

SET Max
Indian Premier League
 Mumbai Indians v Kolkata Knight Riders
 Live from 8:30pm
TEN Action
 Copa del Rey

FINAL
 Barcelona v Real Madrid
 Live from 1:30am (Thursday)
STAR Sports4
 English Premiership
 Man City v Sunderland

Live from 12:45am (Thursday)
STAR Sports2
 English Premiership
 Everton v Crystal Palace
 Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

Spain WC's most expensive squad

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Spain, Argentina and Brazil have the most expensive squads of the 32 sides competing in the World Cup in June, Brazilian financial daily Valor reported on Monday. The squad of reigning champions Spain is worth an estimated 486.9 million euros (\$674 million), ahead of 474.1 million euros for Argentina and 470.2 million for hosts Brazil, according to sports analysis consultancy Pluri Consultoria. The company valued Germany's squad at 445.6 million euros with France coming in ahead of England at 398.6 million euros for Les Bleus to 354.2 million for Roy Hodgson's hopefuls. Belgium's squad outranks Italy at 336.1 million to 322.4 million for the Azzurri. The report ranked Argentina and Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi as the highest-valued player at 138.1 million euros despite a 1.4 percent drop in his estimated price over the past year. Portugal and Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo saw his estimated value rise 11.4 percent over the past year after he landed the world player of the year accolade -- but he still trails Messi by more than 30 million euros. At 107.3 million euros, Ronaldo's estimated current market value is more than a third of the 287 million euros for the entire Portugal squad. Honduras bring up the rear with their squad valued at just 32.3 million euros -- or less than one quarter of Messi and half the estimated 67.4 million for Brazil and Barcelona star Neymar, whose price tag is up 22.5 percent on last year. The consultancy will update its values after the final squads are unveiled on May 7.



Juventus forward Sebastian Giovinco celebrates his opening goal against Udinese during their Serie A match at the Friuli Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Zia loses against Russian GM

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman lost against defending champion GM Aleksandr Rakhmanov of Russia in the eighth round of the Dubai Open Chess Championship which was held in Dubai, UAE on Monday. The defeat meant Zia was on five points from eight rounds. Earlier in the 7th round, Zia drew against GM Iturrizaga Bonelli Eduardo of Venezuela.

Sunnydale, Prayas into girls' final

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunnydale and Prayas moved into the girls' team event final of the Walton Smart TV Dhaka Metropolis Table Tennis Tournament at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday. In the semifinals, Sunnydale beat Azimpur Girls School & College in 3-1 sets while Prayas defeated Sweet Ramna by the same margin. Besides, 40 boys' singles and 16 girls' singles events were also decided yesterday.

C'Ron out of final

AFP, Madrid



World Player of the Year Cristiano Ronaldo will miss the Copa del Rey final between Real Madrid and Barcelona on Wednesday due to a hamstring injury, Real boss Carlo Ancelotti has confirmed. The Portuguese star has missed Real's last three games due to the problem and Ancelotti said he didn't want to risk him with their Champions League semifinal, first leg against Bayern Munich just a week away. "Cristiano is not available because we don't want to take risks and we have other very important games to come this season," he said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday. However, Madrid have lost only once in 10 games without Ronaldo so far this season and Ancelotti believes the likes of Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema and Angel di Maria can compensate for the loss of the former Manchester United man. "We have many players out, not just Cristiano, but we have a lot of confidence in this team and the team has always responded well to missing players. I am sure it will be the same tomorrow. "We are going to lose a player with an incredible quality, but his absence as been provided motivation for the team to run more and play more as a team." Barcelona have emerged victorious in both meetings between the sides so far this season, including a remarkable game at the

Santiago Bernabeu just under a month ago which ended 4-3 to the Catalans.

However, Barca have endured a tough week as they were dumped out of the Champions League by Atletico Madrid before losing significant ground in the title race with a shock 1-0 defeat Granada at the weekend.

And Ancelotti believes his side must be brave and challenge Barca's authority in possession if they are to win the Cup for a 19th time.

"It is a final and we are not planning to try and stop them. We want to play with our quality, our identity. We have tried to do that all season and that is the only way we can win the game tomorrow.

"I think Barcelona are a team that continues to attack well, they had a lot of control of the ball in recent games and it is clear that is the strongest part of their game. To stop them doing that we have to have more control of the ball.

"A quality of our team is to control the game with possession and efficient possession. We need courage and personality, which are the two most important qualities for a final."

Madrid captain Iker Casillas also insisted he wasn't reading too much into Barca's form of late, given their ability to find their best form when it matters most in recent seasons.

"Personally, I don't place confidence in what Barcelona have done over the last month. This is a completely different game for them and us. In a final anything can happen."

Gago may miss WC

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentina midfielder Fernando Gago could miss the World Cup due to a knee injury after his club Boca Juniors said on Monday he would need up to 60 days to recover.

A scan revealed ligament damage after Gago suffered a hard knock during Boca's 0-0 draw at Colon in Santa Fe in the Argentine first division on Sunday.

"The midfielder suffered a grade two sprain in his left knee, with partial lesion of the collateral medial ligament," Boca said on their official website.

Club doctors recommended the knee be immobilised for two weeks and that Gago, who will miss the rest of the Argentine season, which ends in mid-May, should then begin rehabilitation.

Argentina play Bosnia-Herzegovina in Rio de Janeiro in their opening Group F match on June 15.

Coach Alejandro Sabella considers Gago to be Lionel Messi's ideal ball provider on the right side of a midfield that includes Javier Mascherano in the middle and Angel Di Maria on the left.

Sabella, whose squad are due to assemble to start preparations for the tournament in Buenos Aires on May 20, has so far not commented on Gago's

Toure blow for City

AFP, London

Premier League title contenders Manchester City expect to be without influential midfielder Yaya Toure for around two weeks due to a leg muscle injury, manager Manuel Pellegrini revealed on Tuesday.

"Yaya has a muscle injury. We will see with the doctor how many days," Pellegrini told a press conference.

"Maybe it is not so hard as we thought at the beginning, but I think he needs at least 10 days or two weeks to recover."

One of City's outstanding performers this season, Toure appeared to sustain the injury as he shot at goal in the early stages of his side's 3-2 loss at Liverpool in the Premier League on Sunday.

Toure, 30, stands to miss the forthcoming home matches against Sunderland and West Bromwich Albion.

Juve restore 8-pt lead

AFP, Milan



Spanish striker Fernando Llorente scored his third goal in two games as Juventus restored their eight-point lead over Roma at the top of Italy's Serie A with a comfortable 2-0 win away to Udinese on Monday.

Roma kept their slim hopes of a first scudetto since 2001 alive with a 3-1 win at home to Atalanta on Saturday which reduced the gap to five points.

But any thoughts Antonio Conte's men, beaten 2-0 away at Napoli two weeks ago, would suffer a slip-up at the Friuli Stadium were quashed inside the first half hour of a largely one-sided contest.

Sebastian Giovinco opened the scoring on 16 minutes, with Llorente adding a second 10 minutes later to leave a hapless Udinese with a mountain to climb at a near empty stadium.

With striker Carlos Tevez struggling with adductor problems, Conte rested the Argentinian in anticipation of a testing run-in in which Juve face Benfica in the semifinals of the Europa League twice in the coming two weeks.

It meant a rare start for Giovinco alongside the towering Llorente and the 'Atomic Ant' seized the day by opening the scoring on 16 minutes after bustling past Maurizio Domizzi and beating Simone Scuffet with a left-foot strike which rocketed into the keeper's far bottom corner.

Giovinco almost doubled his tally minutes later, only for Scuffet to parry the diminutive striker's low drive round the post.

But from the corner, the teenage 'keeper was left exposed when he blocked Kwadwo Asamoah's attempted tap-in which fell to Llorente to stroke into the net to give the visitors a 2-0 lead on 26 minutes.

It was the Spanish international's 14th goal of the campaign, all from open play.

Udinese re-emerged for the second half with more intent but their spark fizzled out and they were soon back to chasing possession as Juventus re-established command.

After some scrappy opening exchanges the Bianconeri edged closer to a third goal halfway through the second half.

Giovinco hustled down the right but his lob for Llorente from the byeline was just too high and minutes later defender Giorgio Chiellini charged into the area and cut back for Giovinco, whose shot came off Scuffet's far post.

Udinese coach Francesco Guidolin tried to inject some life into his side when he replaced Hassan Yebda with lively Colombian Luis Muriel and with 12 minutes remaining iconic captain Antonio Di Natale made way for Nico Lopez.

Udinese, to their credit, kept pushing to reduce the arrears and Muriel came agonisingly close to an injury-time consolation when his mis-hit shot from the left of the box beat Gianluigi Buffon but came back off the inside of the post.

Winning star for Novak

AFP, Monte Carlo

Novak Djokovic stormed into the third round of the Monte Carlo Masters as the defending champion won his 11th straight match of the season 6-1, 6-0 over Albert Montanes on Tuesday.

The second seed is bidding for a trophy at his fifth straight Masters 1000 after ending last season as winner at Shanghai and Paris and sweeping Indian Wells and Miami last month.

He won the last 11 games in a row, finishing in 45 minutes and improving to 17-2 on the season.

The Serb ranked second in the world behind top seed and eight-time Monte Carlo champion Rafael Nadal ran his record over Spain's Montanes to a comfortable 6-0.

Ninth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga joined Djokovic in the third round with a hard-fought 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 victory over German Philipp Kohlschreiber on his third winning chance.

French compatriot Michael Llodra upset slumping Polish 16th seed Jerzy Janowicz 6-4, 6-2.

Come to Dhaka or get the axe!

SPORTS REPORTER

Three-time defending national table tennis champion Manash Chowdhury is on the verge of being axed from the national table tennis camp for the upcoming Commonwealth Games after Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday sent him a letter asking him to join the camp in Dhaka full-time or face axing from the team.

Manash, who is a dentist by profession and practises his trade in Chittagong to support his family, has been training in the port city in the evening after finishing his day-time job. Manash feels that despite proving his worth by becoming first in the selection, he should not be axed for just not being able to train in the capital.

"They [BOA] have not given any thought to the fact that I have been first while training in Chittagong of my own accord. If I have to shift to Dhaka for full-time training, for the couple of months, I won't be able to meet my family expenditures. Table tennis is not a very rewarding sport which is why we have to pursue other professions for our livelihood," pleaded Manash yesterday.

Manash informed that he had pledged to train in Dhaka for four days and in Chittagong for two days during a meeting with the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation officials a few days ago. He said the federation agreed to his proposal, but now they are not willing to give him any leeway, thanks to the BOA directive.

"The federation did not bring any foreign coach for the training camp. So, I requested them to set up the camp in Chittagong and two of my teammates also agreed to train in Chittagong. But the federation declined my request," said Manash, adding that another player who was way below in the pecking order, was being readied to replace him.

Manash, who won the last three national championships, clinched his first national title in 2009 and has made the final in the last six editions. He also became first in the trial for the Commonwealth Games camp, which began on March 18.

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