

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 2

ICC Women's T20 World Cup
South Africa v Thailand
Live from 10:00am
England v Pakistan
Live from 2:00pm

STAR SPORTS 1

New Zealand v India
Second Test, Day 1
Live from 4:30am (Saturday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League

Norwich City v Leicester
Live from 1:00am (Saturday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Bundesliga
Dusseldorf v Hertha Berlin
Live from 1:16am (Saturday)

SHARAPOVA A CHAMPION, SAYS DJOKOVIC

Novak Djokovic hailed Maria Sharapova as a "legend" after the Russian announced her retirement at the age of 32 on Wednesday. Five-time Grand Slam champion and former World No. 1 Sharapova called time on her career after losing a long-term battle with shoulder trouble having amassed a total of 36 WTA titles, spending 21 weeks on top of the rankings. "Her impact on the sport, not just women's tennis, but tennis in general, was great. It still is great," said Djokovic on Wednesday. "She's a very smart girl, someone that I know very well for a long time. She has the mind of a champion, someone that never gives up. For someone that has won five Grand Slams and has been No. 1 of the world, a legend of the sport. She should be proud of everything she has achieved." --AFP



Kevin de Bruyne played out of position as Pep Guardiola selected him to lead the line against Real Madrid, but the Belgian put in a masterful display, picking up an assist to bring his team level at the Bernabeu before firing home from the spot to make it 2-1 in their Champions League Round of 16 first leg clash on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

City silence Bernabeu with 2-1 win

AFP, Madrid

Kevin De Bruyne orchestrated a dramatic Manchester City comeback on Wednesday as they stunned Real Madrid 2-1 at the Bernabeu to put one foot in the Champions League quarterfinals.

Madrid looked on course after Isco's smart finish early in the second half, but De Bruyne teed up Gabriel Jesus in the 78th minute and then tucked away a penalty five minutes later.

A pulsating finish saw Sergio Ramos sent off for preventing Jesus from going clear and Madrid's captain will now be banned for the second leg at the Etihad Stadium on March 17.

City's two away goals will make them favourites to go through, even if manager Pep Guardiola was quick to discourage complacency.

"It's still not over," he said. "If there is one team that can overcome this it is Real Madrid with their experience and their history."

"We know the situation," said Real manager Zinedine Zidane. "We have to go there and win."

Madrid have now won one of their last five, with the Clasico in La Liga to come on Sunday.

"We are on a bad run but we have to get ourselves out of it," said Zidane. "Sunday is a chance to change."

Guardiola sprung a surprise by picking De Bruyne up front and

leaving Raheem Sterling, Sergio Aguero and Fernandinho all on the bench.

"We played without a proper striker because of the way they defend," said Guardiola. "They are so aggressive down the middle and when that happens you have to make the pitch wide."

Guardiola insisted on Tuesday that Manchester City's two-year Champions League ban, pending appeal, imposed by UEFA for breaching financial fair play rules would not act as a spur for his players.

But it was on the minds of travelling fans, who were singing against European football's governing body from almost the first minute.



Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos was shown a late red card -- his 26th -- meaning he will miss the second leg. PHOTO: AFP

Motijheel clubs in crisis

ANISUR RAHMAN



With state-owned BJMC already withdrawing its team from the upcoming Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) citing a financial crisis, other outfits based in Motijheel and Arambagh's Club Para, are facing similar problems in signing players in the ongoing transfer market.

The BFF opened the BCL transfer window on Feb 10 after getting the nod from all 14 participants except Team BJMC. However, four clubs based in Motijheel are struggling to manage funds after RAB raids closed down illegal casinos across the Club Para last year.

Dhaka Wanderers, Youngmen's Fakirerpool and Victoria SC are all set to play the BCL but have been closed since last September following their involvement with casinos. Wari Club, another participant, were not involved with illegal casinos but their indoor games of cards and houses remain closed since the raids.

Although some clubs were hesitant to take part in the BCL due to financial crisis, they wanted to repair the damage caused to their image. Now, they are struggling to manage funds ahead of the tournament in March.

"Everything happened in the past. We are ready to take part in BCL but are facing financial problems. We had run the club before through donations and earnings from indoor games, but this time we are trying to convince club members to raise the required funds," Wanderers executive member Kamal Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Our main problem is finding a space for players' accommodation because no houseowner wants to rent to 30 to 35 footballers," Hossain added. "We want to request the concerned authorities to open parts of clubs to accommodate players and help us reduce expenses."

Meanwhile, Wari Club has struggled to form a team. "We are in deep trouble because we don't have any income. We are begging for money. Before, whatever we earned from housing, we gave away to players. But now we don't have any income," said general secretary Shamsul Alam Anu.

"We confirmed some players but we can't pay for the full contract. We appealed to the BFF to pay us Tk 10 lakh in advance to sign players. If I can't manage funds, I will resign," Anu said, urging the government to show them a way to run the club before the 122-year-old club is destroyed.

Victoria SC joint secretary AKM Nuruzzaman said that club members were trying to raise funds to form a football squad for the BCL.

"The club can't afford to form a squad. We are going to form mediocre squad for survival. Former footballers should also come forward and help clubs," said Zaman.

All clubs except Fakirerpool have collected transfer forms from the BFF, lending strength to rumours that they may also pull out of the league.

"BCL activities have not started yet and I am ill. The doctor advised complete bedrest. After recovering, I will talk to you," Fakirerpool general secretary Sabbir Hossain told The Daily Star through SMS.

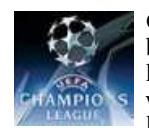
Lyon midfielder Lucas Tousart celebrates after scoring the only goal in their Champions League Round of 16 first leg against Juventus, who fired blanks at the Groupama Stadium on Wednesday and must now overturn a 1-0 deficit.



PHOTO: TWITTER

Juventus fall at Lyon

AFP, Lyon



Cristiano Ronaldo drew a blank as Lucas Tousart goal handed Lyon a surprise 1-0 win over Juventus in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie in France on Wednesday.

Tousart netted in the 31st minute to give Lyon a lead to defend when they head to Turin for the return on March 17.

They then survived late pressure to claim their finest European result since defeating Manchester City in last season's group stage.

"It was a top-class first-half performance from us. It was much harder in the second half, but I was happy with how we hung in

there," said Lyon coach Rudi Garcia. "I said to the boys that when you're at home in the first leg it's very important not to concede, and now we need to go and score there. We must remain humble, it's only half-time."

Maurizio Sarri's side have genuine ambitions of lifting the trophy, but they could not claim a precious away goal.

"In the first half it was not the Juve that we know. We didn't get going in attack. I am struggling to understand certain things," said Sarri, who thought his team could have had two penalties.

"We didn't do enough given this was a Champions League match but fortunately we still have 90 minutes to turn it around."

SHORT CORNER

Chattogram, Barishal move into boys' Gold Cup final

Chattogram and Barishal Divisions moved into the final of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman National (U-17) Gold Cup football tournament with wins in their semifinals at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Chattogram beat Mymensingh 4-3 on penalties while Barishal beat Khulna 2-0.

In the semifinals of the Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib National (U-17) Gold Cup tournament, Khulna division beat Chattogram 4-1 to set up a final against Dhaka Division, who beat Rangpur 1-0.

Both finals will take place at the BNS on Saturday. -- SPORTS REPORTER

Physio Shoilendu dead at 57

Physio Shoilendu Bikash Majumder breathed his last at the Islami Bank Hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 57.

Majumder, who was suffering from cancer for a long time, left behind wife, a son and well-wishers. His funeral was held at Sabujbagh Kalimandir.

Majumder was involved in sport for nearly three decades and provided treatment to numerous athletes and organisers.

He was also a member of the Bangladesh Olympic Association in the medical and anti-doping committee. -- SPORTS REPORTER

Bayern players stun Bon Jovi with pregame antics

Bayern Munich's 3-0 Champions League last 16 first leg victory over Chelsea on Tuesday made an impression on US rock star Jon Bon Jovi for the relaxed way the German side prepared for the game.

The 57-year-old told radio station Talk Sport on Wednesday he had been in his hotel bar on Monday as had the Bayern players.

"I was minding my own business in the bar," Bon Jovi said. "And the team were in there the night before last [Monday] and how they, on the power of whisky and beer, overpowered Chelsea last night doesn't say much for Chelsea's drinking habits either."

"The Bayern guys were certainly sipping and having a good ol' time -- and they went and shellacked Chelsea," said Jovi. -- AFP

Reds post £42 million profit

Premier League leaders Liverpool made a pre-tax profit of £42 million last year despite a record £223 million investment on players, figures showed on Thursday. While that is well below the £125 million profit for the year ending May 2018, the rewards are being felt on the pitch.

The figures incorporate the purchases of Alisson Becker, Naby Keita and Fabinho. They also include the increased costs of new contracts. -- AFP

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