

DAY'S EVENT	
National Cricket League (Four-Day Match, Day-4) Rangpur v Barisal Venue: BKSP 3 Chittagong v Dhaka Metro Venue: BKSP 2 Rajshahi v Khulna Venue: SBNCs Dhaka v Sylhet	Venue: KSOAS Time: 10:00am
Federation Cup Ctg Abahani v Farashganj Time: 4:00pm Sk Russel v Uttar Baridhara Time: 6:15pm Venue: BNS	

MESSI BACK AT THE TOP

Lionel Messi returned to the top of The Associated Press Global Football 10 on Tuesday after scoring a hatrick in Barcelona's 5-0 win over Levante. Messi's 31st career treble came in his 300th Spanish league match. He is already the all-time record scorer in the division and his three goals on Sunday took his tally to 269. "Lionel Messi's goals meant he went level on 23 La Liga hatricks with Cristiano Ronaldo, and so his duel with the Real Madrid star continues," Mike McGrath of The Sun in England said. "This week it is the Barcelona superstar who is top of the charts."

- AP



Fortunate Chelsea

AFP, Paris



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho admitted his side were fortunate to come away with a draw in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie with Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday as he hailed goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

PSG had the better of the game but only had a second-half Edinson Cavani goal to show for their efforts, with Courtois producing half a dozen vital saves to help Chelsea claim a 1-1 draw in the French capital.

As a result, Branislav Ivanovic's precious away goal in the first half -- from Chelsea's only chance of the game -- gives the Premier League leaders the upper hand going into the second leg at Stamford Bridge on March 11.

"I think the first half was our half. Paris gave us the ball, played defensively with a very low block. They never put pressure on us and we were very comfortable, moving the ball, letting the clock tick and never having problems to control the game," Mourinho said.

"The second half was different. They were very direct and it was their half. I think 1-1 reflects one half for Chelsea, one half for Paris, but if you go to chances created and the goalkeepers' performances we have to be honest and say they had more than us, so if somebody was closer to winning the game it was Paris not Chelsea.

"The advantage is minimal. Now everything is decided at Stamford Bridge and not in two matches. They are a fantastic team and we did ok."

Courtois was brought back into the Chelsea side in place of Petr Cech and displayed exactly why he is seen as one of the finest goalkeepers in the world with a string of saves, including one from Zlatan Ibrahimovic in injury time.

"If football was nine outfield players plus two goalkeepers we would give no chance to anyone. We would be absolutely phenomenal because they are both phenomenal," said Mourinho of the duo, before highlighting defender Ivanovic's ability to pop up with crucial goals in big games.

"Iva' has this feeling in big occasions. It looks like he chooses his moments, to win against Liverpool (in the League Cup semifinal), to score here, in the Europa League final (against Benfica in 2013). He chooses the right moment to do it."



HERO INDIAN OPEN Siddikur starts title defence today

ASIANTOUR.COM



Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman plans to bounce back from a run of poor results at his favourite hunting ground when he defends his title at the 1.5-million-dollar Hero Indian Open, starting today.

The two-time Asian Tour winner uncharacteristically missed the cut in his last two events but hopes to rediscover his best form when he contends at the Delhi Golf Club, a venue where he has one win and eight other top-10s, including two runner-up results.

Siddikur will face strong challenges from the home front led by an in-form Anirban Lahiri, Rashid Khan, who won twice in 2014, Jeev Milkha Singh, a two-time Asian Tour number one, S.S.P. Chawrasia, Arjun Atwal and Jyoti Randhawa at the event sanctioned by the Asian Tour and European Tour.

"I feel at peace and happy here. I don't feel any pressure even though I'm defending my title this week. When you do bad or good, it is part of golf. I learn a lot from my mistakes and that has helped me improve," Siddikur told Asiantour.com.

The 30-year-old hopes to strike it hot with his irons which he reckons will be the key to success this week. With his coach Shane Gillespie and wife Samaun Anjum Auroni by his side, Siddikur is determined to retain the title.

"My coach is with me and he is motivating me. According to my stats, I'm not hitting enough greens in regulation. That's my strongest point in the past. My short game is there but I'm not finding enough greens to go low," Siddikur explained.



Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic is ecstatic after scoring the opening goal against Paris Saint-Germain during their Champions League round of 16 tie at the Parc des Princes Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Alonso sees red as Bayern held

AFP, Lviv



Bayern Munich's Xabi Alonso was sent off on his 100th Champions League appearance as the German side were held to a scoreless draw by Shakhtar Donetsk in the last 16 first leg clash on Tuesday.

Alonso picked up his second booking after 65 minutes but Bayern comfortably held on to secure a positive result in a first leg played out in sub-zero temperatures in Lviv.

The Bundesliga champions will be confident they can complete the job in three weeks' time in Munich but Pep Guardiola will be relieved that they survived an ill-tempered encounter in Ukraine.

Guardiola preferred to keep his own counsel regarding Alonso's sending off.

"I obviously followed it from the sidelines and the referee decided what he decided," said Guardiola.

"I don't want to say anything more about it."

Bayern sporting director Matthias Sammer was more forthcoming than Guardiola, describing the refereeing performance as "strange".

The former Germany sweeper also agreed with the Spaniard's suggestion that a scoreless draw away from home is not necessarily positive.

"0-0 is always problematic," Sammer said.

"On the face of it, it sounds good but I'd of the opinion that it's a dangerous result."

Shakhtar Donetsk -- who had not played a competitive match since the last group game on December 10 -- had been forced to host this game over 1,000 kilometres from the club's Donbass Arena due to ongoing violence in the east of the country.

But they successfully stifled the German visitors, who had come into the match brimming with confidence following an 8-0 win over Hamburg at the weekend.

Shakhtar's Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu was delighted despite their rustiness they had not taken a similar hammering.

"The first plan was not to lose," said Lucescu.

"The second was to keep our chances alive for the second leg. We did that.

"What I regret is that we didn't try to play our game when Bayern were down to 10 men."

Bayern almost got an away goal after only two minutes, when Arjen Robben clipped a ball into Bastian Schweinsteiger who hooked wide from inside the penalty area.

Shakhtar could be forgiven for a slow start since they had played their last competitive game 10 weeks ago in their final group game in the competition.

And after 11 minutes, Robben created another good opportunity when his reverse pass picked out the run of Thomas Mueller inside the penalty area.

From a tight angle, Mueller prodded the ball past keeper Andriy Pyatov but did not find the net.

The home team dug in after that and rarely looked threatened despite allowing Bayern 70 per cent possession in the opening half-hour.

After 24 minutes, Alonso picked up his first booking and Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer almost fumbled the free-kick that followed into Douglas Costa's path.

Just past the half hour Bayern created another opening.

Shakhtar coughed up possession cheaply in front of their own penalty area, allowing Franck Ribery and Mueller to combine to good effect.

Mueller slid in to connect with Ribery's neat cut back but the German international could not steer his strike from the penalty spot on target.

Shakhtar contained the German league leaders until half-time and a scrappy second half only came to life when Ribery and Costa were involved in an altercation after a foul by Darijo Srna.

Just a couple of minutes later Costa was lucky to escape with only a yellow card after his elbow caught the Bayern midfielder flush in the face.

The complete commitment of both sides was illustrated just past the hour when Alonso and Shakhtar's Luiz Adriano both called for treatment when they collided near the centre circle.

But Alonso's luck ran out when he was shown a second yellow card for hauling down Alex Teixeira.

FEDERATION CUP Feni outplay BJMC

BROTHERS 1 – 1 RAHMATGANJ

FENI SOCCER 3 – 0 TEAM BJMC

SPORTS REPORTER



Feni Soccer Club gave their chances of qualification for the quarterfinals of the Federation Cup a big boost after an impressive 3-0 win against Team BJMC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Forward Sohel Miah gave Feni a 50th minute lead with a placing shot after collecting a through-pass from Jatta Mustafa. Gambian forward Lamin Jatta doubled the lead in the 78th minute with an angular shot from inside the box before Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan added the third in the injury time with a tap-in from the goal-mouth mele.

The win means Feni finished their Group-A campaign with three points while Sheikh Jamal, who had beaten the Feni outfit 4-1 in the opening day, would play against team BJMC to decide the qualifiers from this group on Friday.

Meanwhile, Rahmatganj MFS, who had lost against Mohammedan SC 1-2 in the opening fixture of Group-D, held Brothers Union to a 1-1 draw at the same venue earlier in the day, to ensure Mohammedan's qualification for the quarterfinals.

Defender Sumon Dey put Rahmatganj ahead in the 27th minute before Augustin Walsom equalised from Brothers in the 81st minute to share the spoils.

Rahmatganj have one point from two matches while Brothers have one from one. Mohammedan have three points from one match.

The Mashrafe effect

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And the effect was quite visible. The fielders at the boundary, which by the way was at quite a distance, ensured that the batsmen worked hard for their singles. The brilliant throw from Sabbir Rahman and Rubel Hossain's 'back-dive' to hold on to a stunner depicted visuals that Bangladesh's fans haven't witnessed for a while.

These were the exact features that were missing from the Bangladesh side a year ago when they were making an attempt to break free from a glut of defeats. No matter how good a position they got into, the players barely looked like they wanted to win.

Against Afghanistan in the Asia Cup, after Arafat Sunny and co took five wickets, the attitude was such that they had already won the game. Similar scenarios were witnessed against Sri Lanka and the West Indies when Bangladesh lost matches they had a firm grasp on.

But yesterday was going to be different. Despite the four consecutive warm-up defeats and the pressure generated following the loss to Ireland, Mashrafe was not going to allow the team to get bogged down. At least that's what his body language suggested and that's exactly what Bangladesh needs more of.

Blues slate racist fans in Paris

AFP, London

Chelsea Football Club said Wednesday it was prepared to ban self-proclaimed racist fans who were filmed preventing a black man from boarding a Paris subway train, saying their behaviour was "abhorrent".

Amateur footage obtained by The Guardian newspaper captured the incident in a Metro station shortly before Chelsea's Champions League march with Paris Saint-Germain in the French capital on Tuesday evening.

It shows a group of men chanting "Chelsea, Chelsea" standing in a packed train waiting at a platform.

The unidentified black man repeatedly tried to squeeze into the carriage and they aggressively pushed him back. The film then cuts to them chanting: "We're racist, we're racist, and that's the way we like it."

In a statement, Chelsea said: "Such behaviour is abhorrent and has no place in football or society.

"We will support any criminal action against those involved, and should evidence point to involvement of Chelsea season-ticket holders or members the club will take the strongest possible action against them, including banning orders."

Italian govt slams Sacchi

AFP, Rome

A senior member of the Italian government on Tuesday condemned Arrigo Sacchi's claim there are too many black players in Italian youth football as a "grave error."

"The Italy of 30 years ago is not the Italy of today," said Graziano Delrio, the State Secretary to Prime Minister Matteo Renzi who also holds responsibility for sport in the Italian council of ministers.

"Today there are young players who are Italian citizens in fact and by right given that they were born and raised in Italy even if their parents had overseas roots," Delrio said in a statement.

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