius v Burundi

Live from 5:00pm

SONY ESPN

South Africa v England

Third Test, Day 1

Live from 2:00pm

Bangabandhu Gold Cup

Mauritius v Burundi

Time: 5:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

HAZARDOUS HOLIDAY WEIGHT

Real Madrid forward Eden Hazard has admitted to letting himself go while on holiday and piling on the pounds after signing for the Spanish giants in the close season last year. The Belgium international, who after years of flirtation finally signed for Real from Chelsea for a joint-club record 100 million euros (\$111.3 million) in June, raised eyebrows when he reported for pre-season training packing some extra weight. "It's true, I cannot lie, if I'm on holiday, then I'm on holiday," Hazard told Belgian Magazine Sport/ Foot. "I put on five kilos in the summer. I'm one of those people who puts on weight very quickly then loses it very quickly. "When I was at Lille I weighed 72 kilos but then I gained muscle and went to 75 kilos. On a bad day I can weigh 77. In the summer I went up to 80 kilos but I lost it again 10 days later." Hazard, 28, made a slow start to his Real career. He began to hit form soon after but he has been out of action since injuring his ankle in a 2-2 draw with Paris St Germain in the Champions League on Nov. 26.

—REUTERS





Palestine players celebrate one of their two goals against Bangladesh in the opening match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

Champions ease past error-prone hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

 Hosts Bangladesh began their Bangabandhu Gold Cup campaign on the wrong foot following a 2-0 defeat against Palestine in the opening match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Khaled Salem and Layth Kharoub scored a goal in each half as the defending champions took a giant step towards the semifinals ahead of their last group-stage match against tournament's lowest-ranked side, Sri Lanka, tomorrow.

Having come out of their usual defensive shell, Bangladesh made a fine start to the game with some crisp passing and they fought toe-to-toe against the defending champions, who did not look as strong as they were in the previous edition of the tournament.

However, Palestine eventually proved their superiority with better skill, running, quick

movement in the attacking third and their overall tactic to ease past the hosts, who looked jittery in defence which could be blamed for both the goals they conceded.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Day played Saad Uddin in Number 9 position instead of his usual right-wing position in absence of regular striker Nabib Newaz Jibon. The Abahani player

BANGLADESH 0 - 2 PALESTINE

(Salem 29', Kharoub 58')

tried to unsettle the Palestine defence, but Matin Mia, playing in right-wing, failed to make an impact before being substituted in the second half.

Bangladesh's early pressure on Palestine produced some corner-kicks and throw-ins, with defender Raihan Hassan taking his usual long throw-ins, but there was hardly any plan of stopping the opposition in transition.

From such a situation, Bangladesh conceded the first goal after having survived a seventh-minute scare. Kharoub whipped in a good cross from the right flank for speedy striker Salem, who brought down the ball inside the box but Tapu Barman made a brilliant clearance to thwart the impending danger.

In the next minute, Bangladesh earned a free-kick from the edge of the box, but Mamunul Islam's curling effort was parried away for a corner by Palestine's 6ft 5inch goalkeeper Tawfiq Abuhammad. Bangladesh kept pressing for the lead and earned a number of throw-ins, but it was one of those throw-ins that eventually led them to concede the lead in the 29th minute as the Palestine defence cleared the throw-in quickly and the forwards pounced on in counter-attack.

Availing the clearance from a teammate, Germany-based midfielder Mohammed Darweesh put a defence-splitting through-pass between Tapu and Yeasin Khan and Salem

darted into the box to place it clinically to the left-hand side of advancing goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana.

Bangladesh then came close to levelling the margin in the 32nd minute, but Tapu saw his diving header off Raihan's throw-in miss the near post before Palestine threatened twice to double the lead.

After resumption, Bangladesh were expected to up the ante, but they went further down in the 58th minute, thanks again to a fumble by the defenders. Yeasin failed to clear a long-ball from Radwan Abukarash and it fell to unmarked Kharoub, who made no mistake to fire home from inside the six-yard box.

The hosts apparently played the rest of the time without much purpose despite the coach sending two pairs of fresh legs in place of Matin and Mamunul. Those changes, though, had no impact as the defending champions inflicted the same margin of defeat on the hosts that they had in the semi-finals of the last edition.

Day left frustrated

SPORTS REPORTER

 Jamie Day expressed his frustration over the way Bangladesh conceded two goals against Palestine in the opening match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

"It was very frustrating because we had possession of the ball after the throw-in. If we don't let them out of the area as easy we did then they don't counter and score. If we don't give silly free-kicks away then we don't concede the second. It's frustrating because if you give such opportunities, they will punish you. We have to learn that going into the next game," Day said at post-match press conference.

"We must avoid such silly mistakes against Sri Lanka. If we make the same mistakes like we did tonight, then we will be punished," warned the 40-year-old coach.

Day, however, believes his charges fought well against Palestine enjoying good possession, but finishing made the difference in the match.

"Except for scoring the goals, the boys played well, put the ball in right area. Couple of boys were really very good. We knew it would be a tough game for us. So we know we have to beat Sri Lanka to go to the semifinals and there were lot of positive things to take from the game. However, we did not make a lot of chances to score while they had chances and they took those," said Day, who believes the second-string Palestine team are a good enough outfit.


"Those who played today are good players. Whether you play against Palestine Olympic team or national team, it is always tough. The player who scored the goal is a good scorer for the national side. If you see the Palestine league and Bangladesh league, any player playing in Palestine league is technically better than Bangladeshi players. Their young players are coming through the system," opined Day.

Palestine's assistant coach Fahad Atel reiterated their confidence of winning the title despite 70 percent of the players being new.

"We have won the first match and now looking forward to win the second match," Atel said. "We know how Bangladesh played and what is their playing style. So we knew we would win the match as we have experienced players."

'Inter was the best choice for me'

AFP, Milan

 Romelu Lukaku scored after just 21 seconds as he bagged a brace in a 4-1 thumping of Cagliari that fired Inter Milan into the last eight of the Italian Cup, while Lazio and Napoli are set for a quarter-final clash after easing past second-tier opposition.

Belgian Lukaku has looked a player reborn since moving to Italy and his double took his hot streak to six goals in his last four appearances in all competitions, with his Serie A tally standing at 14 in 19 games.

"Inter was the best choice for me, here I can grow as a player and help the club go after its goals," Lukaku told broadcaster RAI.

"I give everything for the team and that's how I play -- that's what the fans like."

The 26-year-old lashed home his opener with the match barely underway and then, after Borja Valero had made it 2-0 in the 22 minute, headed home his side's third from Nicolo Barella's corner just three minutes after the break as Antonio Conte's side ran riot at the San Siro.

Their were nerves among the home fans when Christian Oliva pulled one back for the Sardinians in the 73rd minute with a fierce drive, but Andrea Ranocchia headed in Cristiano Biraghi's corner to seal the win.



Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku celebrates after opening the scoring in just 21 seconds during their Italian Cup Round of 16 match against Cagliari at San Siro in Milan on Tuesday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Roger and Rafa come under fire

REUTERS, Undated

 Tempers flared at the Australian Open qualifying on Wednesday as players battled through another day of smoky air and two of the game's all-time greats were labelled "selfish" for not protesting about the conditions.

Qualifying was disrupted for a second successive day, firstly by bushfire smoke and later by a torrential rain storm which cleared the air but put an end to play at Melbourne Park.

Tournament organisers have been under fire for ploughing ahead with the qualifiers after an initial delay on Tuesday, with players complaining of breathing difficulties and one forced to retire from a match after suffering a



Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic shared a light moment as they played in the Rally for Relief charity match in support of the victims of the Australian bushfires in Melbourne yesterday. (Bottom) Davila Jakupovic retired from the Australian Open qualifiers match after suffering from horrendous coughing fit and breathing difficulties.

PHOTO: AFP



Spurs sign Fernandes on loan

REUTERS, Undated

Tottenham Hotspur have signed Benfica midfielder Gedson Fernandes on an 18-month loan deal with the option of making the transfer permanent, the Premier League club announced on Wednesday.

Fernandes, was a member of the Benfica squad last season that won the Portuguese Primeira Liga title.

The 21-year-old has also played twice for the Portugal senior team after making his debut in 2018 and has made more than 60 appearances for various age group teams, winning the Under-17 Euros in 2016.

The transfer could pave the way for the potential departure of Christian Eriksen - who has been linked with a move to Serie A side Inter Milan - before his contract expires at the end of the season.

Why do we need to wait for something bad to happen to do an action.

ELINA SVITOLINA
WORLD NUMBER FIVE

coughing fit.

The ill will spilled over into Wednesday, with Canadian world number 103 Brayden Schnur taking aim at 20-times Grand Slam champion Roger Federer and world number one Rafa Nadal for not taking a vocal stand for the lower-profile players in qualifying.

"It's got to come from the top guys - Roger and Rafa are a little bit selfish in thinking about themselves and their careers," Schnur told Australian Associated Press after winning his qualifier against Austrian Sebastian Ofner.

"Because they're near the end and all they're thinking about is their legacy and they're not thinking about the sport

itself and trying to do what's good for the sport - so those guys need to step up."

Schnur said he felt "super dryness" in his throat and that conditions were "100 percent not normal".

"They're just trying to shove us on the court because we're qualifiers."

France's Nicolas Mahut posted a picture of himself wearing a mask over his mouth and nose with the caption: "Ready for my first round."

Canada's Vasek Pospisil, a member of the ATP Player Council, tweeted: "It's time for a players' union. This is getting absurd."

Australia is experiencing one of its worst bushfire seasons on record, with

fires burning for months and killing 28 people, and razing forests and farmland the size of Bulgaria.

Tennis Australia said it would continue to monitor on-site data and consult their medical team, the local bureau of meteorology and government scientists to determine whether conditions were fit for play.

Scheduled horse race meetings in two separate Melbourne suburbs were also cancelled on Wednesday, governing body Racing Victoria said, "due to smoke haze and poor air quality".

Bushfire smoke has affected a number of Australia's elite sporting competitions including soccer, rugby league and cricket.