

What to WATCH

MAASRANGA TV & SET MAX
Indian Premier League
Chennai v Punjab
Qualifier 2
Live from 8:30pm

STAR SPORTS4
FIFA Friendly
England v Peru
Live from 1:30am (Saturday)
TEN SPORTS
FIFA Friendly

Spain v Bolivia
Live from 2:00am (Saturday)
NEO PRIME
French Open
Men's & Women's
Third Round

Live from 3:00pm



Controversial friendly

AFP, London

World Cup finals bound Nigeria had to come from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Scotland in London in a match which is subject to a match fixing investigation.

The build-up to the game between the Africa Cup of Nations champions and the improving Scots had been overshadowed by reports that Britain's serious crime squad had launched a match fixing investigation.

The National Crime Agency, which investigates serious and organised crime, is said to have asked world football's governing body FIFA to issue an alert over attempts to influence the game at Fulham's stadium Craven Cottage.

The NCA are said to have told FIFA they have general information from Asian betting markets suggesting there had been attempts to rig the friendly and they hoped to stop any suspect activities by issuing the alert.

A FIFA spokesman said they worked closely with law enforcement agencies and other sports organisations to tackle match manipulation, and encouraged anyone with information to contact their integrity hot-line or confidential reporting system.

On the pitch Scotland -- now unbeaten in six games under Gordon Strachan -- made the perfect start as Charlie Mulgrew opened the scoring after 10 minutes before Michael Uchebo equalised with four minutes left of the first half.

Scotland came out with plenty of fight after the break and Nigerian goalkeeper Azubuike Ekwuekwue turned in James Morrison's cross in the 52nd minute to put the Scots back into the lead.

But super-sub Uche Nwofor converted an equaliser in stoppage time of a game in which they had looked second best throughout.

Mulgrew didn't know too much about his opener as James Morrison rifled in a shot from the edge of the box which cannoned off his team-mate's foot and looped up and over goalkeeper Austine Ejide in the 10th minute.

There had been early warning signs for the Super Eagles as Watford's Ikechi Anya, who has a Nigerian father and was eligible to play for the opposition, dragged a shot wide in the opening five minutes.

The game was the 'host's' last before flying to play Greece and then the United States in North America and kicking off their games in Brazil against Iran on June 16 in Curitiba.

Spain playmaker Juan Mata (R) eyes the ball during a training session at the Sport City in Las Rozas on Wednesday ahead of their international friendly against Bolivia tonight.

PHOTO: AFP

Swansea snap up Fabianski

REUTERS

Lukasz Fabianski aims to oust Michel Vorm as Swansea City's first choice goalkeeper after rejecting a contract extension with Arsenal and joining their English Premier League rivals on a free transfer on Thursday.

The 29-year-old Polish international signed a four-year deal, which will be activated upon the expiry of his Arsenal contract on July 1, and becomes Garry Monk's first signing since taking over as manager in February.

"I am very happy with the move, the decision and the club," he told the Swansea website. "For me, it was an easy decision to make.

"If I'm completely honest, the main reason I came to Swansea was because I want to be the number one goalkeeper. I want to play week-in, week-out. It's going to be a real fight, but I'm not afraid of that."

Fabianski, who has won 21 international caps, will compete with Dutch international Vorm for a starting spot at the Liberty Stadium after ending his seven-year spell at the Emirates.

The injury-prone Vorm, who underwent knee surgery in December, was named in the Netherlands' preliminary World Cup squad earlier this month.

Socceroos 1st to touch down

AFP, Curitiba

Australia touched down in Brazil on Wednesday to launch their World Cup campaign, the first team to arrive for the tournament.

The Socceroos landed in the southern city of Curitiba before catching a connection to the coastal town of Victoria, where their base camp is located.

Australia are the lowest-ranking of the 32 teams in the tournament -- world number 59 in FIFA's last ranking -- but midfielder Tommy Oar said they were using that as motivation.

"We are the underdogs. It will be a good opportunity for the Australian team to surprise, so this is all very exciting. And being in the 'soccer country' is an extra motivation, of course," Oar said in a statement released by FIFA.

"We've been training for the last few days and things have gone well. We still have some more weeks to keep on training, so I think we will be well-prepared for the World Cup."

Security was tight for the team's arrival in Curitiba, with officials expecting anti-World Cup protests that never materialized, said an AFP photographer.

Brazil has been hit by a wave of strikes and protests in recent weeks sparked by public anger over the more than \$11 billion being spent on the tournament in a country with urgent needs in education, health and transport.

In the end, however, the only crowd awaiting the Socceroos was a friendly one of about 100 people who welcomed them waving Brazilian flags.

Australia, who are playing in their third straight World Cup, have their first match on June 13 against Chile. They will also face Spain and the Netherlands in a difficult Group A.

The next teams expected in Brazil are Croatia and Iran on June 3. The last arrivals are South Korea, Ghana and Portugal on June 11, the day before the opening match.

The Brazilian side for their part opened their base camp Monday and, after undergoing medical checks, took to the practice pitch for the first time Wednesday.

Neuer, Lahm start training

REUTERS, St Martin

Germany keeper Manuel Neuer and captain Philipp Lahm kicked off their belated World Cup preparations on Thursday with light training after missing the start of the camp through injury.

Neuer did not do any goalkeeping training and only some light running as he races to recover from his shoulder injury in time for the tournament start next month.

There was more good news for coach Joachim Loew at their northern Italian training camp with Lahm training in part with the team for the first time on Thursday as he also recovers from a foot injury picked up in the German Cup final two weeks ago.

"At the moment they cannot be fully fit with us but it looks good for both of them," defender Jerome Boateng told reporters. "For Manuel it may take a bit longer but it will all work out."

Neuer has been the undisputed number one for four years and there have been concerns in recent days about whether he will be fully fit for Germany's first match on June 16 against Portugal.

Italy's Rossi dilemma

REUTERS

Injury-plagued striker Giuseppe Rossi remains the biggest dilemma for Cesare Prandelli as the deadline looms for the Italy coach to trim his World Cup squad to 23 players.

Prandelli admits he has been moved by Rossi's effort to prove that he is ready for the tournament, yet still appears to be cautious about gambling on the player who, when fit, is arguably Italy's most prolific and consistent scorer.

Italy's provisional 30-man squad have been training outside Florence for the last week and, with little real news, Italian media have speculated endlessly on who will be among the unlucky seven.

Many other coaches have saved themselves the headache, and tension, by announcing their definitive 23-man squad well ahead of the June 2 deadline.

However, after Italy repeatedly ran out of gas during matches at Euro 2012, Prandelli is closely monitoring the players' fitness to make sure that those he takes to Brazil are capable of outlasting the opposition.

The latest consensus is, that of the seven forwards in the provisional squad, Mario Balotelli, Ciro Immobile and Alessio Cerci are certain to make the cut, Antonio Cassano has a good chance and Lorenzo Insigne is likely to be dropped.

That would leave Rossi vying with AS Roma's Mattia Destro, who has also battled back from injury, for the fifth and final spot.

Rossi would certainly get the sympathy vote. The United States born forward's troubles began when he suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury while playing for Villarreal in a Spanish league match against Real Madrid in 2011.

Iniesta ice cream

INTERNET

Spanish ice cream maker Kalise has produced the ultimate honour for Andres Iniesta's extra-time winner in the 2010 World Cup final: a frozen treat on a stick.

With help from Iniesta himself, Kalise have released the new ice cream bar, called "Minuto 116" -- the moment Iniesta broke Spain's scoreless deadlock with the Netherlands in South Africa four years ago -- just in time for the 2014 World Cup and its maximized marketing potential.

The football boot shaped ice cream comes in the Spanish national team's colours and includes the corresponding flavours of mandarin orange, raspberry and passion fruit.

Iniesta stars in the commercial launching the new brain freeze inducer.

United owner Glazer dead

AFP, Washington

Malcolm Glazer, the owner of English Premier League giants Manchester United and American football team the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, died Wednesday, it was announced.

Malcolm Glazer was 85 years old.

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