

What to WATCH

STARCricket

England v Australia

Fifth Test, Day 3

Live from 4:00pm

TEN Cricket

Zimbabwe v Pakistan

First T20I

Live from 5:30pm

NEO Prime

Bundesliga

Dortmund v Bremen

Live from 2:30am (Saturday)



# Rooney saga on hold

AFP, London



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho says he will not try to unsettle Manchester United's Wayne Rooney by making a renewed bid for the striker before the teams meet on Monday.

Mourinho has already seen two bids for Rooney rejected by United and has made it apparent that the 27-year-old England forward is his top priority in the transfer window, which closes on September 2.

However, although he hinted that he has not given up in his pursuit of Rooney, he said he would not seek to gain an advantage over David Moyes' team by creating fresh headlines about the former Everton player.

"I don't want Chelsea to do it before we go there," Mourinho said, after his side edged Aston Villa 2-1 in a keenly contested match on Wednesday.

"Everybody in the club, in the board, they agree with me. They share that opinion. There is time to do things we did before, we will do later.

"But I think this period, by the ethical point of view, is a period where we're going to be quiet."

Chelsea secured victory over Villa thanks to a 73rd-minute header from Branislav Ivanovic, after Antonio Luna's early own goal was cancelled out by Villa striker Christian Benteke moments before half-time.

The game had been brought forward due to Chelsea's involvement in the UEFA Super Cup and victory handed Mourinho's side an early three-point lead in the Premier League, but the encounter was marked by controversy.

Villa manager Paul Lambert was incensed that Ivanovic was only booked for catching Benteke with his elbow and that John Terry escaped after the ball struck his outstretched arm in the Chelsea area in stoppage time.

Mourinho, though, felt Villa's robust approach to the match at Stamford Bridge meant they had little cause for complaint.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona striker Neymar celebrates his equalising goal against Atletico Madrid during their Spanish Super Cup first-leg encounter at the Vicente Calderon Stadium on Wednesday.

AFP, Madrid



Neymar scored his first goal for Barcelona as the Catalans were held 1-1 by Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup, but there was another injury worry for Lionel Messi as he was forced off at half-time.

David Villa had given the hosts the perfect start when he netted against his old side in spectacular fashion after just 12 minutes.

Barca then struggled to find their rhythm against a dogged Atletico side and were dealt a huge blow when Messi failed to reappear for the second-half reportedly due to a muscle injury.

However, in his absence, Neymar was the

man to rescue the Spanish champions as he came off the bench to head home Dani Alves' cross 25 minutes from time.

Having thrashed Levante 7-0 in manager Gerardo Martino's first competitive match in charge on Sunday, Barca started confidently and had the first clear opening of the game when Pedro's scuffed effort was palmed away by Thibaut Courtois on 11 minutes.

Within 60 seconds though Atletico were ahead thanks to a fantastic piece of counter-attacking play as Villa fed Arda Turan on the left then burst into the box to meet the Turk's cross flush on the volley to power the ball past Victor Valdes.

Moments later the Spanish international nearly punished his former teammates

again as he and Diego Costa combined perfectly but this time Gerard Pique recovered just in time to block Villa's effort.

The game then settled down with Barca patiently probing without ever opening up a well-organised Atletico side before the break.

Worse was to come for the Catalans though as Messi didn't reappear after the interval and was replaced by Cesc Fabregas.

Fabregas nearly had an immediate impact when the ball rebounded to him after Courtois had saved smartly from Alexis Sanchez, but a posse of Atletico defenders descended on the former Arsenal man to block his attempt.

Miranda then came within inches of doubling Atletico's lead as he just failed to make contact with Gabi's free-kick.

Neymar was next to be introduced by Martino and it didn't take the Brazilian long to net his first Barca goal as he charged in at the back post to nod home Dani Alves' hanging cross.

Valdes had to be alert to deny Villa restoring Atletico's lead moments later before Xavi fired a free-kick just over for Barca as the game became increasingly stretched.

Courtois was forced to come to Atletico's rescue once more to deny Sanchez with a brave block from point-blank range 16 minutes from time.

However, there was to be no winner on the night, meaning the tie is still very much alive heading to the Camp Nou for the second leg on Wednesday.

# Chelsea battle to a win

AFP, London



Chelsea overcame obdurate opposition from Aston Villa to secure a hard-fought 2-1 win at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday that maintained their early momentum in the fledgling Premier League season.

Breezy 2-0 victors over Hull City in their opening game on Sunday, Chelsea had to dig much deeper against Paul Lambert's side but eventually prevailed through a header from Branislav Ivanovic with 17 minutes to play.

As against Hull, Chelsea had taken an early lead, this time through an own goal from Antonio Luna, but Villa refused to roll over and claimed an equaliser on the stroke of half-time when Christian Benteke lashed home.

Victory in an occasionally ill-tempered game, brought forward due to Chelsea's involvement in the UEFA Super Cup on August 30, will give Jose Mourinho enhanced belief that his side are ready for the battle sure to await them at Manchester United on Monday.

Villa manager Lambert, meanwhile, will take solace from the doggedness of his side's display, four days on from their shock 3-1 win at Arsenal and eight months after a humiliating 8-0 defeat on the same pitch.

Mourinho made two changes to the team that beat Hull, introducing Demba Ba and Juan Mata in place of Kevin De Bruyne and Fernando Torres.

Chelsea had taken the lead after 13 minutes against Hull and they were just as quick off the mark against Villa.

This time the visiting team held out for only seven minutes, although there was more than a touch of fortune about the goal.

Oscar released Eden Hazard with an incisive pass down the inside-left



Chelsea full-back Branislav Ivanovic (C) celebrates his winning goal with teammates Oscar (L) and Romelu Lukaku during their Premier League clash against Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

channel and although Brad Guzan parried the Belgian's shot, the ball bounced off inrushing defender Luna and into the net.

Despite the early goal, Chelsea were

not nearly as dominant as they had been against Hull and Villa might have equalised sooner had Andreas Weimann not completely miscued his header from Luna's cross in the 20th minute.

## Zim-Pak 1st T20I today

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe go into Friday's first Twenty20 International against Pakistan at the Harare Sports Club with captain Brendan Taylor confident that the players have put their most recent scuffle with the board behind them.

The month-long tour will see the two sides face off in two Twenty20 matches, three one-day internationals and two Tests, but Zimbabwe's preparations were thrown into disarray last week when the players refused to train after negotiations over unpaid salaries and future contracts broke down.

Although the players came to an agreement with Zimbabwe Cricket last Friday and returned to training, fast bowler Kyle Jarvis announced on Sunday that he was quitting international cricket in favour of a county contract.

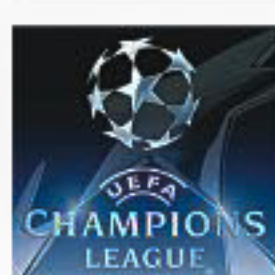
Nevertheless Taylor expects his side to move on mentally as they look to present a challenge to Pakistan.

"I think we've all been around long enough to put that aside now," Taylor told AFP in a telephone conversation. "ZC have met us in the middle and there's nothing more to harp on about it.

"We've discussed this as players and it's time to move forward and try and represent our country as well as we can."

# Arsenal cruise in Istanbul

AFP, Paris



Arsenal provided the perfect riposte to their critics with a timely and ultimately impressive win at Fenerbahce on Wednesday which left Arsene Wenger's side on the verge of a remarkable 17th straight Champions League campaign.

The Gunners turned up in Istanbul under a cloud after last weekend's shock Premier League opening loss to Aston Villa and inactivity in the transfer market

But goals from Kieran Gibbs, Aaron Ramsey and Olivier Giroud lifted the North London side past Fenerbahce in what beleaguered Wenger had described as "a massive" match.

The win, which puts Arsenal firmly in the driving seat for next week's return leg at the Emirates, will likely boost the club in their pursuit of their targets before the transfer window closes.

A relieved Wenger told Sky Sports: "It was a good performance in a heated atmosphere.

"We controlled the match and after the disappointment of the weekend we're in a strong position now. It was vital to get off on the right foot and that's what we did."

Walcott, looking ahead to the return leg, said: "We can't be complacent and have to be professional to get the job done."

The breakthrough after a dull opening half arrived in the 51st minute when Ramsey played in Theo Walcott down the right wing and the winger's cross was allowed to reach Gibbs who crashed the ball into the roof of the net.

Ramsey scored a fortunate second goal with 24 minutes left when Fenerbahce 'keeper Volkan Demirel inexplicably allowed a routine shot from outside the box slip under his hands

Giroud then planted a confident penalty in the top left hand corner after Michal Kadlec brought down Walcott on 77 minutes which has virtually put the tie beyond doubt.

The only downside on an otherwise excellent night's work was the facial injury to Laurent Koscielny who had to come off.

Elsewhere Wednesday, there were 1-1 stalemates at the encounters between Steaua Bucharest and Legia Warsaw, and Schalke 04 and PAOK.

Swiss side Basel, beaten by Chelsea in the Europa League semi-finals last season, saw off Ludogorets Razgrad 4-2 while Austria Vienna defeated Dinamo Zagreb 2-0.



"The transfer market starts for me now and a lot of activity will happen between now and 2 September. It is like a poker game. People hold their cards as long as possible and see what is happening out there. In the end, they go for decisions."

Arsene Wenger

## Underground basketball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The fourth VH Basketball tournament, organised by English Medium coaching centre Vertical Horizon (VH), starts today at the wooden floor gymnasium of Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF) in Dhanmondi.

Eight teams -- Josephites, Vertical Horizon, Basketers, Renegades, Gulshan Youth Club, Blitzkriegs, Gregorian Aces and Mavericks -- are taking part in the in the week-long meet that will conclude on August 29.

# Wenger rules out Suarez move

AFP, London



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has conceded defeat in his pursuit of Liverpool striker Luis Suarez after declaring there is "no chance" the Uruguayan will move to the Emirates Stadium.

Arsenal have had two bids for Suarez rejected during the current transfer window and, speaking after his side won 3-0 at Fenerbahce in the first leg of their Champions League play-off, Wenger said they would not be making another offer.

"(There is) absolutely no chance of that," Wenger said, in remarks widely reported in the British media on Thursday.

A number of British media outlets, including the BBC, claim that Arsenal have expressed an interest in signing Real Madrid pair Karim Benzema and Angel Di Maria.

The London club have also had a bid for Newcastle United's France international midfielder Yohan Cabaye rejected.

Wenger would not be drawn on the identity of his transfer targets, but he confirmed that the club are working to bring in new players.

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