

# What to WATCH

STAR Sports 1  
Australia v England  
Third Test, Day 2  
Live from 8:30am  
STAR Sports 4  
English Premiership  
Man City v Arsenal  
Live from 6:45pm

Chelsea v Crystal Palace  
Live from 9:00pm  
Primera Liga  
Rayo Vallecano v Granada  
Live from 11:00pm  
Barcelona v Villarreal  
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)  
Malaga v Getafe

Live from 3:00am (Sunday)  
STAR Sports HD 1  
Primera Liga  
Osasuna v Real Madrid  
Live from 9:00pm  
English Premiership  
Hull City v Stoke City  
Live from 11:30pm

Serie A  
Catania v Verona  
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)  
NEO Prime  
Bundesliga  
Schalke v Freiburg  
Live from 9:00pm  
Wolfsburg v Stuttgart

Live from 12:30am (Sunday)  
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)  
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)  
Live from 2:30am (Sunday)

## V-Day v'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions  
Bangladesh Army made a  
winning start in the Walton  
LED TV Victory Day  
Volleyball Tournament  
when they beat Border  
Guard Bangladesh by 25-08, 25-12, 25-15 points at  
the Volleyball Stadium in  
Paltan yesterday. In the  
other matches of the day,  
Titas defeated  
Bangladesh Police, Power  
Development Board out-  
played Bangladesh Navy,  
Bangladesh Air Force beat  
BGB and Bangladesh Navy  
beat Bangladesh Police.

## RVP out for a month

INTERNET

Manchester United manager  
David Moyes has  
confirmed that Robin van  
Persie will be sidelined for  
a month with a thigh  
strain.

The Netherlands international  
missed four  
matches with a groin  
problem before making  
his return to action in the  
1-0 loss to Newcastle  
United, playing the full  
90 minutes.

# Swansea qualify

AFP, Paris

 **UEFA  
EUROPA  
LEAGUE**  
Swansea City are through to the last 32 of the Europa League despite producing a lacklustre performance in losing 1-0 to St Gallen in Switzerland on Thursday.

The Welsh side knew that a point would secure their qualification for the knockout stages from Group A but instead a second-half Marco Mathys goal allowed the already-eliminated hosts to bow out on a high.

Nevertheless, the defeat did not prevent the Swans from advancing as Kuban Krasnodar failed to get the victory they required away to Valencia in Spain to stand a chance of grabbing second place.

Paraguayan Lorenzo Melgarejo scored to earn the Russians a 1-1 draw after Paco Alcacer put group winners Valencia ahead at the Mestalla, but Kuban bowed out.

After a quiet first half, St Gallen grew as a threat after the restart, but visiting goalkeeper Gerhard Tremmel made two good saves to deny Roberto Rodriguez before Sebastien Wuethrich hit the woodwork from a free-kick.

St Gallen then had a goal disallowed when Neil Taylor turned a cross into his own net but Wuethrich was penalised for a foul on the Swansea captain.

However, Mathys turned in a low Wuethrich cross following a quick free-kick to put the Swiss Super League side in front with 10 minutes left.

Pablo Hernandez fired wide with Swansea's best chance late on but they limp through and will play European football after

Christmas for the first time in their history. Tottenham Hotspur, who had already qualified before hosting Anzhi Makhachkala at White Hart Lane, made it six wins from six in Group K by beating the Russians 4-1.

Spanish striker Roberto Soldado, whose form since signing for Spurs in the summer has been the subject of criticism, scored a hat-trick, including one penalty, while Lewis Holtby also netted with a classy finish as Andre Villas-Boas' side ran out comfortable winners.

Last season's FA Cup winners Wigan Athletic were eliminated from Group D, finishing bottom of the section after a 2-1 defeat away to Slovenian champions Maribor.

In new manager Uwe Rosler's first game in charge, Wigan had to win to stand a chance of going through and a Jordi Gomez penalty put them in front.

However, Chris McCann was sent off moments later for a second booking after handling in the box and Dejan Mezga tapped in to equalise after his penalty had been saved.

Zeljko Filipovic then put Maribor in front in the second half, and they held on to win despite having Ales Mertelj sent off late on.

Maribor qualified for the last 32 courtesy of their better head-to-head record against Belgian side Zulte Waregem, who lost 2-0 to section winners Rubin Kazan.

Former European champions PSV Eindhoven needed just a point to go through from Group B but were eliminated after losing 1-0 at home to Chornomorets Odessa, a Franck Dja Djedje goal taking the Ukrainians through instead.

## L'pool lose Gerrard

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool skipper Steven Gerrard will be out for at least four weeks with a hamstring injury, leaving the English Premier League title chasers without the England star for the busy Christmas period.

Gerrard pulled up with a hamstring problem during the 4-1 win over West Ham last weekend and limped out of the game in the 56th minute.

"Steven is, as reported, probably going to be up to about four weeks or so," Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers confirmed to liverpoolfc.com.

"So he'll go through an extensive treatment programme over the next numbers of weeks and hopefully we can get him back that little bit sooner.

"But certainly at this stage, it was a four to six-week injury and we'll see how we look with that."

Gerrard, who has helped steer Liverpool to second spot in the table, will miss the games against Tottenham, Manchester City, Chelsea, Cardiff City and Hull City.

# It's crunch time

AFP, London

 Arsenal defender Per Mertesacker has challenged his team to use Saturday's crunch clash at Manchester City to prove they can cope with the pressure of the Premier League race.

Arsene Wenger's side head to Eastlands still reeling from a 2-0 defeat against Napoli on Wednesday which could prove a fatal blow to their hopes of winning the Champions League.

The Gunners needed just a point to finish top of their group and secure an easier draw in the last 16, but instead they slumped to second place and will now face either Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Real Madrid, Paris Saint Germain or Atletico Madrid.

It was a major setback just days after a frustrating 1-1 draw against Everton stopped Arsenal opening up a seven-point lead at the top of the Premier League.

In the circumstances, another defeat against City, who have won all seven of their home league matches and scored 29 goals in the process, would be a disaster heading into the busy Christmas programme.

And Germany centre-back Mertesacker knows the critics are once again starting to question whether Arsenal have the mental strength to overcome the psychological scars of the club's eight-year trophy drought.

"Now everybody is questioning our group and asking if we can maintain that level, so we have to stay together and think that 'yes, we are strong enough',"

Mertesacker said.

"It is always difficult, especially after 15 games in the league and with the Christmas period coming."

"You think you have a good chance to achieve something this season, but you have to keep your momentum and that is really important."

While Arsenal hope to cement their position at the top, fourth-placed City can't afford to lose their 100 percent home record if they want to stay in touch with the leaders.

Manuel Pellegrini's team are already six points behind Arsenal thanks to some disappointing results on their travels and England midfielder James Milner concedes this weekend's match will have a major influence on City's hopes of regaining the title they won in 2012.

"With the gap Arsenal have at the top, if they win or we win, things are going to look very different, so it is important we get the victory," Milner said.

## FIXTURES

### Saturday

(1500GMT unless stated)  
Cardiff v West Brom, Chelsea v Crystal Palace, Everton v

Fulham, Hull v Stoke (1730GMT), Manchester City v

Arsenal (1245GMT), Newcastle v Southampton, West

Ham v Sunderland

### Sunday

Aston Villa v Manchester United (1330GMT), Norwich v

Swansea (1330GMT), Tottenham v Liverpool (1600GMT)

# Kiwis thrash Windies

AFP, Wellington

 Trent Boult led New Zealand to their first Test win in more than a year Friday when he produced career best figures in a fiery bowling display that crushed the West Indies inside three days.

The West Indies lost 16 wickets on the third day as they handed New Zealand a comprehensive victory by an innings and 73 runs.

It was the Black Caps first win in 11 Tests under Brendon McCullum who replaced Ross Taylor after their last success in Sri Lanka nearly 13 months ago.

"Everyone's obviously very happy," McCullum said.

"We played near the perfect Test match and that's obviously pleasing."

The West Indies resumed Friday at 158-4 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 441.

They were forced to follow on when they collapsed to be all out for 193, and the second innings ended at 175.

Boult was the chief destroyer with six for 40 in the first innings where his last four wickets came in the space of six deliveries.

In the second innings he returned 4-40 and also pulled off a spectacular one-handed, diving catch when Denesh Ramdin (19) slashed at a Neil Wagner delivery.

## SCOREBOARD

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings 441 (Taylor 129, Watling 65, Williamson 45; Best 4-110)

**WEST INDIES:** Second innings 35 (Edwards c Williamson b Southee)

36 (Powell c Southee b Anderson)

37 (Bravo c Watling b Wagner)

38 (Samuels c Anderson b Southee)

39 (Chanderpaul not out)

40 (Deonarine c Boul b Anderson)

41 (Ramdin c Boul b Anderson)

42 (Sammy c Boul b Anderson)

43 (Shillingford c Taylor b Wagner)

44 (Best c Fulton b Boul)

45 (Gabriel c Boul b Anderson)

46 (Extras: lb-6, w-1, nb-1)

47 (Total: All out in 54.5 overs)

48 (Fall of wickets: 1-74, 2-75, 3-85, 4-94, 5-175, 6-146, 7-147, 8-148, 9-175.)

**Bowler** O M R W

Boult 12.5 2 40 4

Southee 11 2 24 3

Wagner 17 2 67 2

Anderson 11 1 29 1

Williamson 3 1 9 0

**Result:** New Zealand won by an innings and 73 runs.

**John Mooney's second five-wicket haul in the match saw Ireland post a comprehensive victory by 122 runs over Afghanistan to win the ICC Intercontinental Cup final on Friday.**

Defending champions Afghanistan, chasing 347 runs for victory, were 136 for five overnight but were dismissed for 224.

Medium pacer Mooney took 5 wickets for 36 in the Afghan second innings, giving him match figures of 10-81.

This was Ireland's fourth title in six editions of the Intercontinental Cup, but this victory marked the first time a team has won three ICC tournaments across three different formats in the same calendar year.

India's batsmen are desperately short of match practice in South African conditions. India were beaten in the first two one-day games and were bowled out for 217 and 146, with captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni the only man to hit a half-century. A thunderstorm prevented India from batting in the third and final one-day international.

**India's Test prep rain-hit**

AFP, Benoni

India's preparation for the first Test against South Africa suffered a setback when rain and a wet outfield prevented any play on the first day of a two-day match against a South African Invitation XI at Willowmoore Park on Friday.

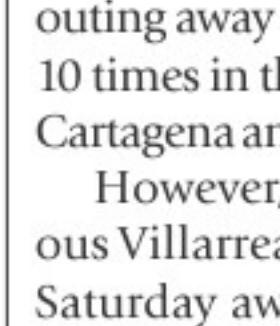
With the outfield wet after heavy rain in the previous week, and more rain expected later, the umpires took an early decision to call off play for the day.

The first of two Test matches starts at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Wednesday. With the tour having been shortened after the Indian board refused to accept the itinerary announced by South Africa, the two-day match was the only fixture scheduled between a three-day one-day series and the Tests.

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# Tough tests for contenders

AFP, Madrid

 Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid were all convincing winners in the Champions League in midweek, but could face a more difficult time on their return to domestic action this weekend.

League leaders Barca have bounced back from defeat in their last league outing away to Athletic Bilbao by scoring 10 times in their last two matches against Cartagena and Celtic respectively.

However, they welcome a dangerous Villarreal side to the Camp Nou on Saturday aware that their visitors have already taken points from both Real and Atletico this season.

"I am happy with how things are going personally and to be able to help the team. The goals help to make you more confident and I feel better physically and more comfortable on the field."

Neymar was the star of the show as Barca demolished Celtic 6-1 on Wednesday with his first hat-trick for the club.

Coach Gerardo Martino described that performance as his side's best of his first five months in charge and he may well be tempted to retain the Brazilian through the middle in the "false nine" role despite Cesc Fabregas

## FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

### Saturday

Osasuna v Real Madrid (1500), Rayo Vallecano v

Granada (1700), Barcelona v Villarreal (1900),

Malaga v Getafe (2100)

### Sunday

Almeria v Espanyol (1100), Real Sociedad v Real

Betis (1600), Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao (1800),

Atletico Madrid v Valencia (2000)