

What to WATCH

GTV & STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
One-off Test, Day 1
Live from 9:20am

STAR SPORTS 1
New Zealand v India
First Test, Day 2
Live from 4:30am
SONY SIX
Sri Lanka v West Indies

First ODI
Live from 10:15am
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Chelsea v Tottenham
Live from 6:20pm

Sheffield v Brighton & Hove
Live from 8:50pm
Leicester v Man City
Live from 11:15pm
TEN 2
Serie A

Bologna v Udinese
Live from 8:00pm
Spal v Juventus
Live from 11:00pm
Fiorentina v AC Milan
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS 2
ICC Women's T20 World Cup
Thailand v West Indies
Live from 1:00pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
One-off Test, Day 1
Time: 9:20am

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
Bangladesh Cricket League

Five-day Match, Day 1
Time: 9:30am
South Zone v East Zone

Venue: Zahir Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chattogram

Bangladesh Premier League
Brothers Union v Abahani
Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

Women's league to start with players left out

SPORTS REPORTER



The women's football league is all set to return today after a seven-year gap, but a group of players believe their football career is already coming to an end due to Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) decision of not allowing their team in the league.

The league will kick off through the match between Bashundhara Kings and Begum Anwara Sporting Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur at 3:00pm.

The game's local governing body managed to convince seven teams including Bashundhara Kings to take part in the league as established clubs such as Abahani, Mohammedan, Sheikh Jamal, Brothers Union, Wari Club and Victoria Club refused to participate due to either financial constraints or unsuitable time of the league.

In absence of 2011 edition champions Sheikh Jamal and 2013 edition champions Abahani, the league is expected to be a one-sided affair, with Bashundhara Kings boasting 19 national players of different age-group teams being tipped as favourites.

Among the other teams, only

FC Uttar Bango have four national players while the rest are relying on their respective local players, leaving at least 25 national age-group players out of the league.

Reviving women's league was a long-time demand from stakeholders, with the intention of giving age-group players platform to shine and increase their competitiveness, but the purpose has seemingly hit a roadblock even before the ball gets rolling as most of the BFF-run training camp players are not getting an opportunity in the league.

"Some of the girls could not find teams due to the absence of Bangladesh Premier League clubs and we can't force any participating team to sign up those players," BFF women's committee chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron said at a press briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

In March 2019, the BFF started licencing of the clubs which wanted to participate in women's league by setting some criteria such as full-time general secretary or CEO, training facilities, qualified coaches, club secretariats and adequate financial backup. But the game's local governing body eventually allowed most of the clubs in the league without meeting those criteria.

The BFF suspended Swapnachura

and Akkelpur FA just a few days before the start of the league fearing unwanted incidents during the league but the players yesterday burst into tears in front of the BFF House after their failure to be part of the league.

"Having overcome social barriers, we came here to play in women's league but we are not getting the opportunity. If we return home without playing the league, our football career will come to an end because the parents will not allow us to play football and people of society will also joke with us," said Swapnachura and Akkelpur midfielder Nazma Akter.

"It is really painful for us as we can't play football. We came to this stage by working hard as it is very tough to play football ignoring social taboos. Our dream has shattered but what was our fault?" said Subarna Akter Ema, who, along with nine others players, went to the BFF to meet Kiron but were not able to reach her.

Kiron, however, told reporters that those girls will be given priority during the BFF trial when forming age-group teams.

Cholo Kheli Trust, BFF women's league's strategic partner for the next three years, roped in Sher-e-Bangla Foundation which will sponsor the league titled Tricotex Women's Football League.



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Diogo Jota celebrates one of his three goals in their Europa League fixture against Espanyol at the Molineux Stadium on Thursday. (Inset) Frankfurt's Japanese midfielder Daichi Kamada, seen here sliding the ball past Salzburg goalkeeper Cican Stankovic, also got three goals on the night.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

Thailand to be China's home venue

AFP, Hong Kong

China will play their 2022 World Cup qualifiers against Maldives and Guam behind closed doors in Thailand because of the coronavirus, the Chinese Football Association said Friday.

China will play the Maldives on March 26 and Guam on March 31 at Chang Arena, in Buriram.

The Thai government asked that both games take place without any fans because of the coronavirus, the CFA said.

The Guam match was originally supposed to take place there, and is nominally a home match for them.

China are in danger of missing out on the Qatar 2022 World Cup because they are second in qualifying Group A, eight points behind leaders Syria.

Only one team automatically goes through to the next qualifying stage for Qatar.

Handball goalkeeper meets tragic death

SPORTS REPORTER

National handball team's goalkeeper Sohanur Rahman met a tragic death in a road accident in Kusthia yesterday. He was 21.

The promising player, along with one of his cousins, was travelling on a motorbike when an unlicensed three-wheeler (locally called Nasiman) hit them from the opposite direction, leaving them critically injured, said SM Arifuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station.

Both were rushed to the Kusthia General Hospital where Sohanur's companion breathed his last a few hours later. Sohanur was being brought to Dhaka but he, too, succumbed to his injuries on the way in Rajbari at around 4:00pm.

Sohanur, who represented Bangladesh in the South Asian Games in Nepal in December last year, has played in different age-level tournaments and participated in different national competitions in the past six years.

National team's coach Kamrul Islam bemoaned the tragic demise of the promising youngster. "Sohanur was a promising player. He was 6ft 2inch tall which was a great advantage for him. He had a great future ahead of him," the coach said.



SOHANUR RAHMAN

Wins for Inter, Arsenal but Man Utd held

REUTERS, Zurich



Inter Milan midfielder Christian Eriksen scored his first goal for the club since last month's move from Tottenham Hotspur to set up a 2-0 win at Ludogorets Razgrad in their Europa League last 32, first leg on Thursday.

Getafe pulled off a surprise 2-0 home win over last year's Champions League semi-finalists Ajax Amsterdam, while Manchester United were held 1-1 at Club Brugge in wet and windy conditions.

Wolverhampton Wanderers' Diogo Jota scored a second successive hat-trick in the competition to lead his side to a 4-0 victory over Espanyol and Arsenal won 1-0 at Olympiakos Piraeus with a late Alexandre Lacazette goal.

Inter were frustrated for more than an hour by their Bulgarian opponents until Denmark playmaker Eriksen fired a low shot into the net from just outside the penalty area in the 71st minute.

"I think he can do much better

than what we've seen today," said Inter coach Antonio Conte. Substitute Romelu Lukaku sealed Inter's win with a stoppage-time penalty, the Belgian striker's 22nd goal of the season, after Anicet Andrianantenaina was judged to have handled following a VAR review.

United were quickly in trouble in Belgium when Emmanuel Dennis lobbed the ball over Sergio Romero to give Brugge a 15th-minute lead, but Anthony Martial levelled in the 36th minute when he raced through to place a shot past Simon Mignolet.

United, with new midfield signing Bruno Fernandes on the bench, struggled to create many chances in the difficult conditions.

At Molineux, Jota opened his account in the first half for Wolves when he poked in from close range and fellow Portuguese Ruben Neves volleyed the second early in the second half.

Jota fired home the third from Matt Doherty's pass before completing his hat-trick with a strike from the edge of the box.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Bukayo Saka combined to set

up an easy finish for Frenchman Lacazette to score the winner for Arsenal in the 81st minute and they nearly had a second when Sokrakis Papastathopoulos headed against the woodwork.

Brazilian pair Deyverson and Kenedy scored in each half for Getafe against Ajax. Deyverson finished off a well-worked free kick to celebrate his European debut for the Liga club with a goal after 38 minutes and Kenedy broke clear to add a second in the last minute.

There was a remarkable comeback by Rangers who scored three goals in the last half hour, including a brace from Ianis Hagi, to beat Braga 3-2 after trailing 2-0 to the Portuguese visitors.

Daichi Kamada scored a hat-trick to help Eintracht Frankfurt to a 4-1 win over coach Adi Huetter's former club RB Salzburg. Viktor Kovalenko grabbed the winner as Shakhtar Donetsk beat Benfica 2-1 and Sporting defeated Istanbul Basaksehir 3-1. Yousef En-Nesyri equalised as Sevilla rescued a 1-1 draw at Cluj after Ciprian Deac put the Romanians ahead with a penalty.

Jamieson stars on debut

AFP, Wellington



The towering Kyle Jamieson had a dream Test debut for New Zealand with three wickets, including the prized scalp of Virat Kohli, winning glowing praise from India on day one of the first Test in Wellington on Friday.

India were struggling at 122 for five when rain swept in at tea to wash out the final session, after the 2.03 metre (6ft 8in) Jamieson had taken three for 38.

Jamieson, who further repaid the selectors' faith with an excellent catch in the deep to remove Agarwal, was called in to the New Zealand squad as cover during Neil Wagner's paternity leave.

While not as quick as Wagner, the 25-year-old used his height to extract extra bounce that troubled the Indian top order.

"It's still trying to sink in. The last couple of weeks have been surreal," Jamieson said of his sudden rise, which began with his maiden appearance for New Zealand in a one-dayer against India this month.

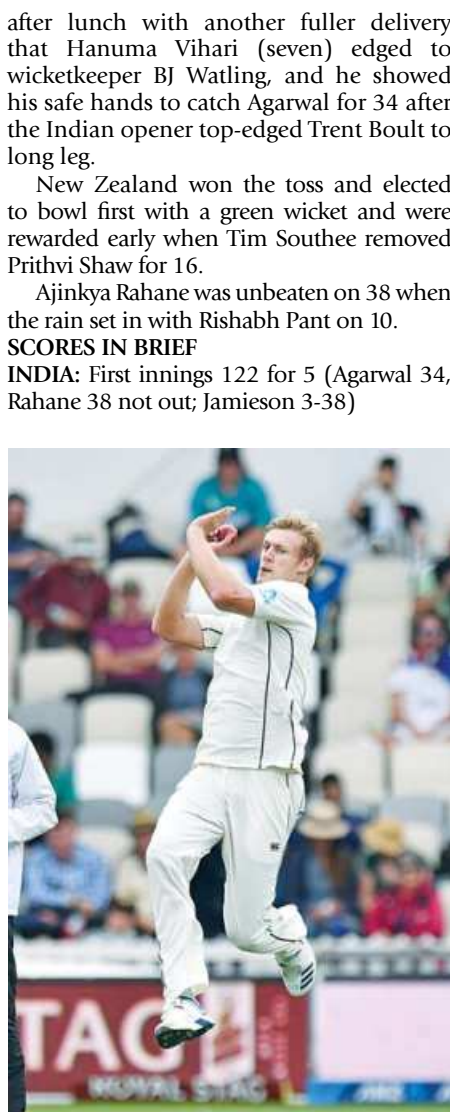
He described capturing the key wicket of Kohli, the world's top-ranked batsman for two as "massive".

It continued a below-par tour of New Zealand for the Indian captain whose top score was 51 in the first one-day international, and five times he has failed to reach 20.

Jamieson removed Cheteshwar Pujara for 11 and then outsmarted Kohli in a nine-ball burst before lunch.

He kept the Indian skipper on the back foot for a few deliveries before pitching one up, wide of off stump, which drew Kohli forward and the ball was nicked to first slip where Ross Taylor clasped the catch in his fingertips.

Jamieson added to his wicket tally



JAMIESON 3 FOR 38

WOMEN'S WORLD T20

India stun Australia

AFP, Sydney



Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav bowled India to an upset 17-run win over defending champions Australia in the opening game of the women's Twenty20 World Cup in Sydney on Friday.

India were restricted to 132 for four off their 20 overs before a half-century from Australian opener Alyssa Healy appeared to have the home team on track for victory.

But then Yadav was brought into the attack. She bagged the crucial wickets of Healy, Rachael Haynes and Ellyse Perry, and was desperately unlucky not to grab a hat-trick in her match-winning 4-19.

Australia won the toss at a near-full Sydney Showgrounds and elected to bowl.

Opener Shafali Verma powered India to 40 without loss after four overs, but the wheels came off with three quick wickets falling as the momentum shifted.

Verma made batting look easy as she plundered four fours off the world's top T20 bowler Megan Schutt in a single over. But Jess Jonassen then pounced, nabbing Smriti Mandhana lbw for 10 before Perry tempted Verma into another big hit and she was caught at midwicket for 29.

Kaur lasted just five balls before being stumped as India lost three wickets for six runs.

Jemimah Rodrigues and the experienced Deepti Sharma steadied the ship with a 53-run stand but they could only reach 132.

Australia made a steady start, putting on 30 runs in the opening five overs before fast bowler Shikha Pandey removed Beth Mooney.

Healy kept the pressure on with a flurry of boundaries. She brought up her 10th half-century with a six off Yadav, who promptly got her out next ball.

Yadav then tempted Haynes down the pitch and she was stumped before Perry was bowled for a golden duck.

Yadav was on a hat-trick and Jess Jonassen got an edge only for wicketkeeper Tanya Bhatia to fluff the catch, depriving her of glory.

But she soon struck again to snare Jonassen and Australia could find no way back.



Clodaldo stands next to Pele's statue unveiled on the 50th anniversary of the 1970 World Cup victory at the Seleccion Museum in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Pele's statue unveiled

REUTERS, Rio De Janeiro

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) unveiled a statue of Pele at its headquarters on Thursday, the first of a series of events to commemorate June's 50th anniversary of the team's third World Cup triumph.

Pele, who will be 80 in October and finds it difficult to walk, was not present at the ceremony in the CBF's museum but had been given a preview of the statue which he declared "perfect".

Jairzinho, Clodoaldo and Brito were among members of the 1970 team present at the ceremony, along with current Brazil coach Tite.

The 1970 Brazil side, led by Pele and

featuring names such as Gerson, Tostao, Rivelino and Carlos Alberto, is frequently rated the greatest team of all time. They won all seven of their matches in Mexico, culminating with a 4-1 over Italy in the final at the Aztec stadium.

The life-size statue of Pele, dressed in the strip worn by the 1970 team, bore a close resemblance to the former Santos and New York Cosmos striker, unlike many of the statues of famous footballers unveiled recently around the globe.

Statues of Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Northern Ireland's George Best have been ridiculed by fans while one of Zlatan Ibrahimovic in Malmo was vandalised by Malmo fans after the Swede acquired a stake in rival club Hammarby.