

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
South Africa v England
Fourth Test, Day 1
Live from 2:00pm
Pakistan v Bangladesh
First T20I
Live from 3:00pm

STAR SPORTS 3
ICC U-19s World Cup
Bangladesh v Pakistan
Live from 2:00pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
New Zealand v India
First T20I

Live from 1:30pm
Bundesliga
Dortmund v FC Koln
Live from 1:30am (Saturday)
SONY SIX & TEN 2
Australian Open
Live from 6:00am & 2:30pm

SOLSKJAER IN FIRING LINE

Manchester United played out the final stages of Wednesday's humiliating 2-0 defeat to Burnley in front of banks of empty seats, raising fresh questions over how long beleaguered boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer will survive. The United team that Solskjaer played in during the glory years of Alex Ferguson were famed for their great escapes but his young, jaded players are struggling to live up to the club's swashbuckling traditions. Solskjaer has now lost more Premier League games than he has won since being handed the job on a permanent basis in March after an exhilarating three-month stint as caretaker boss.



Bangladesh players leave the field dejectedly after suffering a 3-0 thrashing at the hands of Burundi in the second semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. (Inset) Nshimirimana Jospin is the architect of Bangladesh's demise, scoring all three of Burundi's goals in what was his second hat-trick of the tournament. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'They took their chances, we didn't'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Jamie Day said that goal-scoring ability, or lack thereof, was what made the difference in a 3-0 defeat at the hands of Burundi in the second semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup yesterday.

"Ability to take chances was the difference between the two sides. We played good football with good ball possession and created chances but Burundi scored from the opportunities they got while we didn't. That was the problem," said a gloomy Day during the post-match press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

Nshimirimana Jospin struck a hat-trick to take the match away from Bangladesh, whose half a dozen chances were either squandered or thwarted by Burundi goalkeeper Ndizeye Aime Fales.

"We did very well aside from not scoring goals. We conceded two goals in the last five minutes of the first half, which was disappointing.

"We played very well in the second half and got enough chances to score but unfortunately the players could not capitalise," said the 40-year-old.

Day went on to explain why Bangladesh conceded the first two goals.

"I think we played good for the first 40 minutes. Then we conceded twice. The midfielders gave away the ball, sloppy passes that were unnecessary. We gave Jospin too much time in the box. We got the same chances but could not score."

However, Day believes the scenario could have been different had Bangladesh availed the opportunities they created in the second half.

"If he [Saad Uddin] scored at the start of the second half, the scenario could have been different. I couldn't blame anyone if it was a 2-1 margin cause then we could have scored another before the game was finished with the third goal," continued Day, who blamed the domestic football structure for not properly grooming the forwards.

"If we want to continue to do better, we must start scoring goals. We got more chances than Burundi, who however scored three goals while we did not. The players were in one-on-one positions, had free headers and an open net but could not convert. It is disappointing finish," Day said.

"We need to re-structure the league. If we want to improve goal-scoring, the league structure needs to be changed. I personally believe two local players should be given chances along with two foreign players to bring the changes."

Wasteful booters fall in semis again

SPORTS REPORTER

Nshimirimana Jospin slammed his second hat-trick of the tournament to shatter Bangladesh's dream of playing the Bangabandhu Gold Cup final as the hosts were knocked out at the semifinal stage for the third consecutive time a 3-0 defeat at the hands of Burundi yesterday.

Jospin, who struck his first treble against Mauritius, made the difference between the two sides by scoring three goals while goalkeeper Ndizeye Aime Fales stood firm to deny Bangladesh in front of a 15,000-strong crowd at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The second semifinal was predicted to be a battle between Burundi's attacking forces and the Bangladesh defence, and it was the Burundi forwards who prevailed as a feeble Bangladesh backline was to blame for the first two goals.

However, coach Jamie Day's charges showed character in the second half but were unable to find a way past the brilliant Fales.

Day made two changes to the squad that beat Sri Lanka 3-0, drafting Jamal Bhuiyan and Raihan Hasan in place of Mahbubur Rahman Sufil and the suspended Tapu Barman respectively in a 4-2-3-1 formation with Matin

Mia as the lone striker. But the home side suffered a big blow after four minutes as Matin, who struck a brace against Sri Lanka, came off with a muscle cramp.

Striker Sufil came off the bench and had some sprints up front but he had hardly any impact except on one occasion. In the seventh minute, the Bashundhara forward put a defence-splitting through ball for Mohammad

Ibrahim inside the box, but the left-winger saw his shot to the near post well parried by Fales with right-winger Saad Uddin remaining unmarked at the far post.

The hosts tried to play pressing football to disrupt Burundi's build-up game, but the East African side almost broke the deadlock through a backline fumble but Jospin drove wide over advancing goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana in the eighth minute.

Jospin finally broke the shackles in the 43rd minute as the 18-year-old marksman, finding the Bangladesh defenders out of position, slotted home from inside the box off an Ngabonziza Blanchard cutback. Three

minutes later, Jospin doubled the score with a spectacular header off a Blanchard cross from the right side.

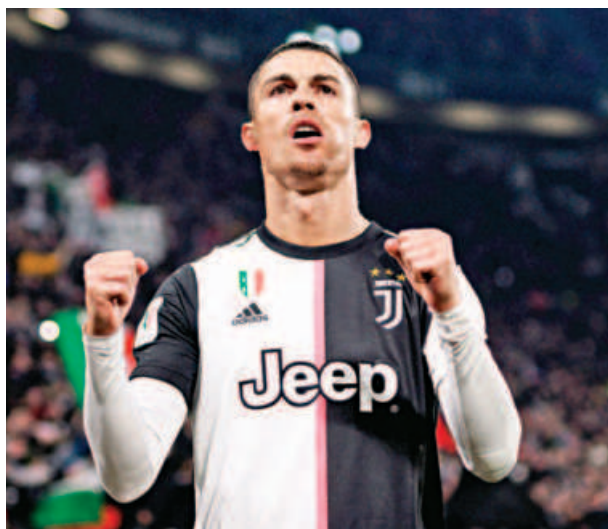
After resumption, the hosts went on all-out attack and created some good chances but poor finishing by the forwards - for long a thorn in Bangladesh football -- and some good saves from Fales kept Bangladesh from recovering any ground.

Saad failed to beat Fales in a one-on-one situation in the 49th minute before a Sufil header was saved at the cost of a corner in the 62nd minute. In the next minute, Riyadul Hasan was denied by the woodwork and Saad headed wide again in the 67th minute. Fales made a spectacular save at the cost of another corner, diving to his left to deny Jamal, before substitute Rakibul Hasan floated over the crosspiece inside the six-yard box in the 78th minute.

While Bangladesh repeatedly squandered chances, Burundi mounted sporadic attacks and completed the rout from a counter with Jospin completing the treble in the 79th minute to raise his goal tally to seven in three matches.

Bangladesh had two more chances when Riyadul saw his close-range header gripped by Fales and Saad was denied by the woodwork in the 90th minute.

BANGLADESH 0 - 3 BURUNDI
(Jospin 43' 45+2', 79')



Ronaldo fires Juve into semis

AFP, Turin

Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri complimented Cristiano Ronaldo's mother as the Portuguese star extended his scoring streak in a 3-1 win over Roma to advance to the Italian Cup semifinals on Wednesday.

The Portuguese star picked up a Gonzalo Higuain cross after 26 minutes, finishing off from an angle in the Allianz Stadium.

It was the 34-year-old's 12th goal in eight consecutive games in which he has played in all competitions for the Turin giants but his first in the Italian Cup.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has also scored seven goals in four matches played in 2020.

"I believe that the compliments should be made to his mother," said Sarri of Ronaldo who has now scored in 15 different club competitions throughout his career.

"He is in super form physically. In terms of explosiveness he is doing well, he takes great care of the details.

"It is difficult to improve on an individual level. We are talking about one of the greatest of all time and I would like to help him win a sixth Ballon d'Or.

Rodrigo Bentancur added a second goal after 38 minutes with defender Leonardo Bonucci nodding in a third just before the break.

Julio pleasantly surprised

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Former Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar was left pleasantly surprised by the technical proficiency of age-group goalkeepers in Bangladesh after a session working with a number of goalkeepers at the Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF's) artificial turf yesterday.

Cesar, who represented the Selecao 87 times, talked to current goalkeeping coaches, goalkeepers playing in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and also some national team goalies during the session.

"He wanted to know about how trainings are being undertaken. He talked about maintaining concentration and staying relaxed under pressure," BFF's coach education coordinator informed before adding that Cesar felt that it was time to update the warm-up regimen of goalkeepers instead of following the classic methodology.

The women's game in the country is set to take a step forward with the introduction of the women's league and Cesar was astounded by the age-level players. The female goalkeepers all gathered around the former Brazilian shot-stopper to learn from his wisdom and their technique was keenly observed by Cesar. During the vibrant session he instructed them to keep working hard and to reach out to him on any matter regarding goalkeeping techniques. During the press conference, Cesar reiterated that he was surprised by the young women goalkeepers in the session.

"I was surprised with their technicality. When I saw them make some moves at the goal line, I was positively surprised. It is very nice that so many girls want to become

goalkeepers. It's important for FIFA to develop women's football and so there should be focus on improving," the Brazilian said.

Lack of height is an issue for goalkeepers in the region but Cesar was convinced by the young footballers he worked with. "For the goalkeepers of our time, we needed to be tall. I'm 1.86 metres so I need to be an example for them since I'm not tall. I told them that 'guys, you need to be strong in your legs because the goal is big and if you are not tall enough then you can't save the goal [without leg strength]. But they said 'no Julio, we are strong in the legs and we work'. If you can save then it doesn't matter if you are tall or not."

He reminisced on the highs and lows of his international and club careers, reflecting on the scene in the dressing room in the aftermath of Brazil's 7-1 defeat in the 2014 World Cup.

"Each player tried to stay quiet and some players cried, one of them being

me," he said and cited his time at treble-winning Inter Milan as 'the best moment' of his career.

The Brazilian spent a day full of activities yesterday, starting with a visit to the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi road 32, accompanied by Father of The Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's grandson Radwan Mujib Siddiq.

"I visited the father of the nation's house and it was a very emotional visit. I didn't know anything about the father of the nation but now I will spend some hours to try and understand many things about him and your country," he told reporters during his visit to Road 32.

After his session with the footballers, he met up with the members of the Swadhin Bangla Football Team before heading to the Bangabandhu National Stadium to watch Bangladesh take on Burundi in the semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.



Former Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar had a vibrant time sharing his wisdom with the age-group-level goalkeepers under BFF's guidance during a session at the BFF Artificial Turf yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Kyrgios suffers fright, Halep sails

AFP, Melbourne

Flamboyant Nick Kyrgios suffered a fright before reaching the Australian Open third round on Thursday as the weather-disrupted tournament faced a new challenge: dirty rain, which left courts muddy and unplayable.

After a day of clean-up operations and delays, Australia's Kyrgios fought his way past Frenchman Gilles Simon in four sets, and Wimbledon champion Simona Halep stamped her class with a win over Britain's Harriet Dart.

Kyrgios, increasingly popular with home fans after spearheading fundraising efforts for Australia's bushfire crisis, was cruising at two sets up when he dropped the third set and with it, his composure.

But just when it looked like he would suffer one of his trademark implosions, he rallied for a 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 victory. In the women's draw, Halep beat Dart 6-2, 6-4, while Belinda Bencic knocked out former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko - who was playing despite the sudden death of her father this month.

Two-time Major winner Garbine Muguruza, who scaled Mount Kilimanjaro in the off-season as she searches for a return to form, dispatched home hope Ajla Tomljanovic 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

Barca, Madrid survive a scare

AFP, Madrid

La Liga's heavyweights were both given a scare by third tier opponents in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday as Barcelona needed two late goals to beat Ibiza and Real Madrid dug deep for victory over Unionistas de Salamanca.

Barca sit 44 places ahead of Ibiza and Madrid 56 above Unionistas but the lowly duo both came close to extraordinary upsets, only for Ibiza to lose 2-1 and Unionistas 3-1 in front of their jubilant home fans.

With Lionel Messi rested and not even on the bench, Antoine Griezmann proved the saviour for Barcelona, scoring twice in the second half, including a 94th-minute winner, after Pep Caballe had given the hosts a fairytale lead at Can Misses.