

What to WATCH

TEN HD
South Africa v India
 First Test, Day 4
Live from 2:30pm
STAR Sports 4
English Premiership
 Liverpool v Cardiff City

Live from 6:45pm
Man United v West Ham
 Live from 9:00pm
Primera Liga
 Real Betis v Almeria
Live from 11:00pm
 Atletico Madrid v Levante

Live from 1:00am (Sunday)
 Granada v Real Sociedad
Live from 3:00am (Sunday)
STAR Sports HD1
English Premiership
 Fulham v Man City
Live from 9:00pm

Serie A
 Livorno v Udinese
Live from 11:00pm
 Cagliari v Napoli
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)
NEO Prime
Bundesliga

Dormund v Hertha Berlin
Live from 9:00pm
 Nurnberg v Schalke
Live from 12:30am (Sunday)
New Zealand v West Indies
 Third Test, Day 4
Live from 3:30am (Sunday)

Vanishing spray at World Cup

AFP, Marrakech



FIFA president Sepp Blatter on Thursday confirmed that referees would be allowed to use a vanishing spray to mark out free-kicks at next year's World Cup finals in Brazil.

Referees will use the spray during matches to mark a line on the ground where the defensive wall, and ball, must be stationed at free-kicks.

The water-based spray, which disappears about a minute after use, has been trialled during the ongoing Club World Cup in Morocco.

"The teams, players, referees and delegations are happy with it. One of the Bayern representatives told me the other day that now free-kicks can be taken with the wall nine metres back instead of five or six and we are going to use it at the World Cup in Brazil," Blatter told reporters in Marrakech ahead of Saturday's Club World Cup final between European champions Bayern and host nation champions Raja Casablanca.

It will be used in addition to goal-line technology in Brazil, with Blatter adding: "Everyone has been convinced by the tools and we're similarly impressed."

The vanishing spray was previously tested at this year's under-20 World Cup in Turkey and at the under-17 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates, while it is also notably used in matches in Argentina.

It is used to stop players in the defensive wall creeping closer to the ball, while a circle is also drawn where the ball is to be placed for a free-kick.

"I like it. The mark left by the spray disappears after 15 or 20 seconds. The rules say that the wall must be a certain distance back and now that is respected," said Bayern coach Pep Guardiola.

"It is a good idea. I hope it is kept and does not disappear in the future."



Barcelona forward Pedro Rodriguez poses with a fake shark to celebrate Christmas time at the Aquarium of Barcelona on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Suarez pens new deal

BBC ONLINE

Luis Suarez has signed a new four-and-a-half-year contract with Liverpool. The striker, 26, joined the Reds in January 2011 and has scored 17 goals in 11 Premier League starts this season.

Suarez, whose original deal was set to expire in 2016, will earn around £160,000 until the end of this season and then £200,000 per week over the final four years of the contract.

"I am delighted to have agreed a new deal with Liverpool and have my future secured for the long term," he said.

"This is fantastic news for everyone associated with the club; the team, the owners and most importantly the supporters," manager Brendan Rodgers said on Liverpool's official website.

"Luis is a world-class talent and securing his services is crucial for what we are trying to achieve here."

"What's most important and most exciting is that, at just 26 years old, his best years are still ahead of him and we now know we'll be seeing him reach that potential in a Liverpool shirt."

Div-II football from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Kool 2nd Division Football League begins today at the Birshreshtha Shahid Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur with East End Club taking on PWD SC in the opening fixture. The match will start at 2:30pm. A total of 15 teams from Dhaka Metropolis are taking part in the tournament. All the matches in the group stages will take place at the same venue.

Four teams will qualify for the first division from this league while two teams will be demoted after this one-leg league. Square Toiletries is providing Tk 10 lac out of an estimated budget of Tk 15 lac for the league.

Top spot under threat

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona will have to do without both Neymar and Lionel Messi as they try to ensure they finish 2013 at the top of La Liga when they visit Getafe on Sunday.

Neymar had just hit top form in front of goal for the first time since his summer arrival from Santos with six goals in Barca's previous three games.

However, the Brazilian has already travelled back to his homeland for an early Christmas break after picking up a suspension with his fifth yellow card of the season in last weekend's 2-1 win over Villarreal.

With Messi also still recovering from his hamstring tear, the focus will be on Cesc Fabregas, Pedro Rodriguez and Alexis Sanchez to score the goals needed to keep Barca on top.

Pedro has seen his opportunities diminished by the arrival of Neymar and Sanchez's good form this season, but the Spanish international has stressed his intention to fight for his place in Gerardo Martino's side.

"When you play less you don't necessarily feel less important, but it is true that it is a different feeling when you don't get so many minutes on the field," he said.

"What I need to do is fight to try and achieve my objective which is to stay at Barcelona."

Barca did receive a boost on

Thursday with the news that Andres Iniesta is to sign a new deal that will keep him at the club until 2018.

And with Fabregas set to play in the false nine role, Iniesta should be restored to the starting line-up in midfield alongside Xavi Hernandez and Sergio Busquets.

Getafe will also face Barca in the next round of the Copa del Rey as both sides eased through their fourth-round ties in midweek.

Midfielder Angel Lafita admitted his side have a better chance of downing the Catalans in a one-off game than in a two-legged tie, but isn't convinced Barca will miss Neymar and Messi too much.

"In one game a lot can happen. When it is 180 minutes, normally consistency is the most important thing."

"In that aspect Barcelona are very strong, they are the best in the Spanish

FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

Saturday

Villarreal v Sevilla (1500), Real Betis v Almeria (1700), Atletico Madrid v Levante (1900), Granada v Real Sociedad (2100)

Sunday

Espanyol v Valladolid (1100), Getafe v Barcelona (1600), Athletic Bilbao v Rayo Vallecano (1800), Valencia v Real Madrid (2000), Celta Vigo v

league and, therefore, it is possible we have more chance of sneaking something out of the league game.

"It is obvious they are missing two of the best players in the world, but they also have Pedro, Cesc, Alexis and many others that are also playing very well and can replace them perfectly well."

Given Barca's lack of goalscoring options, Atletico Madrid have a great chance to be top of the league at Christmas for the first time since 1995 as they host Levante at the Vicente Calderon on Saturday.

Atletico trail Barca only on goals scored and will move top as long as they better Martino's men's result at Getafe.

Diego Costa will return for Diego Simeone's side after being rested in the Copa del Rey in midweek, and he too is looking to finish the year on top La Liga's scoring charts after moving level with Cristiano Ronaldo on 17 with a double in last weekend's 3-0 win over Valencia.

Real Madrid also face a tricky encounter to close the year as they travel to Valencia.

Madrid's defensive crisis has been eased by Sergio Ramos' successful appeal against his 18th red card for the club in last weekend's 2-2 draw away to Osasuna.

However, Pepe does remain suspended as he picked up his fifth yellow of the campaign, whilst Raphael Varane's on-going knee problems mean Nacho will start alongside Ramos at the heart of the

Angelo steals a thriller

STAR SPORT DESK

Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews rallied late to pull off a two-wicket win with two balls to spare in the second ODI against Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday. The win levels the five-ODI series 1-1.

After opener Ahmed Shehzad's 124 took Pakistan to 284 for four, Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara and Dinesh Chandimal took the score from 49 for two to 159 in the 32nd over. Saeed Aijmal and Junaid Khan then combined to affect a collapse to 173 for five. Mathews then strung important partnerships with the lower order before pulling the first ball of the last over by Shahid Afridi straight to mid-wicket with only four runs needed. Sachithra Senanayake hit a two and a four to seal the win.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 284 for 4 (Shehzad 124, Hafeez 32, Misbah 59 not out, Afridi 30 not out; Malinga 1-78).
SRI LANKA: 287 for 8 in 49.2 overs (Sangakkara 58, Mathews 47; Junaid 3-52, Afridi 2-46). **Result:** Sri Lanka won by two wickets.

Messi defends himself

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona star Lionel Messi defended himself, his family and fellow players on Friday against press reports linking charity football matches he played into alleged laundering of Colombian drug money.

In his first personal reaction to the allegations that emerged on Monday, the striker insisted the benefit matches were "100 percent charitable".

"I deeply regret what is being said not only about me but about people I love such as my dad and players who are my friends," the Argentine international told Spanish radio station Rac1.

Spanish newspaper El Mundo reported on Monday that the player's father Jorge Messi is suspected of being involved in an operation to launder Colombian drug money through charity football matches featuring Messi and some of his Barcelona teammates.

"What we do in those matches is 100 percent charitable," Lionel Messi said in the radio interview.

Spain's police and the Interior Ministry say a Colombian promoter is suspected of laundering drug money through concerts and sporting events in Spain, South America and the United States.

But they say there is no evidence of wrongdoing by Messi, his family or other players who featured in matches organised by the Colombian promoter at the centre of the affair.

Barcelona's president Sandro Rosell on Thursday branded the reports an "attack" on Messi's family.

Messi was speaking from Argentina where he is recovering from a hamstring injury that is sidelining him from the Barca squad until the new year.

"I am focussing mentally on my recovery and I am not thinking about anything else, other than getting back to the highest level of fitness possible," he said.

Wilshere punished

AFP, London



Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere was handed a two-match suspension on Thursday after he admitted a misconduct charge over an offensive hand gesture made towards Manchester City fans.

Wilshere was caught by television cameras raising his middle finger at City fans during the second half of Arsenal's 6-3 defeat at East-lands on Saturday.

Although the incident was missed at the time by referee Martin Atkinson and his officials, the English Football Association was able to retrospectively implement disciplinary proceedings against the player under a new pilot scheme for 'not seen' incidents in Premier League matches.

As such, an independent three-man panel agreed if the gesture had been viewed during the game, then it would have merited a dismissal.

Arsenal submitted mitigating circumstances to the governing body, arguing the length of the punishment is excessive, but those submissions were rejected and so Wilshere will now miss both the crucial clash against title rivals Chelsea on December 23 as well as the Boxing Day trip to West Ham.

A statement from the FA read: "Arsenal's Jack Wilshere has been suspended for two matches by an independent

Nadal and Williams win French awards

AFP, Paris

Tennis champions Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams have been named as sportsman and sportswoman of the year by French sports daily L'Equipe.

Nadal returned from seven months on the injury sidelines to win the French Open, US Open and five Masters Series titles as he returned to the world number one spot.

Williams produced one of the finest years of her career at 32, winning her second French Open as well as the US Open to take her haul of Grand Slam titles to 17.

Nadal said that while he was delighted to have won the newspaper's award for the second time in his career.

On the national scale, L'Equipe chose Wimbledon winner Marion Bartoli as its sportswoman of the year with the men's award going to basketball star Tony Parker, who led France to the European title.



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere removes his shirt at the final whistle after his team were beaten 6-3 during the Premier League match against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium last Saturday.