

BTV
SAFF Championship
 India v Maldives
 Second Semifinal
 Live from 6:45pm
TEN Sports
US Open
 Men's Singles Final
 Live from 2:30am (Tuesday)

Giants keep to script

REUTERS, London



No World Cup finals would be complete without Italy and Germany on the cast list, and both nations will take their places in next year's Brazil showpiece with victories on Tuesday.

Four-times world champions Italy will qualify if they beat the Czech Republic in Turin, while Germany, bidding for their 16th successive appearance, can follow suit with a win over the Faroe Islands, though a Sweden victory against Kazakhstan would delay the Germans' passage.

The Netherlands, assuming they beat Andorra, will be guaranteed top spot in Group D if Romania fail to beat Turkey.

For other European powerhouses the task is less straightforward.

England will be wary of their trip to Ukraine despite going top of Group H after

a 4-0 win over Moldova on Friday. Ukraine warmed up for the potential group decider with a 9-0 hammering of San Marino.

Ukraine are one point behind England, and one of their three remaining ties is against San Marino.

"It's a massive game against Ukraine, but we have nothing to fear and can go there full of confidence," England captain Steven Gerrard, who scored the opener against Moldova, said.

"We need to believe in ourselves, roll our sleeves up and put in a performance, because if we were to get all three points it puts us in the driving seat."

England look more certain qualifiers than France, whose hopes of topping world champions Spain in Group I look forlorn after a 0-0 draw with Georgia on Friday left them three points behind with two games to go.

They must win in Belarus on Tuesday to keep alive any realistic chance of heading the group and avoiding a playoff.

Ribery laid low by buttock injury

REUTERS, Paris

Franck Ribery is not 100 per cent fit ahead of France's penultimate World Cup qualifier against Belarus on Tuesday, UEFA's Best player in Europe said on Sunday.

"I have pain in my left buttock," the Bayern Munich midfielder told French TV channel TF1. "I underwent tests and there is something," he added without giving any more details.

Ribery, who missed training on Saturday, played the whole game in the goalless draw against Georgia on Friday, a result which left France second in qualifying Group I and three points behind Spain.

Physio injured

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany's physiotherapist suffered two injuries as he ran on to the pitch to treat a player during Friday's World Cup qualifier against Austria.

Klaus Eder, who has worked for the German federation for 25 years, tore a muscle in his left leg as he went to tend to Marcel Schmelzer, causing him to fall over and break his finger.

"I now have to put into practice what I always tell my patients," the 60-year-old told the German federation's website (www.dfb.de) on Sunday.

"Patience is important and you should not expect a lot of progress too soon."

"The way the players reacted was very comforting," he said. "Philipp Lahm brought me the ice pack, Mesut Ozil and Miroslav Klose held me and led me off the field."

Wenger set for new deal

SOCCERNET

Arsene Wenger is set to re-open contract talks with Arsenal in a new deal that could be worth up to 15 million pounds, according to the Sun.

There had been calls from Arsenal supporters wanting discussions over a new deal with Wenger to be put on hold following the lack of summer signings.

But, after the Gunners smashed their transfer record in bringing Mesut Ozil to The Emirates for 42.5 million pounds, the manager looks set to renew his contract, which expires at the end of the season, in a two-year 7.5-million-pound-a-season deal.

The Sun also states that Wenger will have 40 million pounds to spend during the January transfer window which could go on a top-class striker.

Mexico sack la Torre

AFP, Mexico City



Jose Manuel "Chepo" de la Torre was sacked as manager of Mexico on Saturday, hours after his side's embarrassing home defeat by Honduras in a World Cup qualifier.

The 2-1 defeat on Friday night -- which marked just the second time Mexico had lost a World Cup qualifier at home -- saw El Tri slip to fourth in the six-nation North and Central America and Caribbean final qualifying group, with only the top three teams earning direct entry to the finals in Brazil next year.

The fourth-placed team will play New Zealand for a berth.

A brief statement from the Mexican Football Federation in the early hours of Saturday morning said only that president Justino Compean had taken the decision to make a change.

Luis Fernando Tena, an experienced assistant to De la Torre, will take over.

Tena comes in as Mexico face a critical match against the United States in Columbus, Ohio, on Tuesday.

The USA will be keen to get back on track after falling 3-1 in Costa Rica on Friday to slip to second in the group behind the Ticos.

Calls of "Chepo Out" had echoed through the Azteca Friday night, but De la Torre had insisted immediately after the match he wouldn't resign.

"Quitting now would be a failure," he said.



Brazil sensation Neymar celebrates his goal against Australia during their friendly international at the Mane Garrincha National Stadium in Brasilia on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Selecao slay Soccerroos

SOCCERNET



Brazil hit Australia for six in a one-sided international friendly in Brasilia.

The Confederations Cup champions netted three goals in either half as they were rarely tested by a 46th-ranked Australia side who have qualified for next summer's World Cup finals in Brazil.

Striker Jo scored twice while Neymar -- who was influential throughout -- Ramires, Alexandre Pato and Luis Gustavo added their name to a scoreline that did not flatter the hosts.

The only sour note for Brazil was a left hamstring injury to Real Madrid left-back Marcelo, which forced him to miss the second half.

Brazil will be expecting a far tougher

test when they travel to Boston for a friendly against Portugal -- who will be without Cristiano Ronaldo -- on Tuesday.

Jo began the rout, on Brazil's Independence day, after eight minutes following clever work by Neymar down the left flank. The Barcelona forward tricked his way into space and while Bernard volleyed his cross against the post the ball rebounded kindly for Jo to tab in from six yards.

Australia briefly threatened with three consecutive corners but their failure to keep hold of the ball for any sustained period was exposed by an incisive Brazil counter-attack.

Brett Holman carelessly played the ball wide to space on halfway and Brazil broke at pace before Bernard's cross was athletically steered in by an unmarked Jo at full speed. It was 3-0 moments later when Neymar's run

from deep was not tracked and he latched on to a through-ball before sliding an angled shot across the exposed Mark Schwarzer.

Brazil were now already coasting and Schwarzer did well to deny Neymar as he easily found another way through the Soccerroos defence.

Marcelo was forced off with his hamstring injury, to prompt the half-time whistle, and while he did not reappear Brazil's total dominance did.

Neymar was involved for Brazil's fifth as Australia again failed to follow his forward burst allowing him to pull the back for substitute Pato to force in at the near post.

Luis Gustavo smashed in the goal of the night seven minutes from the end when he played a one-two with Neymar before unleashing an unstoppable shot into the top corner from 25 yards.



People spell out the words "THANK YOU" at the Tokyo metropolitan government building on Sunday after the Japanese capital won its bid to be the host city of the 2020 Olympics.

PHOTO: AFP

2020 is Tokyo's

AFP, Tokyo

Tokyo celebrated Sunday after winning the right to host the Olympic Games for the second time, overcoming fears about radiation from the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant to land the 2020 edition of the world's biggest sporting event.

Members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) meeting in Buenos Aires chose the Japanese capital, which previously hosted the Games in 1964, over Istanbul, after Madrid was dramatically eliminated following a first-round tie with the Turkish city.

Thousands of Japanese who gathered in Tokyo in the early hours of Sunday erupted in joy, making V for victory signs and shouting "banzai!" (hurrah!) and "Tokyo!" as the result was beamed live from the Argentine capital nearly a dozen time zones away.

At the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry, crowds shouted "arigato" (thank you) in unison, several television hosts and their guests were lost for words and in tears, while at the Komazawa Olympic Park -- venue of several sports at the 1964 Games -- golden tinsel rained down in celebration.

"I have been waiting a long time for this feeling," bid chief Tsunekazu Takeda said in Buenos Aires. "The members of the IOC have seen that Tokyo is a safe pair of hands."

Tokyo city governor Naoki Inose added that the Olympics would help Japan recover from the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami that claimed more than 18,000 lives and vowed no let up to create what he said would be "the best Games ever".

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had earlier flown to South America from the G20 summit in St Petersburg, Russia, to reassure nervous members about the safety of the nuclear plant some 220 kilometres (140 miles) from Tokyo amid fears about the leaking of contaminated water.

He told delegates that the situation was "under control", adding: "It has never done or will do any damage to Tokyo."

Concerns over Fukushima -- seriously damaged by the quake and giant waves two-and-a-half years ago -- had dogged the bid in the final days despite Tokyo's branding as a safe and sound city, but Abe successfully allayed IOC members' fears.

The final result was 60 votes for Tokyo against 36 for Istanbul.

Japanese networks broadcast the voting in special programmes screened through the early hours, while newspapers issued commemorative editions with jubilant banner headlines that were delivered free on the streets.

"We have now been given a dream, a hope, and a future," Abe told Japanese television.

"Japan has had 15 years of economic stagnation... and we've lost confidence in ourselves. But I hope this will be a chance for us to regain our confidence," he said in another live broadcast.

The vote for Tokyo -- which came third in the race for the 2016 Games won by Rio de Janeiro -- means it will be the fourth time Japan plays host to the Olympics, having also organised winter Games in Nagano (1998) and Sapporo (1972).

Asia will see successive Olympics as the South Korean resort of Pyeongchang is hosting the 2018 winter edition.

Madrid had looked to be the city with the momentum coming into the final week after an outstanding presentation to IOC members in Lausanne in July, and were hoping they could go on to win.

But doubts about Spain's recession-hit economy persisted to the end, and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's pledges that financing would not pose problems failed to convince.

News that Madrid had been eliminated was greeted with shock by crowds who had prepared for a victory party, and tennis superstar Rafael Nadal who had been a tireless campaigner said in New York that it had not been treated fairly.

Istanbul had been hoping Turkey would become the first predominantly Muslim country to host the quadrennial sporting extravaganza.

But despite a passionate and dynamic campaign trading on bridging two continents and two cultures as well as an evocative "wake up in Asia compete in Europe" slogan, their bid was hampered in June.

Several IOC members were unimpressed by the heavy-handed way that the Ankara government handled anti-government protests, and there was nervousness over the fallout from the bloody civil war in neighbouring Syria.

Prime Minister Abe cited in his presentation his experience meeting one of the children on a trip to visit survivors of the earthquake and tsunami, and said sport had a key role in society to aid recovery.

Bolt's deserved break

AFP, Brussels



Usain Bolt is ready to chill out on holiday after bagging another three world gold medals in a season during which he suffered only one defeat, and that was by one-hundredth of a second.

The Jamaican's 100m victory in 9.80sec at the season-ending Diamond League meet on Friday crowned another amazing season which was marred early on by a dearth of doping cases.

Positive tests for teammate and former world record holder Asafa Powell and top American sprinter Tyson Gay, and injury to his main rival from Jamaica, Yohan Blake, had stripped the track circuit of three of their main performers.

And again it was Bolt who steered the world of track and field out of those doldrums.

The 27-year-old went to last month's world championships in Moscow with nagging question marks over his form, as there had been at the London Olympics and the 2011 Daegu worlds.

Bolt promptly dispelled any concerns by claiming treble gold, winning the individ-

ual 100 and 200m crowns and then anchoring home the Jamaican 4x100m relay team to give a rosy tint to the world of athletics.

It means that apart from his false-start blip in the Daegu 100m, Bolt has won every global sprint title on offer since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, an astonishing feat he aims to carry through until the 2016 Games in Rio.

The six-time Olympic gold medallist's world medal haul now stands at eight golds, bringing him level with American women's 200m specialist Allyson Felix, and retired US track stars Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson.

With no global championships planned for 2014, Bolt has made several hints that he might target a debut appearance at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

But first up is a well-earned holiday back in Jamaica, albeit interspersed with at least two return trips to Europe to fulfil sponsor commitments.

"It's the end of the season, I've got no worries, I'm totally relaxed now, I'll have some fun and put my feet up," said Bolt, whose sole defeat of the season came over 100m at the Rome Diamond League meet at the hands of American Justin Gatlin.

Vettel wins, extends lead

AFP, Monza



Sebastian Vettel extended his lead in the drivers' world championship to more than 50 points when he drove to a polished victory for Red Bull in Sunday's Italian Grand Prix.

The 26-year-old German, series leader and defending triple world champion, survived a torrid start and gearbox problems as he dominated an intriguing 53-laps race, the last of the European part of the Formula One season.

Vettel came home 5.4 seconds clear of Fernando Alonso, as the Ferrari driver thrilled the tifosi with a battling chase in pursuit ahead of third-placed Australian Mark Webber in the second Red Bull and Brazilian Felipe Massa, fourth in the second Ferrari. On

a warm, if overcast, afternoon, Vettel proved both his sublime talent and his fighting spirit -- as both Red Bull men were told to nurse their cars home -- to reel off his sixth win of the season and the 32nd of his career. It was his third win at Monza and helped Red Bull end a run of poor results at the circuit.

His brilliance, however, was matched by that of Briton Lewis Hamilton, who started 12th, lost the use of his team radio and suffered a slow puncture, as he fought back twice to finish ninth. "A nightmare," he said.

Red Bull team chief Christian Horner praised the winner: "Fantastic Seb, you've won the Italian Grand Prix again," he said. "Brilliant drive."

Vettel replied with his characteristic scream and then added: "Very good boys, very good race. Sorry for the lock up into the first corner, made the first stint a bit tricky."