

# What to WATCH

STAR Sports

CLT20

Perth Scorchers v Otago Volts

Live from 4:30pm

Rajasthan Royals v Highveld Lions

Live from 8:30pm

Serie A

Napoli v Sassuolo

Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

ESPN HD

Primera Liga

Granada v Valencia

Live from 12:00am (Thursday)

Elche v Real Madrid

Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

ESPN

Serie A

Bologna v AC Milan

Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

STAR Cricket

# Bale signing cheap: Perez

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has defended his policy of signing the best players in the world for huge transfer fees by claiming they make the club money in the long run.

Perez is in his second term in charge at the Santiago Bernabeu and added to a stellar cast of signings under his guidance such as Luis Figo, Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo with the capture of Gareth Bale earlier this month.

And whilst the 66-year-old construction magnate refused to clarify whether Madrid had paid 91 million euros (\$123 million, £76.7 million) for the Welshman reported by Spanish media, or what would be a record breaking 101 million euros as suggested by the press in England, Perez claimed Bale had in fact been a "cheap" signing.

"The signing was cheap," Perez told Spanish radio station Cadena Ser.

"All the important players have been cheap for Real Madrid. That is why we lead the Forbes list."

Indeed, American business magazine Forbes increased their valuation of Real Madrid following the Bale signing to \$3.4 billion to consolidate their place as the world's most valuable sports entity.

"It was shown with Figo, Zidane, Beckham and Ronaldo. Even though they were very expensive, we went from losing money to making money."

Madrid's money-making potential under Perez's two spells in charge has dramatically increased with revenue rising from just 85 million euros 15 years ago to 520.9 million euros for the 2012/13 season.

Real also recorded a significant rise in profit and cut their net debt last season despite ending the campaign empty handed in terms of trophies.

Athletic Bilbao forward Iker Muniain (R) vies with Espanyol midfielder David Lopez during their Primera Liga encounter at the Cornellà-El Prat Stadium on Monday. Espanyol won 3-2.

PHOTO: AFP

# Revolt forces Di Canio out

REUTERS

Paolo Di Canio was forced out of Sunderland after a player revolt at the Italian's abrasive management style media reported on Tuesday.

British newspapers carried detailed reports of how players, led by former captain Lee Cattermole, went to club owner Ellis Short to demand his dismissal after an angry showdown with the mercurial manager.

In an angry exchange after Saturday's 3-0 Premier League defeat at West Bromwich Albion, players told Di Canio on Sunday they would no longer play for him, with the Italian telling them to go to the owner if they wanted him sacked.

Short then fired Di Canio by telephone, with the announcement of his departure made on Sunday night.

Sunderland winger Adam Johnson complained last week that constant public criticism from Di Canio "could kill players' confidence".

According to the media reports, Di Canio prohibited any familiarity between the players and staff and even banned tomato ketchup and sweet desserts from the club canteen.

# Mata urged to adapt

REUTERS

Juan Mata has been urged to follow Cristiano Ronaldo's example and broaden his skill set under Jose Mourinho in order to force his way back into the side, Chelsea assistant coach Steve Holland said on Monday.

The Spain midfielder, voted Player of the Year in the last two seasons, has been used sparingly by Mourinho, but Holland thinks he is capable of altering his game to fit into the manager's plans.

"Ronaldo is a player I have always really admired, but in his three-year period working with Jose he really evolved as an individual," Holland told the club's website.

"He is not just a talented dribbler who can score goals, he has become a top-level match winner who wants to make runs in behind and to threaten the goal," he added.

"Jose is quite clear in his mind given the success he has had.

"Having to adapt is nothing particularly new here."

# Roma lead under threat

AFP, Milan

Roma's bid to tighten their grip on Serie A is likely to be kept in check Wednesday when the Italian top flight's whipping boys Sassuolo visit bona fide title challengers Napoli.

Roma finished a disappointing seventh last season but are enjoying some time in the spotlight having won their opening four games, including a 2-0 derby win over Lazio Sunday, under new coach Rudi Garcia.

Despite feeling buoyant ahead of their visit to Sampdoria, Roma's time in the hot seat may soon be over.

Napoli sit second, also on 12 points, and only failed to retake command of the league later Sunday when an injury-time goal by Mario Balotelli reduced arrears for Milan in a 2-1 win for Napoli at the San Siro.

Only a one-goal difference separates the sides but with Inter putting seven unanswered goals past hosts Sassuolo on Sunday, Napoli's fans will expect nothing less than three points and plenty of goals when the league's new boys visit the San Paolo on Wednesday.

Napoli will be without Italy midfielder Christian Maggio after it was revealed Monday that he is to undergo knee surgery after picking up a meniscus injury.

But his loss is unlikely to affect Napoli's expected domination of Sassuolo, who are reportedly looking to replace Eusebio Di Francesco as soon as possible.

# Balotelli gets 3-match ban

REUTERS

AC Milan striker Mario Balotelli has been given a three-match ban for his sending-off at the end of Sunday's 2-1 home defeat by Napoli, the Italian league said in a statement on Monday.

Balotelli, who missed a penalty and scored a late goal in the game, was given a second yellow card after the final whistle for arguing with match officials.

In addition to the automatic one-match ban, he was given an additional two games for "directing insulting and intimidating expressions to the referee at the time of the sending-off," said the league in a statement.

AC Milan were also ordered to partially close the San Siro stadium for their next home game because of insulting chants by their fans aimed at Napoli supporters.

The disciplinary tribunals said the chanting "expressed discrimination based on their territorial origin".

# East Bengal make history

UDAY SHANKAR DAS

Football-crazy Kolkataans were in a jubilant mood when an equalising header late in the second half of return leg of an AFC Cup quarterfinal ensured one of Kolkata's leading teams, Kingfisher East Bengal Club's maiden berth in this tournament's semifinal.

Riding on 1-0 lead from the home leg held on 17 September, when a brilliant drive by Ryuji Sueoka gave the Kolkataans a well-deserved win against Semen Padang FC of Indonesia, a draw was all that they needed in the return leg to reach the last four.

Held on Tuesday afternoon in scorching heat in Agus Salim Stadium, Pedang, the home side kept the visitors under pressure from the start of the second leg, and a defensive lapse mainly from East Bengal's goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh in the 24th minute of the first half enabled Edward Wilson to give the home side a 1-0 lead in the match, and bringing the tie to a 1-1 parity.

In the second half, there were attacks on both ends without bringing any joy to either side, and when extra-time was looking a certainty, came the equaliser. In the 78th minute, the two substitutes of the visiting side combined to level the match, when Sarabjit's cross from the right flank was neatly headed into the far corner of Pedang's net by James Moga, giving East Bengal a 2-1 aggregate lead in the tie, which remained the final result.

This was the Kolkata club's sixth away win out of 22 matches in AFC Cup, and their opponents in the semifinal would be the winners of the tie between Kuwait Sports Club and New Radiant, Maldives. With the Kuwaiti club taking a hefty 7-2 lead from the first match, they are all set to reach their 4th semifinal in five years.

# Bolt extends Puma deal

AFP, Frankfurt

Jamaican sprint sensation Usain Bolt has renewed his sponsorship contract with German sportswear maker Puma "through and beyond the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio," Puma said Tuesday.

The six-time Olympic champion, aged 27, has been training and competing in Puma since 2003.

"We are very proud to extend our sponsorship contract with him because Usain is the perfect ambassador of the Puma brand," said chief executive Bjoern Gulden.

"He will play a crucial role in our future product concepts as well as brand communications leading towards the Olympic Games in Rio 2016 and beyond."

The financial terms of the contract were not disclosed but according to Forbes magazine the deal will earn Bolt some 9 million dollars per year.

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