

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 4
English Premiership
QPR v Stoke City
Live from 5:45pm
Aston Villa v Arsenal
Live from 8:00pm
West Ham v Liverpool

Live from 10:30pm
Serie A
AC Milan v Juventus
Live from 12:45am (Sunday)
STAR SPORTS2
Primera Liga
Bilbao v Granada

Live from 10:00pm
Atletico Madrid v Celta de Vigo
Live from 12:00am (Sunday)
Espanyol v Malaga
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)



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Everton defender Seamas Coleman (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Leighton Baines (L) during their Europa League match against Wolfsburg at Goodison Park on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Everton return in style

AFP, Paris

Everton marked their first appearance in Europe since the 2009/2010 season with a 4-1 Europa League win over Wolfsburg on Thursday while Celtic and Tottenham were held to draws in tricky away assignments.

The Merseysiders were ahead after just 15 minutes at Goodison Park when Ricardo Rodriguez put through his own goal after deflecting a Steven Naismith shot before a close-range header from Seamas Coleman made it 2-0 on the stroke of half-time.

Leighton Baines added the third from the penalty spot two minutes after the break with Kevin Mirallas firing home a smart fourth two minutes from time after a fine pass from substitute Samuel Eto'o.

Rodriguez grabbed a consolation for Wolfsburg with a curled free-kick past Tim Howard in the Everton goal in injury time.

The English side top H after rivals Lille and Krasnodar drew 1-1 in France.

Scottish champions Celtic came away from their trip to 1994 finalists Salzburg with an entertaining 2-2 Group D stalemate, twice being pegged back, while Spurs were goalless against Partizan in Belgrade.

Ghanaian winger Wakaso Mubarak put Celtic in the lead in the first quarter of an hour in Austria on his loan debut.

Brazilian striker Alan then levelled for the home side, his 35th minute shot deflected off defender Efe Ambrose.

Minutes before, only Celtic keeper Craig Gordon's fingertips had kept out Andre Ramlho's header.

After the restart, Gordon produced a superb double save to keep Salzburg at bay again.

Scott Brown put the Scots back in front on the hour, his 30-yard screamer helped on its way by Andre Ramalho's leg.

With 12 minutes left, Salzburg captain Jonatan Soriano earned the Austrians a share of the points with a brilliant freekick, which flew over the wall and into the top corner of Gordon's net.

In the other game in Celtic's group, on-loan Manchester United forward Angelo Henriquez was among the scorers as Dinamo Zagreb routed Astra Giurgiu of Romania 5-1.

Tottenham, in their fourth Europa League campaign, made no fewer than 10 changes from the side that drew with Sunderland in the Premier League at the weekend, keeper Hugo Lloris the only survivor.

Harry Kane almost gave the north Londoners a dream start to their bid to get out of Group C, his first minute attempt hitting the bar.

But despite looking dangerous on occasions Tottenham lacked the killer touch and were unable to find a way through Partizan's defence.

Elsewhere, Inter Milan were held 1-1 at Dnipro, and goals from Aleksandr Kokorin and Aleksei Ionov lifted Dinamo Moscow to a 2-1 Group E win at Panathinaikos.

Defending champions Sevilla enjoyed a 2-0 win over Feyenoord thanks to first-half strikes from Grzegorz Krychowiak and Stephane Mbia.

Celebration goes wrong

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Coritiba forward Joel Tagueu's goal celebration went spectacularly wrong when he jumped over an advertising hoarding and disappeared into a hole during a Brazilian championship match.

The Cameroon player got carried away after he ran from the halfway line and rounded the goal-keeper to score his second goal of the game, and Coritiba's third, in a 3-1 win over Sao Paulo on Wednesday night.

He continued running and leapt over the hoarding, unaware that there was a hole behind it containing steps that led down from the pitch into the dressing room.

The player landed in the hole, his blow softened by a tarpaulin, and emerged looking decidedly groggy before returning to the game.

Brandao gets 6-month ban

AFP, Paris

Bastia's Brazilian striker Brandao was banned for six months by the French football league's disciplinary commission on Thursday for headbutting Paris Saint-Germain's Thiago Motta, his club announced.

Brandao had already been suspended on August 21, five days after he clashed with Motta in the corridors of the Parc des Princes following the two clubs' Ligue 1 match.

He will only be able to return to action on February 21 next year.

Milan gear up for Juve

AFP, Milan

AC Milan host Juventus in a top-of-the-table clash Saturday that could add impetus to their bid to erase two nightmare seasons -- if the Rossoneri can plug the holes at the back.

Under new coach Filippo Inzaghi, Milan have enjoyed a flying start to the season following two horrendous campaigns under Massimiliano Allegri and, latterly, Clarence Seedorf.

An opening day win over Lazio (3-1) was followed by a 5-4 win at Parma last weekend.

Although the latter victory put Milan's attacking talents on display, it also exposed their frailties at the back.

Juventus, unbeaten at home all of last season on their way to a third consecutive title, have yet to concede a goal in their two

wins over Chievo and Udinese and have scored three times.

Milan midfielder Jeremy Menez, however, said he expects plenty of fireworks at the San Siro on Saturday.

"It will be a big show. Plenty of goals and emotion, almost like it was at Parma," the Frenchman told Gazzetta dello Sport.

"Juve may still be ahead of us, but on Saturday we'll be playing on level terms and we could achieve something special."

"There's a lot riding on this game... we just have to concentrate on ourselves and stick to our gameplan."

FIXTURES

Saturday
Cesena v Empoli (1600 GMT), Milan v Juventus (1845)
Sunday
Chievo v Parma (1030), Genoa v Lazio, Roma v Cagliari, Sassuolo v Sampdoria (1300), Atalanta v Fiorentina, Udinese v Napoli (1600), Palermo v Inter, Torino v Verona (1845)

Real have little room for error

AFP, Madrid

Two consecutive defeats have left European champions Real Madrid with a mountain to climb just three games into the La Liga season if they are to catch leaders Barcelona.

Real are six points adrift of the Catalans, who have made a 100 percent start under new boss Luis Enrique, after a 4-2 defeat to Real Sociedad was followed by a 2-1 reverse at home to Atletico Madrid last weekend.

Carlo Ancelotti's men did at least manage to get back to winning ways in midweek as they thrashed Basel 5-1 in their Champions League opener.

The performance of Colombian James Rodriguez was a particularly positive aspect of that win as he produced his best display since a 75 million euro (\$97 million, £59.6 million) move from Monaco after being heavily criticised for his failure to replace the energy and balance offered by the departed Angel di Maria.

Ancelotti accepted the criticism dished out to his side less than four months after sealing the club's 10th European Cup, hailing the high demands at working at one of the biggest clubs in the world.

Blame it on wrong boots

AFP, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona joked Thursday that Argentina lost the World Cup final to Germany because striker Gonzalo Higuain "had his boots on the wrong feet".

Higuain, the former Real Madrid star who now plays with Napoli in Italy, fluffed a golden chance to score for Argentina in the July 13 final in Rio before Mario Goetze grabbed Germany's dramatic extra-time winner.

"Pipa' (Higuain's nickname) is a goal scorer. If he gets 10 chances like that, he'd score nine times," Maradona told Argentine TV station, TyC Sport.

"But he had his boots on the wrong feet that day."

London to host Euro 2020 final

AFP, Geneva

London will host the final and semifinals of the 2020 European football championship, which will exceptionally be held in 13 different countries, UEFA boss Michel Platini announced Friday.

The quarterfinals will meanwhile be hosted by Munich (Germany), Baku (Azerbaijan), Saint Petersburg (Russia) and Rome (Italy), the president of European football's governing body revealed at a ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland.

London beat its sole rival Munich for the top bid, as observers expected.

Debuchy out for 6 weeks

REUTERS, London

Injured Arsenal right back Mathieu Debuchy will be out for at least six weeks and possibly three months but Jack Wilshere has recovered from an ankle scare, manager Arsene Wenger said on Friday.

"We will know tonight. He has an exploration of his ankle tonight," Wenger told reporters ahead of Saturday's Premier League match at Aston Villa when asked about the French international.

"They are going to look at how the ligament is damaged and after that we'll know. If he doesn't need surgery it will be six weeks."

City in Chelsea's way

AFP, London

Stung by a last-minute defeat in the Champions League, Manchester City will attempt to make up ground in the Premier League title race when they host leaders Chelsea on Sunday.

A 90th-minute strike by former player Jerome Boateng condemned City to a 1-0 loss at Bayern Munich on Wednesday and left Manuel Pellegrini's side without a victory in three matches.

Chelsea can open up an eight-point lead over the champions if they pull off a repeat of their 1-0 win at the Etihad Stadium in February and City midfielder Fernandinho says it is a game that his side must win.

"That is not easy for a big team such as City (to lose against Bayern), but the best way to recover our confidence and our best qualities is to win the next game," said the Brazilian.

"Already we think about the Chelsea game. We have to win this game because we have had a (2-2) draw against Arsenal and a (1-0) loss at home to Stoke. We have to recover points to think about the top of the table."

Chelsea are gunning for a fifth consecutive league victory, but their momentum took a blow in Wednesday's 1-1 draw at home to Schalke.

A breakaway goal by Klaas-Jan Huntelaar earned the German side a point after Cesc Fabregas had put the hosts ahead and Chelsea captain John Terry has urged his team to cut out the defensive errors that have seen them concede six goals in their first four league outings.

"The first four league games, we've been killing teams off. We didn't do it (against Schalke), but it was disappointing to concede the way we did, from a counter-attack from our own corner," Terry told the club website.

"It was our corner, we were attacking, and we got caught on the break. It shouldn't happen. It's the second time already this season it's happened."

City will restore Sergio Aguero to their starting XI and seven-goal top scorer Diego Costa will return for Chelsea after the two players started their respective sides'

Champions League opens on the bench.

Arsenal also endured punishment at German hands in the Champions League, losing 2-0 at Borussia Dortmund, and have drawn their last three games in the league.

On Saturday Arsene Wenger's side visit Aston Villa, who climbed to second place in the league table with an impressive 1-0 victory at Liverpool in their last game.

Liverpool survived a scare in the Champions League, winning 2-1 at home to Bulgarian newcomers Ludogorets Razgrad thanks to a 93rd-minute penalty by captain Steven Gerrard.

With Daniel Sturridge sidelined by injury, Liverpool have been labouring in front of goal, but ahead of Saturday's trip to West Ham United, manager Brendan Rodgers has urged their fans to show patience.

"I remember this time last year I was asked if we were going to score enough goals and we ended up with 101 (league) goals," he told a press conference on Thursday.

"We've had to bring in a lot of new players because of the demands of the Champions League so that naturally takes time and we've got players adapting to a new country."

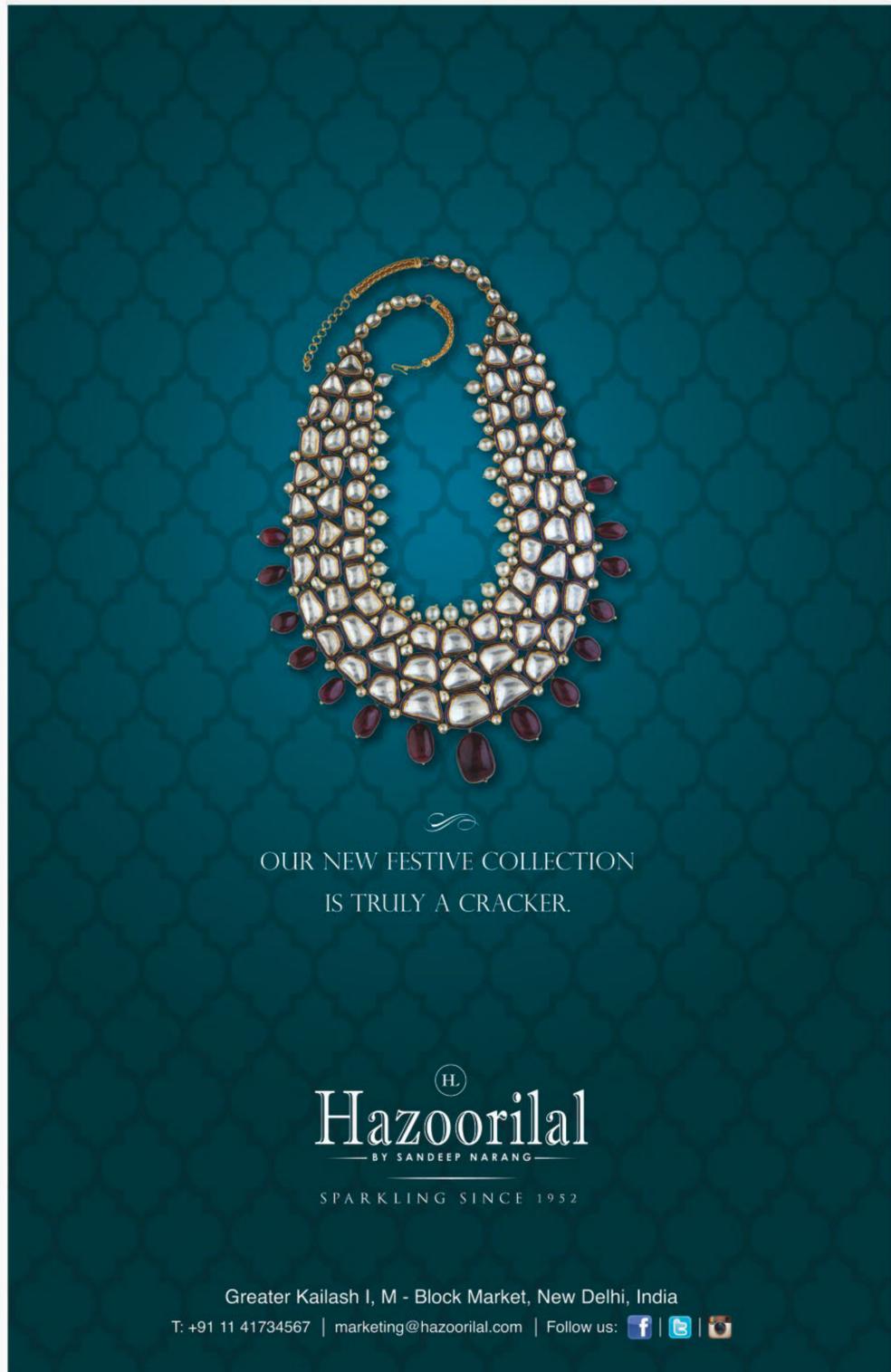
Having seen their side crush Queens Park Rangers 4-0 last weekend, Manchester United's supporters will hope their team confirm their return to form at promoted Leicester City on Sunday.

Manager Louis van Gaal must decide whether to hand a first start to new signing Radamel Falcao, who came off the bench in the latter stages of the win over QPR.

Newcastle United manager Alan Pardew has rather less pleasant quandaries to ponder after his team slithered to the foot of the table following last weekend's 4-0 loss at Southampton.

FIXTURES

Saturday
(1400 GMT unless otherwise stated):
Aston Villa v Arsenal, Burnley v Sunderland, Newcastle United v Hull City, Queens Park Rangers v Stoke City (1145 GMT), Swansea City v Southampton, West Ham United v Liverpool (1630 GMT)
Sunday
(1500 GMT unless otherwise stated):
Everton v Crystal Palace, Leicester City v Manchester United (1230 GMT), Manchester City v Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur v West Bromwich Albion (1230 GMT)



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