

DAY'S
EVENT

Premier League
Team BJMC v Sk Russel
Time: 5:30pm

Rajasthan on a roll

AGENCIES, Ahmedabad

Rajasthan Royals consolidated their chances of making it to the play-offs of the seventh edition of IPL on Thursday with a magnificent 62-run victory over a listless Delhi Daredevils, who are already out of the play-off contention.

Chasing a mammoth target of 202, the Daredevils kept on losing wickets at regular intervals and only managed 139 for the loss of 9 wickets at the end of 20 overs. Manoj Tiwary was the lone warrior in the Delhi line-up with his unbeaten 61.

Delhi skipper Kevin Pietersen completely read the pitch wrong as he invited Rajasthan to make best use of the conditions piling up their season's best score of 201 for six.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RR: 201 for 6 in 20 overs (Rahane 64, Samson 40, Cooper 32, Faulkner 23 not out; Tahir 2-25, Nadeem 2-35) DD: 139 for 9 in 20 overs (Tiwary 61 not out, Agarwal 17; Bhatia 2-18, Faulkner 1-6)

Result: Rajasthan Royals won by 62 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Ajinkya Rahane.

Federer falls

AFP, Rome

Frenchman Jeremy Chardy caught Roger Federer on the hop and Rafael Nadal had to fight to survive on Wednesday at the ATP-WTA Rome Masters.

Federer fell to Chardy 1-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

Nadal was manhandled by Gilles Simon before the Spaniard came up with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 win.



The victorious Vietnamese team members show off the Standard Chartered Trophy after winning the third edition of the competition at Anfield in Liverpool on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STANCHART



PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Europa League final against Benfica at the Stadio delle Alpi in Turin on Wednesday.

Sensational win for Sevilla

AFP, Turin



Spanish side Sevilla sensationally claimed a third Europa League title after a dramatic penalty shoot-out in which Benfica pair Oscar Cardozo and Rodrigo missed from the spot to extend the Portuguese giants' European final hoodoo in Turin on Wednesday.

Benfica, recently crowned league and League Cup champions, came to Turin confident of ending a 52-year jinx that had seen them lose a total of seven European finals since winning the second of two consecutive European Cups in 1962.

Benfica had stumbled at the last hurdle five times in the

European Cup, once in the UEFA Cup (1983) and once in its successor, the Europa League, in 2013 when they lost 2-1 to Chelsea in Amsterdam.

Yet despite creating the lion's share of chances in an open, flowing encounter, the 'Benfica Curse' -- as their unenvied streak has come to be known -- was maintained as Jorge Jesus's men ultimately failed to hit the net at Juventus Stadium.

Jesus said the "best team did not win the Europa League", and added: "Sevilla started off better, but as match progressed we improved and we were the better team.

"We showed our power and created chances to score but couldn't. And then in extra time the team that believed more in the

penalties was Sevilla."

Benfica's fans, celebrating in Turin only weeks ago having knocked Juventus out of the competition during a scoreless second leg draw in their semifinal, had plenty of reason to feel aggrieved.

The Portuguese were solid throughout and although Sevilla, steered admirably by the surging runs and intelligent play of Croatian captain Ivan Rakitic, created chances of their own, Benfica should have had scored before the break.

Sevilla's Portuguese 'keeper Beto produced two crucial saves in succession, first denying Maxi Pereria from point-blank range as he ran on to volley and then diving low to block Rodrigo's angled drive.

Benfica had claims for a penalty waved away when Nicolas Gaitan tumbled under a challenge from Federico Fazio and Sevilla's defence was tested again at the start of a busy second half when Nicolas Pareja cleared Lima's goal-bound shot off the line and then two chances by Rodrigo were blocked by an astute Spanish defence.

Lima was then only denied by a superbly-timed challenge from Coke as he waited to pull the trigger on Pereira's cross. Rodrigo's first-time shot was then blocked by Fazio, and from virtually out of nowhere on 84 minutes Lima fired a curling drive which forced Beto to tip to safety.

The match remained scoreless after two 15-minute periods of extra time and when it came to

penalties Sevilla -- who claimed the second of their two titles from the Europa League's predecessor, the UEFA Cup in 2007 -- stepped up to the plate.

Sevilla coach Unai Emery admitted it had been "delicate" keeping his troops focused.

"All you can do is tell them to be calm, sure of themselves and not to have any doubts. It's a delicate situation," he said.

Sevilla were allowed to dream when Beto dived low to save Cardozo's shot, and after he then stopped Rodrigo's equally tame effort, Frenchman Kevin Gamero sealed the win with his spot-kick to make Sevilla the first team to win the Europa League on penalties.

Rakitic was quick to pay tribute: "We all have to say thanks to Beto

Nasri's future in doubt

AFP, Abu Dhabi



finals.

The 26-year-old -- who had an outstanding season as City won the English Premier League title -- said he respected France coach Didier Deschamps decision, ostensibly taken because he didn't regard him as a team player, but it had prompted him to think about his future.

"It's a little bit hard to accept," Nasri told Sky Sports News from Abu Dhabi where City were showing off their Premier League trophy.

"I need to take some time now to think about the national team because it's been twice now that they take away a World Cup from me," he continued, referring to then-coach Raymond Domenech's decision to leave him out of the 2010 World Cup.

"I need to think a little bit during the holiday, what will be my future in the

national team, because missing two World Cups is really hard for a player."

Nasri, whose last match for France was in the first leg of the 2014 World Cup play-off with Ukraine which they lost 2-0 last November, said Deschamps decision hadn't come as a shock.

"I respect his choice, which hasn't been a surprise for me," Nasri told reporters.

"If he thinks my behaviour is bad, that's his business. Me, I play for my team (Manchester City) and I have no problem," said Nasri, who has 41 caps for his country.

Nasri, who started his career at Marseille before spending three years at Arsenal prior to joining City, was handed a three-match ban by the French Football Federation for poor behaviour during Euro 2012.

He then returned to the national team in August 2013 but his performances failed to convince Deschamps.

Nasri's club boss, Manuel Pellegrini, said the midfielder's absence from the France set-up "is not good news for him. He deserves to play for France but each coach has his choices."

France kick off their World Cup campaign against Honduras on June 15 in Porto Alegre. They will also face Switzerland and Ecuador in Group E.

Thiago ruled out of WC

AFP, Berlin

Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara has been ruled out of next month's World Cup in Brazil after suffering a fresh knee injury, his club Bayern Munich confirmed on Thursday.

The 23-year-old will undergo more surgery after again tearing the medial ligament in his right knee -- the same injury which has kept him out since March -- in club training on Monday.

He will miss the World Cup with holders Spain opening their defence against the Netherlands in Group B on June 13 in Salvador, Brazil, in a repeat of the 2010 final.

On Tuesday, Spain boss Vicente del Bosque had included Thiago in his 30-man provisional squad for the World Cup having made five appearances for Spain.

"That is a bitter pill for Thiago, we're really sorry for the boy," said Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge as Thiago joined Bayern from Barcelona last July.

Rio sidesteps exit questions

AFP, Singapore

Rio Ferdinand sidestepped questions about his abrupt departure from Manchester United Thursday and said he was still considering his next move.

The former England captain, taking questions in Singapore during a promotional visit, said he had already "settled" the matter with a statement on his website.

"My statement at the end settled what needed to be settled... I don't want it to become a 'Rio Ferdinand affair'," Ferdinand told media.

In his statement, the 35-year-old admitted that "circumstances didn't allow for me to say goodbye the way I would have liked", after a trophy-filled, 12-year career at Old Trafford.

Ferdinand was dropped for the last game of the season and on Monday, he revealed he would leave the club after his contract expires in July.

British media said Ferdinand was only told at the last minute that his contract would not be renewed, in what was interpreted as harsh treatment for a long-serving and successful player.

Ferdinand, appearing with Manchester City's Sergio Aguero, said he was still mulling what do next. He looks likely to seek a new club after saying in his statement that he felt "fit and healthy, ready for a new challenge".

No official WC song for France

AFP, Paris

There will be no official theme song for the France team during the 2014 World Cup finals, the French Football Federation (FFF) said on Thursday.

"Following numerous songs released in recent days on the theme of the World Cup in Brazil, the FFF wishes to clarify that it will not bestow on any of them the title of official anthem of the France team," the FFF told AFP.

Several French singers, including rock group Mickey 3D, have released songs, mostly humorous, in recent weeks, to encourage 'Les Bleus' in Brazil.

Other national sides have opted for an official song with singer Stromae's "Ta fête" (Your Party), the official song for Belgium for the 2014 World Cup.

WORLD CUP BRIEFS

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

If Messi was an Englishman !

English rock group The Band of God have released a video imagining the World Cup conquest England would wage if Lionel Messi were on the team. "If Messi Was an Englishman" opens with a review of England's roster and wishfully concludes, "What we need is one Messi."

The video then shows a Photoshopped Messi clad in iconic English garb -- a Yeomen of the Guard uniform, a leather punk-rock vest -- and touring various national landmarks. It even offers to hand over the Falkland Islands -- or Malvinas, as they are known in Argentina, which tried and failed to seize them from Britain in 1982 -- if Messi's country lets him play for England.

Hungry Hazard's hamburger

Belgium's Eden Hazard spoke publicly for the first time about his infamous "hamburger incident" in a TV interview Sunday.

Hazard was suspended for three matches, later reduced to one, after he was substituted during a Euro 2012 qualifier against Turkey and left the stadium, only to be caught munching a hamburger outside.

"I sent a message to my dad and told him

to come outside, that we should leave," said Hazard, recalling his disappointment at being benched. "At the time I was super hungry. That's normal after a match.... Even if it's true that it was a stupid thing to do. But I learned my lesson."

Lufthansa rebrands as Fanhansa

Lufthansa will put new logos on eight of its planes, temporarily rebranding itself as "Fanhansa" in support of the German national team and football fans everywhere, it said.

The logos will debut on a mid-range plane flying from Munich to Hamburg and London, and eventually feature on two more mid-range and five long-haul planes -- including jumbo Boeing 747-8s, where they will be hard to miss, with letters measuring 1.2 meters (four feet) tall and a giant football.

The German flag carrier will transport the national team to Brazil in one of the planes.

I'll drink to that

World Cup fans can celebrate after Brazil's finance ministry postponed a planned tax hike on cold beverages.

Finance Minister Guido Mantega told reporters: "The government will postpone the tax rise. It will be a Cup without drinks price rises."



Manchester United's Rio Ferdinand (L) and Manchester City's Sergio Aguero juggle the ball during a promotional visit to Singapore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP