

# What to WATCH

TEN Sports  
IAAF World C'ships  
Day 5  
Live from 11:30am  
(Morning Session)  
STAR Cricket  
Italy v Argentina  
Int'l Friendly

Live from 12:45am (Thursday)  
STAR Sports  
England v Scotland  
Int'l Friendly  
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)  
Sony Six  
Switzerland v Brazil  
Int'l Friendly

## Bale keeps mum



AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur winger Gareth Bale has refused to comment after being quizzed by reporters over speculation linking him with a record-breaking transfer to Real Madrid.

The 24-year-old is reportedly on the brink of a move to the nine-time champions for a fee that could eclipse the £80

million (\$123.6 million, 93.2 million euros) that Madrid paid Manchester United for Cristiano Ronaldo in 2009.

Several Spanish television crews and photographers watched Bale train with Wales in Newport on Monday, but when asked to speak about the reports, he replied: "I'm really sorry, now's not the time to talk."



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## Messi pulls out of Italy encounter

AFP, Madrid

World Player of the Year Lionel Messi will miss Argentina's friendly with Italy on Wednesday, Messi's club Barcelona confirmed on Tuesday.

"Leo Messi will not play the friendly in Rome this Wednesday between Argentina and Italy," said a statement on the club's website.

"After undergoing a check-up with the Argentine medical staff it has been decided that the star will return to Barcelona to continue his recovery from a quadriceps strain in his left leg."

The 25-year-old missed the final match of Barca's Asian tour against Malaysia on Saturday due to the injury.

However, the club are still hopeful that he will be fit to play on Sunday as the Catalans begin their La Liga title defence against Levante.

## Downing joins West Ham

AFP, London

West Ham United on Tuesday announced the signing of England international winger Stewart Downing from Premier League rivals Liverpool for an undisclosed fee.

Downing, 29, has signed a four-year contract with the east London club and follows striker Andy Carroll in moving from Liverpool to Upton Park.

"I'm very excited. It's a great opportunity for me being here, it's a great club and I'm really excited to get going." Downing told the club's official website.

"I'm ready and I'm fit for the first game against Cardiff City (on Saturday). I've played a decent few games for Liverpool in pre-season."

The left-footed wide player becomes West Ham manager Sam Allardyce's fifth new signing of the close season, after Carroll, Romania captain Razvan Rat, Spanish goalkeeper Adrian and midfielder Danny Whitehead.

## Chamakh moves to Palace

AFP, London

Morocco striker Marouane Chamakh ended his disappointing three-year spell at Arsenal on Monday after joining newly-promoted Crystal Palace.

Chamakh, 29, signed a one-year contract with Ian Holloway's team and is likely to make his debut against Tottenham at Selhurst Park on Sunday.

"Crystal Palace are delighted to confirm the signing of Morocco international striker Marouane Chamakh on a one-year deal," a statement on the club's website confirmed.

Chamakh is the third striker signed by Palace since their promotion via the Championship play-offs and he will compete with fellow new boys Kevin Phillips and Dwight Gayle for a place in the starting line-up while last season's leading scorer Glenn Murray recovers from a long-term knee injury.



Two-time Olympic champion Russian icon Yelena Isinbayeva clears the bar on way to winning the pole vault gold at the 2013 IAAF World Championships at the Luzhnik Stadium in Moscow yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Yelena wins 3rd world title

AGENCIES, Moscow



Yelena Isinbayeva, the greatest woman pole vaulter of all time, thrilled a partisan home crowd roaring her every jump when she landed the third and probably last world title of her illustrious career on Tuesday.

The Russian, twice Olympic champion and world outdoor record holder, was the only vaulter to clear 4.89 metres.

It was a season's best leap for the 31-year-old, the first woman to clear the revered five metres barrier, who said before the championships that she would retire.

American Olympic champion Jenn Surh took silver and Cuban Yarisley Silva bronze. Both failed at 4.89 after clearing 4.82.

American Lashawn Merritt regained the men's 400 metres world title at the World Athletics Championships in Moscow on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old, who won his previous title in 2009, posted the fastest time of the year of 43.74 seconds to take gold while compatriot Tony McQuay ran a personal best (44.40sec) for second place and Luquelin Santos of the Dominican Republic was third (44.52sec).

Ethiopian Mohammed Aman won the men's 800m title, the first ever medal for the country in the two-lap event.

Aman clocked a season's best of 1min 43.31sec, with American Nick Symmonds taking silver in 1:43.55.

Djibouti's Ayanleh Souleiman claimed bronze (1:43.76), the first medal for the east African country since Ahmed Salah's silver in the marathon in the 1991 worlds in Tokyo.

Ukraine's Ganna Melnichenko won the heptathlon crown.

In a closely-fought competition that came down to the seventh and final event, the 800m, Melnichenko amassed a total of 6,586 points, a personal best.

Canada's Brienne Theisen Eaton, wife of newly-crowned world decathlon champion Ashton Eaton of the United States, claimed silver with 6,530pts, with Dafne Schippers of the Netherlands taking bronze (6,477) in a Dutch record.

German discus great Robert Harting won his third successive title.

The 28-year-old Olympic champion threw a best of 69.11 metres to take gold while Piotr Malachowski of Poland was second (68.36m) and Gerd Kanter of Estonia took bronze (65.19).

Two-time Olympic champion Felix Sanchez moved a step closer to making history on Tuesday as he reached the 400 metres hurdles final.

The Dominican Republic superstar - who turns 36 on August 30 - can become the first man to win the world title three times and looked on form in posting his fastest time of the season of 48.10 seconds in finishing second.

## England lack identity: Rio

AFP, London



Former England defender Rio Ferdinand claims that the current national side have lost their identity and has called for an overhaul of the national coaching strategy.

The Manchester United centre-back, 34, played at three World Cups but never went beyond the quarterfinals, and he believes the reason England are continually eclipsed by teams like Spain and Italy is because they have no coherent playing style.

"What is our identity?" said Ferdinand, who retired from international football in May.

"I've said that on Twitter I don't know how many times and people come back and say, 'What are you talking about?' But what is our identity?"

"We started to see something when Glenn Hoddle was in charge (1996-1999), a bit of an identity then, free-flowing football, and you would say we were starting to get an idea of the pattern of what he wanted to

implement in the team.

"Since then I don't think we've actually really seen an identity, where you could say, 'That's an England team', where you look at the under-21s and go, 'That's an England team'."

He added: "You could put an under-16 lad into the senior Spanish team or Italian team. He might not have the attributes in terms of physique and speed to be able to deal with it but positionally I'm sure he'd know what to do because that's what they're taught, day in, day out."

"I just don't think you see that connection between our (senior) team and the under-21s, or the under-17s and the under-20s team and the senior team, and I think that doesn't bode well for the England team."

England won the World Cup on home soil in 1966 but since then they have reached the semifinals of a major tournament on just two occasions -- at the 1990 World Cup and the 1996 European Championship.

## Pope torn over who to support

AFP, Vatican City



Pope Francis joked with Italy and Argentina players on the eve of a friendly football match in Rome on Tuesday, saying he was torn over who to support.

"It's going to be difficult for me, it's lucky it's a friendly match! And let's make sure it is one," the Argentine pontiff said in a private meeting, which journalists listened to over the speakers in the Vatican's press room.

The players, along with Italian coach Cesare Prandelli and Argentine coach Alejandro Sabella, met the 76-year-old at the Vatican before Wednesday's game at Rome's Stadio Olimpico.

The pontiff, a lifelong fan of Argentine club San Lorenzo, called on the teams to make sure they used their popularity to give a good example to their fans.

"You, dear players, are very popular. People follow your example, off the pitch as well as on. You have a social responsibility," he said.

The players presented Francis with a personalised shirt from each team with his name on it, as well as a silver vase from the Argentinians and an olive tree from the Italians.



PHOTO: AFP

Pope Francis (C) receives an olive tree from Argentine star Lionel Messi (R) and Italian captain Gianluigi Buffon during a private audience at the Vatican yesterday.

## History will be made

AFP, London



At some point during the 2013-14 Premier League season, football history will be made when technology is used to settle a contentious goal-line decision for the first time.

The system has already been deployed at last year's FIFA Club World Cup in Japan and this year's Confederations Cup in Brazil, but both tournaments passed off without any controversial goal-mouth incidents.

That is almost certain to change when the first of this season's 380 Premier League games kick off on Saturday, after the English top flight became the first national championship to sanction the use of the technology.

Its arrival will mark the biggest change in the English game since the back-pass rule was introduced in 1992, preventing goalkeepers from picking up passes from teammates and slowing the game down.

British-based firm Hawk-Eye was chosen over German company Goal Control to supply the ground-breaking technology at a meeting of Premier League club chairmen in April.

Hawk-Eye's system uses 14 elevated cameras (seven per goal) to track the movement of the ball around the pitch, with computer software scrutinising data from the cameras to detect whether or not the ball has crossed one of the two goal-lines.

When a goal is scored, a signal will be sent to the match officials' wristwatches within a second.