

SPORT

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
PREMIER LEAGUE
Sheffield Utd v Wolves
Live from 11:00pm
Brighton v Chelsea
Live from 1:15am (Tuesday)

Naomi Osaka beat Victoria Azarenka 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the final

Osaka, 22, became the first woman since 1994 final to come back from a set down to win title

For the first time since 1980, both semifinals as well as the final were decided in three sets

Osaka became the first woman to win her first three Grand Slam finals since Jennifer Capriati

Azarenka, 31, was playing in the final for the first time since 2013

This was the third US Open final defeat for the two-time Australian Open winner.



Naomi Osaka kisses the US Open trophy after beating Victoria Azarenka in a three-set final at Flushing Meadows on Saturday. (Bottom) The 22-year-old wore a different face mask for each of her matches, each carrying the name of Americans that were slain by members of police. With no fans in the stands this year, for her it was all about bringing Black Lives to the front seat.

PHOTO: US OPEN

Champion, in more ways than one

REUTERS, New York

Naomi Osaka capped a transformative US Open with another Grand Slam title and a challenge to the millions watching across the globe on Saturday to "start talking" about racial justice.

Striding into Arthur Ashe Stadium for her first-round match 12 days ago, Osaka put her activism front-and-centre from the start, wearing a mask to honour Breonna Taylor, a Black woman killed by police officers who burst into her apartment in March.

Osaka would go on to recognize seven different Black Americans -- one for each of the seven rounds of the tournament -- bringing the Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality to her sport's broad international fan base. Asked after her final what message she hoped to send with her masks, she turned the question on her interviewer, "What was the message you got?" "The point is to make people start talking," she added.

Osaka, who was born in Japan to a Haitian father and Japanese mother, spent her formative years in the US and lives in Los Angeles. She represents her birth country



in competition but her influence defies international borders.

"Everything that I was doing off the court was on the court at the same time," she said after her three-sets win over Victoria Azarenka. "It made me stronger because I felt like I have more desire to win because I want to show more names."

One of the most recognized personalities in Japan, Osaka sent

shockwaves through her sport before the tournament even began.

She forced the postponement of the Western & Southern Open semifinal late last month after opting out in protest over the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin. Athletes in the NBA and WNBA mounted similar boycotts.

"Watching the continued genocide of Black people at the

hand of the police is making me sick to my stomach," she wrote on social media at the time.

Tennis pioneer Billie Jean King said the action put her in the pantheon of the greatest athlete activists. "It has been more than 50 years since athletes like Muhammad Ali, John Carlos and Tommie Smith and the Original 9 of women's tennis all stood up and used their sport, their voices and their actions to change humanity," she said. "The baton has been passed and Naomi has accepted it."

Her final mask of the US Open bore the name of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old child who was holding a toy gun when a police officer shot and killed him in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2014. She said she thought about wearing the mask for her trophy ceremony but was told not to don a face covering for the exchange.

Osaka, who has immersed herself in Haitian history as she forms her views on racial and social justice, said she would be interested in meeting with the families of the seven people who appeared on her masks.

"I learn more through experiences," she said. "For me, I feel like sharing stories and hearing people's experiences is very valuable."

HP squad's tour of Sri Lanka in doubt

SPORTS REPORTER



There are question marks over Bangladesh's upcoming tour of Sri Lanka and as per the latest updates, Sri Lanka Cricket is only willing to host the national team and not the High Performance (HP) squad. SLC have rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) request to bring a 65-member contingent, a Sunday Observer report said yesterday.

There had been complications over the delay in finalising health protocols and following SLC officials' discussion with government health authorities, it was decided that a "mandatory 14-day quarantine period" will have to be met as part of safety measures.

Till Saturday no official update was made over the suggested quarantine for the visitors by the Sri Lankan health authorities. But according to BCB, SLC officials had previously informed them of a seven-day quarantine ahead of the three-Test series.

The BCB had planned to send both their

national and HP squads after completing a short residential conditioning camp at home. The HP side were supposed to have a training camp along with the national team in Sri Lanka and were expected to play a few warm-up matches before taking part in a series against their Lankan counterparts.

According to sources, SLC has now asked the BCB to reduce that number to 30, which means the HP team's tour may be suspended.

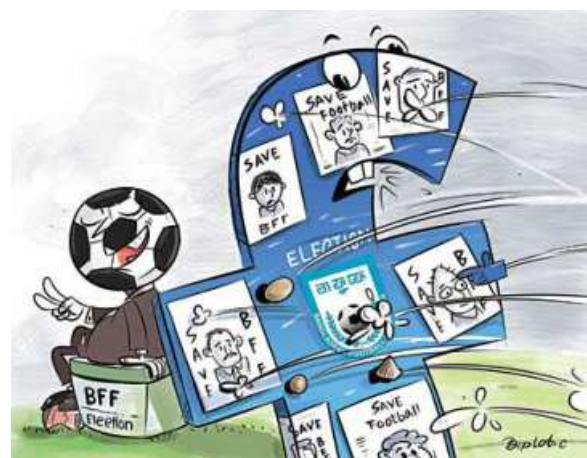
"Nothing is final yet, it will take another three-four days to finalise. We are in constant touch with them. The players and support staff of the national team together total to about 32-34 members. But it's not just about the Sri Lankan board -- it's a national issue. They are discussing the matter and we are thinking. Until everything is clear we are unable to talk about HP separately," Naimur Rahman Durjoy, chairman of High Performance unit, told reporters yesterday.

According to BCB, the SLC is facing some problems in developing their plans and may need some late adjustments due to the delay in preparing the official schedule as well as creating a bio-secure bubble.



In search of cover, Mushfiqur Rahim jumps over a practice pitch with two bats in his hands as rain interrupted the Bangladesh batsman's training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



For a light-hearted look at the Bangladesh Football Federation elections and the fallout on social media, scan the QR code and read 'As the ball rolls, so does BFF'.

Roy 'still in' BFF race

SPORTS REPORTER

Although Badal Roy decided to withdraw from contesting the post of president in the upcoming Bangladesh Football Federation elections on Saturday, his withdrawal letter was not taken into consideration by the election commission as it was submitted after the deadline.

Roy allegedly drafted the withdrawal letter in face of 'pressure from some quarters' but its rejection means he will contest the post of president alongside incumbent Kazi Salahuddin and former footballer Shafiqul Islam Manik.

Roy's wife had brought a withdrawal letter to the BFF House on Saturday, but election commission chief Mezbah Uddin informed that the communication was after the deadline. So, they did not take it into consideration as per BFF electoral regulations and FIFA electoral codes.

"We neither accepted nor rejected his nomination because there was no opportunity to take the matter into consideration as the letter was placed after the deadline," Uddin said at the BFF House yesterday. "We first considered electoral regulations. As per the regulation (6/A/11), candidates must withdraw their respective candidature through a signed withdrawal letter within the timeframe of the withdrawal mentioned in the schedule. But his withdrawal letter came after the deadline," explained Uddin. "FIFA's instructions are also very important here. As per article (6/C), the deadline must be strictly enforced. Roy is now a legal candidate and if he gets more votes than other candidates, he will be declared the winner."

"There is nothing I can do if my name has been put on the ballot as per regulations," Roy, the incumbent BFF vice-president, said.



Olympiakos complete double

AFF, Volos

An early goal by Serbian midfielder Lazar Rangelovic on Saturday lifted Olympiakos past AEK Athens 1-0 in the twice postponed Greek Cup final as the Piraeus side won a record 18th double.

Rangelovic scored in the ninth minute to secure a record 28th domestic cup for Olympiakos, who finished the regular season unbeaten in June and won an unrivalled 45th Super League crown.

The final was played at a neutral venue, Panthessaliko Stadium in the northern city of Volos, without spectators in line with government health protocols brought on by the coronavirus epidemic.

AEK suffered a fourth straight defeat in the final.

'Very special' Salah denies Leeds

AGENCIES



Mohamed Salah's Premier League numbers are up there among the best of the era but Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp insists he offers his side much more than bare statistics after he got them off to a winning start in the Premier League.

The Egyptian's hatrick in a 4-3 win over Leeds took his tally to 76 in 109 matches since moving to Anfield. He has reached 50 goals in 63 home games, second only to Alan Shearer (47 appearances), and Liverpool have won each of the last 35 league fixtures in which he has found the net -- overtaking Wayne Rooney's competition record set between September 2008 and February 2011.

Since his blistering maiden campaign, when he scored 32 times in 36 appearances, the 28-year-old's yearly total has been falling but what makes him so important to Klopp's side is his all-round game.

"First and foremost,

congratulations to him. He is a very special player," said the Liverpool manager of Salah.

"The numbers tell the story a little bit. All the rest around you probably don't know about. But this is a very good example of it. He put three more goals on his scoring list, but the performance all-round

was absolutely exceptional.

"He deserved the goals 100 per cent. Two were penalties, one was a sensational finish, but he deserved them as he was constantly pressing, pressing, constantly causing the opponent massive problems, one-v-one situations, played his football.

"There have been a lot of good performances for us from Mo for sure, but this was one of the better ones. He should be proud of it because it's very special to get these kind of numbers."

Salah was one of the few players close to the top of their game as the Premier League champions began their defence with error-strewn, victory to end Leeds' hopes of a dream start on their return to the top flight after 16 years.

Marcelo Bielsa's side did what few visitors have done to Liverpool during their run of 60 unbeaten home league matches, stretching back to March 2017, and dominated possession. They enjoyed 52 per cent of the ball but their manager was unhappy they did not make the most of that, although a 100 per cent conversion rate from three shots on target suggested they fully capitalised.

Salah scored two penalties in his hatrick to bookend the scoring, the first in the fifth minute and the last in the 87th, along with a rasping half-volley. Virgil Van Dijk scored the other while Jack Harrison, Patrick Bamford and Mateusz Klich netted for Leeds.



Mohamed Salah lit up Anfield with a cracking hatrick, including this sublime volley, in Liverpool's 4-3 win over Leeds United on the opening day of the Premier League season on Saturday.

PHOTO: LIVERPOOL FC

Koeman displays new style in friendly

REUTERS, Barcelona



Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman said his side could play a different style of football to which the club's fans are used to this season after his side earned an underwhelming 3-1 win over Gimnastic de Tarragona in a pre-season friendly on Saturday.

The Dutchman lined up with a 4-2-3-1 system with two holding midfielders, a shape rarely used by Barca coaches in the past.

He started Sergio Busquets and Carles Alena in the middle in the first half and then Frenkie de Jong and Riqui Puig, as he changed his



Lionel Messi started and played 45 minutes in Barcelona's pre-season friendly against Gimnastic de Tarragona at the Johan Cruyff Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

entire team at halftime.

"It's perhaps a little different and more defensive to what we have seen in the last few years," Koeman told the club's official channel.

"But the aim is to move the ball, hold on to it and create space to play between the lines, behind the opponents' midfielders. I think this team is capable of doing this because we have midfielders who are able to play in that way."

Ousmane Dembele opened the scoring for Barca while Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho scored from the penalty spot in either half in Koeman's first game since quitting his role with the Netherlands to coach the Catalans.

The coach played close to a full-strength team in the first half, starting Lionel Messi even though the captain had only started training on Monday after ending his stand-off with the club following his request to leave on a free transfer.

Barca will play at least another friendli before starting their campaign at home to Villarreal on September 27.

"It was important for those players to play now because this is not a normal pre-season, we only have four weeks, not six and it's very difficult," Koeman added. "What we want to do right now is focus on fitness and then over the next two weeks focus on more tactical questions."