

Sony Six
New Zealand v India
Second Test, Day 5
Live from 4:00am
STAR Sports 2
ICCU-19 World Cup
New Zealand v England
Live from 11:30am

STAR Sports 4
Winter Olympic Games
Day 11
Live from 1:30pm
TEN Action
UEFA Champions League
Man City v Barcelona
Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

BARCELONA baptism for City

AFP, London



Barcelona appear to have hit form with ominous timing for Champions League knockout-phase debutants Manchester City ahead of Tuesday's last 16 first leg between the sides at the Etihad Stadium.

After a run of one win in four Liga games, including a rare home defeat against Valencia, the Catalan giants have won their last two matches in emphatic style, scoring 10 goals in the process.

Following a 4-1 success at Sevilla last weekend, Saturday's 6-0 demolition of Rayo Vallecano further strengthened their position at the top of the table on goal difference from Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid.

The game featured a goal-scoring return from injury for Neymar, while the team's fourth goal, a dizzying passing move finished by Pedro Rodriguez, bore the hallmarks of Barcelona's Pep Guardiola-era pomp.

City could scarcely have asked for more daunting opposition in what will be their first ever knockout game in the post-1992 Champions League era, but Manuel Pellegrini's side can also take heart from their weekend result.

After a run of two games without victory, the 2012 English champions produced a superb display at the Etihad to beat Chelsea 2-0 in the fifth round of the FA Cup.

The victory avenged a 1-0 loss to the same side in the Premier League 12 days earlier and goal-scorer Samir Nasri believes it was ideal preparation for the visit of Barcelona.

"It is a massive game," said the French midfielder, who was making his first appearance after a five-week lay-off with knee ligament damage.

Nasri will hope that his second-half cameo against Chelsea convinces manager Pellegrini to hand him a starting berth, but he faces competition from Jesus Navas.

With James Milner suspended and Fernandinho a doubt with a thigh problem, Javi Garcia is in line to partner Yaya Toure in

FACTFILE

Coaches

Man City - Manuel Pellegrini (CHI) 60 yrs

Barca - Gerardo Martino (ARG) 51 yrs

Leading scorers

Man City - Sergio Aguero (26 goals)

Barca - Lionel Messi (24 goals)

League performance

Man City - Third in Premier League, three points behind leaders Chelsea with a game in hand

Barca - Top of La Liga on goal difference from Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid

Group stage

Man City - second in Group D behind Bayern Munich

Barca - winners of Group H ahead of AC Milan

midfield, while top scorer Sergio Aguero is expected to miss out with a knee injury.

Barcelona coach Gerardo Martino has the rare luxury of a fully fit squad to choose from.

Despite demonstrating his fitness in the romp against Rayo, Brazil superstar Neymar is expected to start on the bench, but Xavi is likely to come back into the side after being rested on Saturday.

With Lionel Messi having amassed 10 goals in 11 games since his return to fitness in January, Pellegrini feels that reports of Barca's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

"Any coach would love to have the roster that Barca has," said the former Real Madrid and Malaga coach.

"Barca have 12 wonderful players. Messi, Xavi, (Andres) Iniesta, Neymar, Cesc (Fabregas), Pedro, they are full of great players.

"They have been leading the Primera Liga standings, they are alive in the Champions League, and they are in the final of the Copa del Rey."

The two teams have never previously met in a competitive fixture, but Barca provided the opposition when City opened their City of Manchester Stadium - subsequently rechristened the Etihad Stadium -- in August 2003.



Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany eyes the ball during a training session at the Etihad Stadium yesterday on the eve of their Champions League last 16 match against Barcelona.

PHOTO: AFP

Roma thrash Samp

APP, Milan



Young guns Mattia Destro, with a brace, and Miralem Pjanic were on target for Roma in a 3-0 romp over Sampdoria which kept the Serie A title battle with Juventus ticking over on Sunday.

Champions Juventus had accounted for spirited Chievo 3-1 earlier in Turin to take their lead over second-placed Roma to 12 points.

However Rudi Garcia's side, who have a game in hand, further underlined their scudetto credentials with a dominant display at the Olympic Stadium which simultaneously highlighted the talents of his young crop of stars.

Captain Francesco Totti was ruled out through injury but the club veteran, present in the stands, was on hand to watch the Giallorossi take command from the outset.

Destro eventually headed the hosts into a 44th minute lead from a corner, but in a lively opening half the 22-year-old was among several Roma players to narrowly miss the target as Sampdoria's defence was overrun.

A deft flick from Gervinho was cleared off the line by Daniele Gastaldello on 26 minutes and then Pjanic drilled just wide of Angelo Da Costa's goal.

Pjanic then swung over a cross that Destro missed by centimetres and the 23-year-old Bosnian forward harried down the right to deliver for Maicon only for the Brazilian to fluff his shot.

Roma missed another great opportunity on 40 minutes when Pjanic sent Kevin Strootman clear but the Dutch midfielder drilled straight at Da Costa.

The hosts had a penalty claim waved away when Shkodran Mustafi handled in the area, but from the resulting corner Destro stepped away from his marker in timely fashion to send a powerful header past Da Costa and into the top corner.

Barely 10 minutes after the restart Pjanic doubled Roma's lead with an arrow-straight free-kick which dipped just as Da Costa

RESULTS

Catania 3 (Izco 1, Spolli 48, Peruzzi 58) Lazio 1 (Mauri 45+1)

Atalanta 0 Parma 4 (Molinari 9, Benalouane 74-0g, Cassano 77, Schelotto 90+3)

Cagliari 1 (Nene 64) Livorno 2 (Emerson 43, Paulinho 53-pen)

Genoa 3 (Konate 45, Gilardino 69, 79) Udinese 3 (Basta 35, Fernandes 40, Muriel 48-pen)

Juventus 3 (Asamoah 17, Marchisio 29, Llorente 58)

Chievo 1 (Caceres 51-0g)

Sassuolo 0 Napoli 2 (Dzemali 37, 55 Insigne 55)

Roma 3 (Destro 44, 57, Pjanic 53) Sampdoria 0

dived, beating the 'keeper at his right post.

Three minutes later a Roma attack caught Samp's defence unawares and when Gervinho passed to Destro the Italian spun and smashed the ball high into the net.

Sampdoria had offered little in response but Sinisa Mihajlovic's men were unlucky when the referee waved away penalty claims after defender Mehdi Benatia appeared to shove the ball away after a blocking tackle.

Samp's chances of salvaging anything from the match suffered a blow when Gastaldello saw red on 80 minutes after a rash tackle on Radja Nainggolan, the defender's second bookable offence.

Earlier, Kwadwo Asamoah finished a one-two with Fernando Llorente with a left-foot strike from outside the area to give Juventus a 17th minute lead.

With midfielder Paul Pogba on the bench, Claudio Marchisio made the most of a rare start to tap home the rebound from an Andrea Pirlo free kick on the half-hour.

Despite being pegged back seven minutes after the restart when Martin Caceres bundled the ball into his own net, Llorente headed Juve's third from a Pirlo corner to wrap up the points.

Third-placed Napoli extended their lead over Fiorentina to six points with a 2-0 away win at struggling Sassuolo with goals from Blerim Dzemali and Lorenzo Insigne coming in either half.

Giroud in hot water

APP, London



Arsenal's French striker Olivier Giroud issued an apology on Sunday after a British tabloid newspaper alleged that he had an extramarital affair.

The Sun on Sunday claimed that Giroud spent a night in a hotel with lingerie model Celia Kay prior to Arsenal's 2-0 home win over Crystal Palace in the Premier League earlier this month.

The article was accompanied by a photograph, reportedly taken by Kay, which apparently showed Giroud in his underpants in a hotel room.

"I apologise to my wife, family and friends and my manager, team-mates and Arsenal fans," Giroud wrote on his Twitter account.

"I now have to fight for my family and for my club and obtain their forgiveness. Nothing else matters at the moment."

Giroud, 27, is Arsenal's first-choice centre-forward and is also a key player for the France national side.



Real Madrid midfields Luka Modric (C) and Alvaro Arbeloa (R) celebrating a goal during their Primera Liga encounter against Getafe at the Alfonso Perez Stadium on Sunday.

Arsenal gain sweet revenge

APP, London



Arsenal knocked Liverpool out of the FA Cup with a 2-1 win at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday as they gained revenge for a humiliating loss to their Premier League title rivals.

Only eight days earlier Arsenal were beaten 5-1 by Liverpool at Anfield.

But Arsene Wenger's men -- who have not won a major trophy since lifting the FA Cup in 2005 -- turned the table at the Emirates Stadium.

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain gave the Gunners a 16th minute lead when he followed up after Steven Gerrard blocked Yaya Sanogo's initial shot.

Oxlade-Chamberlain turned provider in the 47th minute, outpacing Daniel Agger before a pull-back for Lukas Podolski allowed the Germany star to fire them into a 2-0 lead.

But Liverpool captain Gerrard ensured a nervous finish for the London club when he scored from the penalty spot in the 59th minute after Podolski fouled Luis Suarez.

The Gunners will now face Everton in the quarterfinals after the Toffees beat Swansea 3-1 earlier on Sunday.

Everton manager Roberto Martinez, who won the Cup with Wigan last season, saw Lacinha Traore, his loan transfer signing from Monaco in January, take just four minutes of his debut to give the Merseysiders the lead.

Jonathan de Guzman drew Swansea level in the 15th before second half substitute Steven Naismith put Everton in front again -- with his fourth goal in six games -- and then won the penalty from which Leighton Baines scored to put the result beyond doubt.

However, there was a worrying moment for Everton when, shortly before full-time, Naismith went off with concussion after being caught in the head by Jordi Amat.

The draw took place just after the final whistle, with Martinez's attention turning towards the Emirates.

"The draw hasn't been too kind in terms of playing away from home, but we will embrace it and look forward to it," Martinez told ITV Sport.

Sunday's other Cup tie saw third tier Sheffield United beat second-tier Nottingham Forest 3-1.

United, managed by former Forest favourite Nigel Clough, could be involved in a derby quarter-final against Sheffield Wednesday if their city rivals beat Charlton Athletic in a re-arranged match.

Jamie Paterson headed Forest into an early lead before the on-loan Conor Coady drew the Blades level in the 66th minute.

And Chris Porter then sparked scenes of near delirium amongst the Bramall Lane faithful with two goals right at the end of the match.

He put them in front with a 90th minute penalty following Greg Halford's hand-ball and then sealed victory in stoppage-time with a finish from close range.

The last eight line-up also saw FA Cup holders Wigan paired against Manchester City in a repeat of last season's final.

Madrid at par with leaders

APP, Madrid



Real Madrid made light of the absence of the suspended Cristiano Ronaldo with a 3-0 win away at Getafe to move level with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga.

It took the visitors just five minutes to make the breakthrough as Jese Rodriguez curled home his fifth goal in six games from Gareth Bale's pass.

Karim Benzema doubled Madrid's advantage as he finished off Angel di Maria's fine cross before the break and Luka Modric rounded off the scoring with an effort from outside the box midway through the second-half.

All three sides at the top are now tied on 60 points with 14 games still to play.

Ronaldo's three-match suspension after being sent-off against Athletic Bilbao earlier this month has allowed Jese to get a continued run in the side and the Spaniard continued to make his case for a place in Vicente del Bosque's World Cup squad with a precise finish into the far corner.

Despite being involved in the build-up to the goal, Bale didn't enjoy his best afternoon as he slotted a wonderful chance wide after great work from Benzema and was shown a yellow card in the first-half.

Carlo Ancelotti's men were well in control, though, and made the game safe with a flowing counter-attack that ended with Di Maria's cross being swept home by Benzema.

Getafe started the second period the stronger as Madrid constantly gave the ball away cheaply, however the hosts couldn't take advantage of a number of half chances and were punished when Modric added to Real's lead 24 minutes from time.

The Croatian midfielder has been his side's most consistent performer since the start of the year, but hadn't scored in La Liga this season until his low strike from 25 yards past Miguel Angel Moya.

Defeat leaves Getafe still fighting for their lives as they remain without a league win since November and just four points above the relegation zone.