

What to WATCH

SONYSIX
Australian Open
Live from 6:00am
STAR SPORTS4
Primera Liga
Cordoba v Real Madrid

Live from 9:00pm
Elche v Barcelona
Live from 11:00pm
At Madrid v Rayo Vallecano
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)
Real Sociedad v Eibar

Live from 3:00am (Sunday)
STAR SPORTS1
FA Cup
Man City v Middlesbrough
Live from 9:00pm
STAR SPORTS2

Live from 11:30pm
Serie A
Lazio v AC Milan
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

WHEN TROUBLE CALLS

Volodymyr Kozlenko was casually chatting away on his phone while playing for third-tier side Energiya Nova Kakhova against Olimpik Donetsk during a friendly tournament. Kozlenko repeatedly pulled the phone from his shorts, called someone and conversed. Olimpik eventually lost the game 2-1. The Kiev Region Football Federation has suspended Kozlenko for the rest of the tournament as well as banned the referee for failing to discipline the player.

— INTERNET



MU's 4-4-2 gets van Gaal twitchy

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal feels a "twitch" in his backside when his team adopt a 4-4-2 formation, he told British newspapers in comments published on Friday.

United's supporters revolted over Van Gaal's preferred 3-5-2 system during their 2-0 Premier League win at Queens Park Rangers last weekend, chanting "4-4-2!" at half-time.

But Van Gaal, who led his native Holland to last year's World Cup semi-finals with a three-man defence, says watching United play in a 4-4-2 formation makes him uncomfortable.

"We have won more with 4-4-2 in a diamond (midfield), but when you analyse the game then we have twitched our asses on the bench," the United manager said.

"I have twitched my ass because we were out of balance. I told my players I was squeezing my ass, but (they said) it was the wrong expression."

Real agree Silva deal

Reuters, Sao Paulo

Cruzeiro have agreed to sell defensive midfielder Lucas Silva to Real Madrid, the Brazilian champions said on Thursday.

Spanish media reported the fee would be around 15 million euros (\$17.4 million).

Silva, 21, is considered to be one of Brazil's most promising young players and has represented his country at junior level.

UAE players sport black armbands

AFP, Sydney

UAE players wore black armbands and striker Ali Mabkhout refused to celebrate his opening goal as the death of Saudi King Abdullah was marked at the Asian Cup on Friday.

Mabkhout walked away with his arms down after scoring the opener against Japan in their quarterfinal in Sydney, in a mark of respect for the Saudi king.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) lowered its flag at its Kuala Lumpur headquarters to half-mast and expressed "deep sadness" at the king's death.

AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa said it was "a big loss for the people of Saudi Arabia, and will be sorely felt by the entire Asian continent".

A night of upsets

AFP, Sydney

The United Arab Emirates shocked holders Japan and Iraq sent their arch-rivals Iran crashing out as a stunning night of upsets turned the Asian Cup on its head on Friday.

A double-header of quarter-finals ended in two penalty shoot-outs in Canberra and Sydney, with UAE and Iraq surviving moments of intense drama to come out on top.

Their stars shone with UAE wizard Omar Abdulrahman and Iraq's Younis Mahmoud, hero of their 2007 title run, both slotting outrageous "panenka" penalties in the shoot-outs.

But Japan's leading lights Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa had a night to forget, and 10-man Iran were left cursing Australian referee Ben Williams.

UAE's 5-4 win on penalties, after it



Andreas Seppi of Italy (L) gives Roger Federer a warm embrace after winning their third round match of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

Magical match-point ousts Federer

REUTERS, Melbourne



Andreas Seppi's stunning upset of Roger Federer at the Australian Open on Friday was a three-hour affair but the shot that ended the Swiss's 11-year run to the semifinals at Melbourne Park will be replayed for years to come. Serving at 6-5 on his first match point of a nerve-jangling fourth set tiebreaker, the 46th-ranked Italian had to scramble hard across court as Federer rushed to the net with a forehand approach shot that burned down the line.

Seppi stuck his racquet out in pure desperation and as he hurtled over the tramlines with inertia, the lofted shot sailed down the line past Federer, who moved across but did not take a swing at the ball.

Whether it was a leave or had Federer beaten cold, the Swiss master himself was unsure, but the ball ultimately dropped on the baseline and 15,000 spectators inside a packed Rod Laver Arena roared as 30-year-old Seppi sealed the match 6-4, 7-6(5), 4-6, 7-6(5) and toasted the finest win of his three-title career.

"I guess maybe if he hits it normally, maybe yes," Federer said when asked if he had a shot at the volly.

"But the way he hits it you think, 'this can't possibly land in'. You kind of go and you're there and you're like, 'No, I'm going to let it go'. As you're telling yourself that,

you look behind you and you already know it's done."

"Because he was also running into the sun, so I have to cover cross-court just in case. That's where everybody goes. I don't know. Ask him how he felt hitting it. It's clearly a big blow because I actually hit my forehand pretty good."

For Seppi, it was a "strange shot".

"At the beginning I thought I couldn't even reach the ball. Then, yeah, when I hit it, I didn't see it going there. I just saw when it bounced in. Was, yeah, for sure one of the important shots of my life."

Seppi ended his perfect 10-match losing record to Federer and an improbable 23-match losing streak to top-10 opposition.

The 17-times grand slam champion was never at his best against Seppi but was magnanimous in defeat.

"I can't remember well. But I think he said, 'unbelievable last point. Congratulations'. Something like that," said Seppi.

He will bid for his first quarterfinal at a major against young Australian Nick Kyrgios, who beat Malek Jaziri in straight sets 6-3, 7-6(6), 6-1.

"Against Roger, you know, I never went close," Seppi added.

"I never had the chance. To have this win in my career, it's for sure something big, yeah."



Chief of Air Staff Air Marshall Muhammad Enamul Bari and Chevron Bangladesh president Kevin Lyon inaugurate the three-day American Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY



United Arab Emirates players celebrate their stunning victory against Japan in the Asian Cup quarterfinal in Sydney yesterday.

Shooters leave for Kuwait

SPORTS REPORTER

Commonwealth Games silver medalist Abdullah Hel Baki and Shovon Chowdhury will leave for Kuwait today to take part in the Emir of Kuwait 4th International Shooting Grand Prix as part of their preparation for April's International Shooting Sports Federation World Cup.

Though the Grand Prix gets underway today in Kuwait City, Baki and Chowdhury will be competing in their pet event--10m air rifle-- on Monday, informed shooting federation joint secretary Ishfaq Ahmed yesterday.

And the dismissal turned out to be

critical as Iraq levelled through Ahmed Yaseen to force extra-time, and then went ahead via the head of captain Mahmoud.

Iraq levelled through Morteza

Pouraliganji -- but the defender then

conceded a penalty by clattering into

Yaser Kasim, which Dhurgham Ismael

dispatched.

He led them to seventh place in the league, missing out on a Copa Libertadores berth.

Ribery not happy

AFP, Berlin



France's Franck Ribery says only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi seem capable of winning the Ballon d'Or and has voiced his frustration after Bayern Munich teammate Manuel Neuer missed out.

Portugal's superstar Ronaldo won the prestigious award for the second year running earlier this month in Zurich with Messi second and goalkeeper Neuer third.

Much to his frustrations, Ribery missed out on scooping the 2013 title, also finishing third behind the superstar pair despite strong displays in helping Bayern win that year's Champions League title.

"I was really angry, but it is the same every year: you don't know what you have to do in order to win the vote," Ribery told Munich daily AZ.

The Frenchman questions whether it is even worth a Bayern Munich player even bothering to attend the gala award ceremony in the future.

Between them, Ronaldo and Messi have won the award for the last seven years and Ribery questioned what more Neuer could have done to dethrone them after winning the World Cup with Germany.

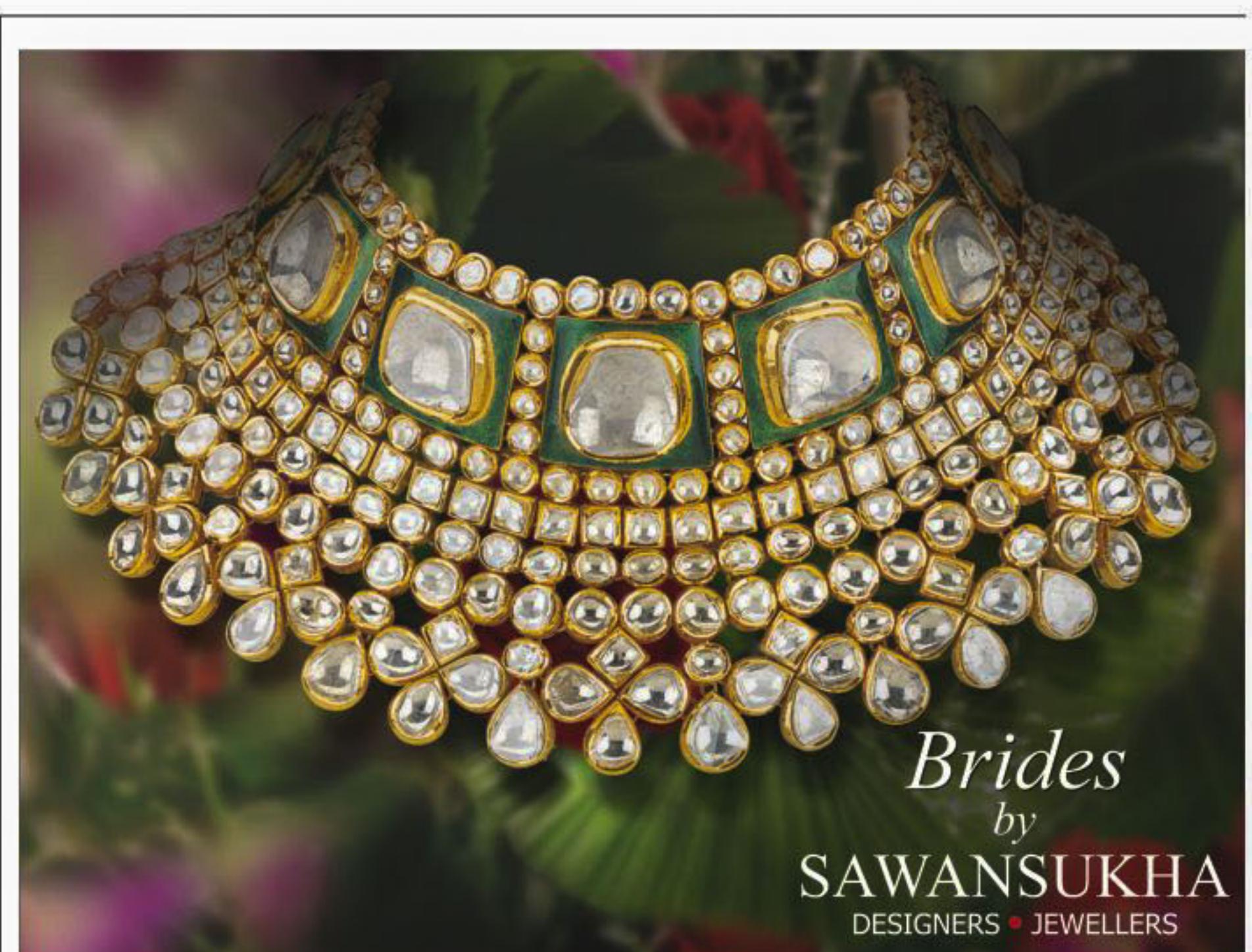
"It clearly appears that winning the World Cup isn't enough," Ribery fumed.

"For the last two or three years, Neuer has been the world's best goalkeeper and had won titles with the club.

"In Brazil, he was the best goalkeeper and is a world champion, but that's clearly not enough. I don't understand it!"

"If a Bayern player is again nominated, we should consider whether it is worth travelling to the award ceremony.

"For what? Perhaps to have a photo taken? No!"



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9, Camac Street, Entrance Pretoria Street, Kolkata - 700017, West Bengal, India.

P:033-22895281/82/83