

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
Pakistan v Bangladesh
First Test, Day 2
Live from 11:00am
STAR SPORTS 3
ICC U-19s World Cup
Third Place Play-off

Pakistan v New Zealand
Live from 2:00pm
STAR SPORTS 1
New Zealand v India
Second ODI
Live from 8:00am

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Everton v Crystal Palace
Live from 6:20pm
Brighton v Watford
Live from 11:20pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Bundesliga
Freiburg v Hoffenheim
Live from 8:15pm
Bayer Leverkusen v Dortmund
Live from 11:15pm

TEN 2
Serie A
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Live from 8:00pm
Verona v Juventus
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Cricket League
Four-day Match, Day 2

East Zone v South Zone
Venue: Cox's Bazar

Central Zone v North Zone
Venue: Sylhet



Lionel Messi cut a forlorn figure after Barcelona were dumped out by Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey quarterfinal at the San Mames Stadium on Thursday. (Bottom) Real Madrid players were equally frustrated as they suffered the same fate following a defeat against Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu on the same night.

PHOTO: AFP

Messi frustrated

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi admitted in December he could soon retire but Barcelona's frenzied attempts to make the most of his final years appear to be having the opposite effect.

As Athletic Bilbao's players celebrated Inaki Williams' 94th-minute winner at San Mames on Thursday night, Messi stood still in the centre circle, hands on his hips and staring down at the ground in front.

He had missed a chance to win it, his shot saved by Unai Simon, just moments before Williams' flicked header crept inside the post to send Barca out of the Copa del Rey before the semi-finals for the first time in 10 years.

Messi has been the inspiration and saviour of this Barcelona team, his finger prints on their string of La Liga titles more than anyone else's.

But as Bilbao proved, when Messi misses, Barca are there to be hit, their insecurities known and ready to be exposed.

The political turmoil now engulfing the club stems in part from desperation, not to waste Messi's final years or at least to be seen to be trying to make the best of them.

He will be 33 in June and said at the Ballon d'Or presentation retirement was "approaching" but a sense of time running out has long lingered at Camp Nou.

When Messi won the Champions League in 2015, aged 27, the assumption was there would be more but instead there has been only disappointment, three quarter-finals and one semi-final, the last two tournaments ending in capitulation.

The fear of a repeat and another year

squandered was instrumental in the decision to sack Ernesto Valverde last month, even if players insisted losses to Roma and Liverpool were not down to their coach.

After the clumsy appointment of Quique Setien, in which Xavi Hernandez was approached but not persuaded, and then a botched January transfer window, when strikers were targeted but not signed, frustration grew.

In an interview with Diario Sport on Tuesday, the club's sporting director Eric Abidal then called out Xavi and shifted responsibility onto the players.

As the most powerful among them, Messi was implicated most.

He hit back, insisting "everyone should take responsibility for their actions" and that not naming names "tarnished all the players".

In the middle of it all, Setien is trying to usher in a new style of play mid-season, more in-keeping with the club's DNA and better suited to Messi.

Setien said on Wednesday his "obligation" was to focus on football but that has been a concern as well, two defeats in his opening six games leaving Barcelona out of the cup and three points behind in the league.

A clause in Messi's contract means he could leave for free at the end of the season but the situation is likely to need to deteriorate further for that to become a realistic possibility.

No club in Europe can offer guaranteed success in the Champions League and Messi said in October he was against uprooting his family and three children from the city he has called home for close to two decades.

Basques dump Real, Barca

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona and Real Madrid both crashed out of the Copa del Rey on Thursday night as Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad pulled off a shock Basque double to reach the semi-finals.

Barca were beaten 1-0 by Bilbao at San Mames, where Inaki Williams headed in a dramatic 93rd-minute winner, after La Real had seen off Madrid 4-3 in a seven-goal thriller at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Two sensational upsets added another layer of excitement to a competition that has been full of surprises this season, with Bilbao and Real Sociedad joining Granada and second division Mirandes in an unfamiliar line-up for the draw on Friday.

"There have been some surprise results," said Williams. "Sometimes you just have to have faith and heart."

Quique Setien has lost two of his opening six games in charge, with a Champions League tie against Napoli fast-approaching. The fall-out from another failure in Europe would prove longer-lasting.

"We deserved to go through," said Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu. "But the ambition and attitude I saw on the field

encourages me for the league and the Champions League. Success can come."

For a rotated Madrid side, who sit top of La Liga, the loss against Real Sociedad was perhaps less damaging, even if they conceded as many goals in 69 minutes as they had in their last 11 matches put together.

Martin Odegaard, on loan at La Real but allowed to face his parent club, found the opener before the superb Alexander Isak hit two to give Real Sociedad a remarkable 3-0 lead.

Marcelo and Rodrygo both scored late in the second half and while

Mikel Merino added a fourth for the visitors, a Nacho Fernandez header set up a wild final three minutes, in which Andoni Gorosabel was also sent off.

Ten-man Real Sociedad held on for a superb win to progress to the last four while Madrid's run without success in Spain's domestic cup extends to six years.

"It hurts, we have to be honest, nobody likes a defeat," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

One consolation might have been the display of the 21-year-old Odegaard, who is beginning to live up to the hype after signing for

Madrid aged 15.

On loan at Sociedad, the plan was for Odegaard to stay one more year at Anoeta but this glittering display, that earned him a standing ovation from the home fans when he went off, may well persuade Madrid to recall him early.

Their 21-game unbeaten streak comes to an end after an uncharacteristically careless performance in which a rotated side highlighted the importance of the likes of Casemiro, Raphael Varane and Thibaut Courtois.

Courtois' replacement Alphonse Areola was at fault for at least one of the goals while Marcelo was typically unpredictable at left-back, a position the more dependable Ferland Mendy has made his own in recent weeks.

Eden Hazard is training again but the wait for his return goes on while Gareth Bale was again left out of the squad completely.

Yet Zidane's changes should take nothing away from Real Sociedad, who showed why they were pushing for a place in La Liga's top four earlier this season, before a dip in form has seen them slip to eighth.

"It is the second time in 32 years we've reached the semis," said their coach Imanol Alguacil. "We were convinced we could do it. But we haven't achieved anything yet."



Taguchi to train swimmers

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) is likely to appoint Japanese coach Takahiro Taguchi to prepare swimmers for proposed Bangabandhu Age-Group International Swimming Championships under a project of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Taguchi, who coached Bangladeshi swimmers in late 1980s, worked as an advisor of Bangladesh Swimming team during the 13th South Asian Games in Nepal in December last year where the Bangladeshi swimmers managed only three silver and

eight bronze medals.

"He came here yesterday [Thursday] and we will sit with JICA on February 10 to confirm his appointment even though JICA is interested in assigning Taguchi to conduct training camp every alternative month for a period which hasn't been finalised yet," BSF general secretary BM Saif said, adding that they are also looking for a permanent coach for the swimmers.

BSF's plan is to organise the competition in June with participation of swimmers from India, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The federation has placed a budget of Tk 2.74 crore for the event, with the budget awaiting government's approval.

18-yard box comes up short

REUTERS, Undated

A Brazilian cup tie between Uniao and Atletico Goianiense was delayed in unusual circumstances when officials were forced to redraw the penalty box after players noted the 18-yard line at one end of the ground was around 2.5 metres short.

Uniao groundsmen used green paint to cover the erroneous line and paint a proper one just few minutes before the game began.

However, seconds after kick-off the game was halted as players complained they were confused by the old and new lines, according to Brazil's globoesporte.com.

Thursday night's game was delayed for a couple of minutes while groundsmen at the fourth division club took the field again with brushes to touch up the proper dimensions.

Atletico won 1-0 to progress to the second round where they will play Santa Cruz.

Ibrahimovic return adds spice to Milan derby

AFP, Milan



Zlatan Ibrahimovic's return to AC Milan will add spice to the city derby against Inter Milan on Sunday with the Swede looking to thwart Antonio Conte's side from keeping pace with Serie A leaders Juventus.

Ibrahimovic played his first Milan derby as an Inter player 13 years ago, while his last was for rivals AC Milan in May 2012, when he scored a double in a 4-2 defeat.

Ibrahimovic was the top scorer that season with 28 goals but Milan lost the Serie A title to Conte's Juventus, the first in the Turin giants' current run of eight Serie A titles.

The 38-year-old's return to Milan -- who he helped to their last Serie A title in 2011 -- has proved a boost with his side now eighth, seven points adrift of the Champions League berths.

Milan were on a three-match winning run with Ibrahimovic on the pitch but were held 1-1 by Hellas Verona last weekend with the Swede out with flu.

AC Milan director Zvonimir Boban praised Ibrahimovic's impact, insisting the Swede was pushing to be ready for "a unique derby".

Ibrahimovic meanwhile posted on Twitter a video of himself roaring,



with the caption: "Lions don't sound like humans."

Stefano Pioli's Milan come up against an Inter who have been transformed since Conte's arrival last summer are just three points behind Juventus, who travel to Hellas Verona.

Milan lost the reverse fixture 2-0 in September under Marco Giampaolo, who was sacked after just seven games.

Last summer Inter signed Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez, the latter on loan, from Manchester United.

Conte again raided the Premier League during the winter break

bringing in Christian Eriksen, Ashley Young and Victor Moses.

"He'll be more used to this type of game, I'm just starting," said former Tottenham midfielder Eriksen of Ibrahimovic, who said he was relishing his first 'Derby della Madonnina'.

"I've seen it on TV in the past but playing now will be very different," the Dane told Gazzetta Dello Sport.

"Compared to London, I expect a different atmosphere, here the whole stadium sings, there will be so much noise, it will be beautiful."

Bangabandhu Cup Golf to offer \$400k

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 is poised to become the richest professional golf event in Bangladesh with a total prize purse set to increase to 400,000 dollars, according to Asian Tour.

The sixth edition of the full-fledged Asian Tour event, which was first held in Bangladesh in 2015 when the prize purse was 300,000 dollars, will be held at the Kurmitola Golf Club from March 25 to 28.

General Aziz Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff, Bangladesh Army and the President of Bangladesh Golf Federation told AsianTour.com: "Bangladesh is celebrating the 100th

birthday of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 2020. The whole nation is incredibly excited and as part of that BGF would like to organise the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 in a befitting manner to show profound respect and love for the Father of the Nation."

Cho Minn Thant, Commissioner and CEO, Asian Tour said: "2020 will be our sixth consecutive year playing in Bangladesh and we are delighted that the prize purse has been elevated to record level. As the richest sporting event in Bangladesh, I'm confident the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 will continue to provide unveil more hidden talents in the region while promoting the sport in Bangladesh."