

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
Sri Lanka v West Indies
First T20I (N)
Live from 7:30pm
FA Cup
Leicester v Birmingham

Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
SONY SIX
South Africa v Australia
Second ODI (D/N)
Live from 5:00pm
FA Cup

Tottenham v Norwich City
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Rahmatganj v Bashundhara Kings
Time: 3:30pm

Abahani v Mohammedan
Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

LEIPZIG APOLOGISE FOR EJECTING JAPANESE FANS

RB Leipzig on Monday apologised after forcing a group of Japanese spectators to leave their Red Bull Arena during the weekend's 1-1 draw with Bayer Leverkusen over coronavirus fears. In a statement, Leipzig said that their security staff "had been instructed to intensify checks" of "certain groups due to potential risk". "Unfortunately ... amidst the great uncertainty surrounding this topic ... a mistake was made on our part," the statement continued. "We would like to extend our apologies." Leipzig added that they were trying to contact the fans, reportedly as many as 20, in order to invite them to their next home game. While not as badly affected as nearby Italy, cases of coronavirus in Germany rose to 157 on Monday, up from 129 the previous day.



Arteta gamble pays off against Portsmouth

AFP, Portsmouth



Mikel Arteta admitted he took a risk by making nine changes for Arsenal's 2-0 win over Portsmouth in the FA Cup fifth round but insisted he had no choice because some of his stars were still shell-shocked after their Europa League exit.

Arteta's side reached the FA Cup quarter-finals thanks to goals from Sokratis Papastathopoulos in first-half injury time and Eddie Nketiah six minutes after the break at Fratton Park on Monday.

It was a much-needed boost for Arsenal, who crashed out of the Europa League in a painful last-gasp defeat against Olympiakos on Thursday.

Arteta conceded that fielding such an inexperienced line-up -- only David Luiz and Bukayo Saka retained their places -- could have put Arsenal's only chance of silverware this season in jeopardy.

"They fully deserve the chance and I know it is risky to play them in this competition but they are worth a risk," Arteta said of his young side.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who was

in tears after missing a costly late chance against Olympiakos, and Mesut Ozil were both absent, while Alexandre Lacazette and Nicolas Pepe were on the bench.

"I assessed the team and physically some of them were knackered, some of them had issues, some of them mentally were hanging on what happened that day.

"So I tried to pick the right team knowing how they were and I made the most of it. If you win, it is okay but if we had lost obviously it would have been the wrong decision.

"The energy, the focus and the willingness and desire to play in this competition is really important."

One sour note for Arsenal came when Uruguay midfielder Lucas Torreira was taken off injured on a stretcher just 15 minutes into the game and left Fratton Park on crutches.

"He was in a lot of pain, he is in a brace at the moment," said Arteta.

"He will be assessed in the next few days and we will know more. I don't know if it's the bone or ligaments, we don't know yet."

Portsmouth manager Kenny Jackett said Arsenal were worthy of their place in the next round after surviving an early barrage from the third-tier promotion chasers.



Saif SC players converge on Arifur Rahman after the forward scored during their 2-0 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad in the Bangladesh Premier League at the Sheikh Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Locals put Saif back on top

SPORTS REPORTER



Saif Sporting Club maintained their perfect winning streak against Muktiyoddha Sangsad in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-0 win at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

The win not only extended Saif SC's winning streak against the All Reds to five, but also helped them reclaim top spot of the 13-team table with 10 points from four matches, three more than Chattogram Abahani, Bashundhara Kings and Abahani even though the latter two outfits played a match less than Saif SC's four.

Even though the league leaders won the match away in Gopalganj, Muktiyoddha dominated the match by creating a lot of chances but unfortunately their forwards could not take those chances, leaving the home side to slip to the bottom of the table with only one point from three matches.

Striking duo of Ismail Bangoura and Paul Emile exposed Saif SC's vulnerable defence time and again in every transition as Saif SC players apparently lacked urgency.

The Muktiyoddha Sangsad forwards, however, could not beat goalkeeper Mahfuz Ahmed Pritom, who kept the title contenders in the match by making a couple of good

saves while defender Yeasin Arafat and new-signing Javed Ahmed made two goal-line saves.

Japanese midfielder Norito Hashiguchi all but put Muktiyoddha Sangsad ahead but his sliding drive at the far post went inches wide following a bursting run from Bangoura down the right.

Saif SC took the lead against the run of play in the 18th minute as Yeasin saw his miscued header off a Murolimozhon Akhmedov free-kick fall to unmarked Arifur Rahman, who nodded home from inside the six-yard box.

Despite conceding the lead, Muktiyoddha Sangsad kept on pressing and went close to levelling the margin four times before the break, but those chances were wasted by Brazilian defender Albert Frank, Bangoura and Shohel Rana.

Deiner Cordoba then frustrated Saif SC by misfiring a spot-kick in the stoppage time while Yeasin and Javed denied Bangoura by making two goal-line saves in between Saif SC's second strike from Javed, who drove a groundier from the top of the box after availing a poor clearance from a Muktiyoddha Sangsad defender.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad were once again frustrated on the hour-mark as Bangoura saw his goal-bound header cleared by Javed as they suffered their second defeat in third match.

New charm in Dhaka derby

SPORTS REPORTER

It is perhaps the first time in the country's professional football league that all the teams have dropped points just after the second round of matches, making the ongoing BPL already very intriguing with five to six teams in the title race.

And today's early clash between Abahani and Mohammedan is expected to bring extra excitement to the 13-team league as a win for either side will give them an edge in the table.

Abahani are second with seven points followed by Mohammedan, who are third with six points from three matches.

Abahani have turned the Dhaka derby into a one-sided by winning 10 of 23 matches and losing only five to Mohammedan, although the teams won one game each in league meetings last season.

Despite a depleted squad, the Black and Whites have shown character by winning two of three matches under English coach Sean Lane while Abahani dropped points against Brothers in between two wins.

"I understand that for supporters and players, the history of this game is huge and we want the supporters to be proud of our performance. We are looking forward to winning the match," said Mohammedan coach Lane.

"A derby is always special and the Dhaka derby has so much history that we must take it as more than just three points. I think both teams are in good shape, always extra motivation in both sides to play a derby," said Abahani coach Mario Lemos.



Striker Eddie Nketiah scored Arsenal's second as the Gunners secured a 2-0 win against Portsmouth in their FA Cup fixture on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

UEFA to 'adapt' FFP for future

AFP, Amsterdam

UEFA is considering adapting its Financial Fair Play regulations, president Aleksander Ceferin said Tuesday, as Manchester City take their fight to overturn a ban from the Champions League for breaching the rules to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"It is too early to say how it will look in the future but we are thinking about it and we will probably have to adapt it," the Slovenian Ceferin said at a press conference after the UEFA Congress.

"It was very successful as a system, there are almost no losses in European football any more, but now we will probably have to adapt to different times."

However, the last decade has seen City and PSG in particular, with mega-rich owners from Abu Dhabi and Qatar respectively, present a huge new challenge to Europe's established elite and to the FFP rules themselves.

City were banned from Europe for two years for serious breaches of FFP regulations. The reigning English champions last week filed an appeal to CAS.

Asked if he was confident the ruling against City could be upheld in the CAS appeal, Ceferin said: "As a lawyer I respect the system and the system we have -- the investigatory chamber, the adjudicatory chamber, and at the end we have the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne. City appealed to the CAS. Let's wait for the decision."

Meanwhile, General Secretary Theodore Theodoridis played down concerns that of UEFA staff could be under threat when City host Real Madrid in the Champions League last 16, second leg on March 17.

Glory seekers Penarol branch out into cricket, rugby

AFP, Montevideo

A decade ago, Penarol were named South America's football team of the century. It's one of the biggest and most successful clubs on the continent having won the Copa Libertadores five times and their national title on 50 occasions.

But now, Uruguay's most successful football club is aiming for titles in cricket and rugby too.

Uruguay is football mad and Penarol's black and yellow shirt is instantly recognizable but seeing it running up and down a cricket or rugby pitch takes getting used to.

"Two years ago, there was a story saying that cricket was being played in Uruguay and that's when we started taking more of an interest," said Leonardo Vinas, president of Penarol's cricket section.

Cricket was being played on a makeshift pitch alongside Montevideo's promenade by Indian expats working for the multinational Tata Motors.

"We got involved with the Indian community here in Uruguay who brought a sport that practically hadn't been played in the country for 60-70 years," added Vinas.

Penarol actually started life in 1891 as a cricket club when it was known as the Central Uruguay Railway CC, before it was renamed in 1913 as Club Atletico Penarol.

It was a sports club established by British railway workers in the Penarol neighborhood of the capital Montevideo.

"In the first year, Penarol only played cricket ... the next year it started playing football and it was football that took root amongst Uruguayans," said Daniel Vinas, who runs the Penarol rugby club, and is Leonardo's brother.

"Through football, [Penarol] developed into one of the main sports clubs in South America."

Penarol is one of eight teams playing in the Uruguayan league, although almost all the players are Indian expats working for Tata.



This file photo shows Uruguay's Penarol and Victoria Cricket Club players preparing before a match in Punta de Rieles neighbourhood in Montevideo on February 16.

PHOTO: AFP

It's also one of six teams to join the new South American club rugby championship -- Super Liga Americana de Rugby -- alongside Brazilians Corinthians, Olimpia Lions of Paraguay, Chile's Selknam and Ceibos from Argentina, with Colombians Cafeteros Pro partially taking part as well.

"Penarol is a club that has recently invested a lot in minority sports, which is really good," said Alejandro Nieto, the captain of the club's rugby team, which will play its first ever competitive fixture on Wednesday against Selknam.

"In Uruguay the most popular sport is football and Penarol is flying the flag in this, so the idea of such a popular club supporting minority sports is so they grow."

Uruguay has a number of historic rugby teams playing in the national amateur league, such as Montevideo Cricket Club, which is more than 150 years old, and Old Boys, over 100 years of age and originally made up of ex-alumni from Montevideo's British schools.

But for the country's first ever professional rugby team, the Uruguayan Rugby Union picked

Penarol to run the franchise.

"The big difference (to other amateur rugby teams) is that Penarol has the tools to grow this sport," said Nieto. "The aim is that (rugby in) Uruguay grows and Penarol is a great vehicle for that."

According to Pablo Aversente, the president of the rival Victoria Cricket Club, "the name of Penarol means something to people.

"If tomorrow Penarol play hockey, they will attract people, if tomorrow Penarol play polo, people will go to see them."

But the club is not just taking an interest in these minority sports to help them grow.

"Penarol always look to compete at their level, and to win," said Leonardo Vinas. "We're not a social club and never have been. We're a competitive club."

When it comes to rugby, Penarol is looking to make history.

"With rugby we'll try to see if we can be champions, to become the only club in South America to become continental champions in three sports," said Daniel Vinas. "We've already been champions in football and basketball."

Wobbling Juve, Inter aim for cup glory

AFP, Milan



Juventus and Inter Milan can get their seasons back on track with Italian Cup semifinal return-legs midweek, which take place amid Serie A fixture chaos caused by the coronavirus.

Locked in a battle for the league title the pair have been overtaken by surprise package Lazio as the city of Rome remains relatively untouched by COVID-19, which has caused havoc in the north of the country, killing 52 people.

Inter, who travel to Napoli on Thursday hoping to overturn a 1-0 deficit from the first leg at the San Siro, haven't played in Italy since being beaten at Lazio on February 16 as the virus concentrated in the Lombardy and Veneto regions.

Their home match against Sampdoria and the weekend's schedule title clash with Juve were both postponed, provoking a furious reaction from the club's CEO Beppe Marotta, who wanted the match played behind closed doors.

Two Europa League last 32 matches against Ludogorets is all Inter have had for preparation in that time, and their disrupted schedule comes in the midst of a dip in domestic form that has left the

former league leaders third behind Lazio and traditional rivals Juve.

They face stiff opposition in Napoli, who look a side reborn since Gennaro Gattuso replaced Carlo Ancelotti as coach in December.

They have surged up the Serie A table into sixth and impressed when they held Barcelona to a draw at the Stadio San Paolo in midweek.

The reigning league champions meanwhile host AC Milan in the other semifinal on Wednesday in a match that will be open to the public, or at least a portion of it.

Juventus face a Milan side whose only defeat in 2020 so far came against Inter in a thrilling derby last month and who were unlucky to come away from the first leg with only a 1-1 draw.

However Maurizio Sarri's side will be favourites despite ropery recent form that has seen them lose to Napoli and Hellas Verona and scrape past relegation fodder Brescia and SPAL.

Their 1-0 defeat to Lyon in the Champions League led to questions over Sarri's future on the Juve bench, and should Milan reach the final with a first ever win at the Allianz Stadium the calls for his dismissal will only become louder.



AC Milan superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic was a livewire in training yesterday, but the Swede will need to be at the top of his game to ensure that the Rossoneri get one over Juventus in Coppa Italia semifinal second leg tonight.

PHOTO: AC MILAN TWITTER