

DAY'S EVENT

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE
(Four-Day Match, Day-3)
Khulna v Dhaka Metro
Venue: BKSP 3
Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: BKSP 2
Dhaka v Rangpur
Venue: SBNS

Sylhet v Chittagong
Venue: KSOAS
Time: 10:00am
Time: 6:15pm
Venue: BNS

FOOTBALL DIPLOMACY

Britain's Prince William practised sports diplomacy in China on Tuesday, striding onto the football pitch at a Shanghai school. Wearing a dark blue suit, he stopped a stray ball, tapped it twice with his black shoe before giving it a confident kick. His trip to China makes him the highest-profile royal visitor since Queen Elizabeth II in 1986 as Britain attempts to improve top-level diplomatic relations with Beijing. On Monday, William reached out to China's top leader, President Xi Jinping, telling him: "I also gather you're quite a football fan."
-AFP



Ramsey set for return

AFP, London

Arsenal midfielder Aaron Ramsey is in line to make his return from a hamstring problem in Wednesday's Premier League clash with Queens Park Rangers, manager Arsene Wenger revealed on Tuesday.

The Wales international sustained a third hamstring injury of the season during Arsenal's 2-1 defeat of Leicester City on February 10, but is in contention to feature at Loftus Road after returning to training ahead of schedule.

"Aaron Ramsey is back in the squad," Wenger told a press conference.

"When you have a repetition of muscular injuries, it can put the handbrake on your body a little bit. To get rid of that is a psychological problem.

"I don't think he suffers from that, looking at him in training. Certainly, you lose a bit of confidence in your body."



Roma midfielder Seydou Keita goes off on a celebratory run after scoring the equaliser against Juventus during their Serie A encounter at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

AFC U-23 C'SHIP QUALIFIERS Camp likely from March 16

SPORTS REPORTER



The training camp for the U-23 national football team ahead of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers is likely to get underway from March 16, just 10 days before the start of the four-team qualifiers to be held in Dhaka.

The Bangladesh Football Federation is planning to suspend the Bangladesh Premier League, which is scheduled to start from March 9 for two weeks to accommodate the training camp of the U-23 national team as well as the qualifiers which will feature Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Syria and India from March 27 to 31.

"We are thinking of suspending the Bangladesh Premier League after the completion of the first two rounds matches which will be completed on March 15. The U-23 team will start its training either at BKSP or at the BNS," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag adding that they have already asked Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif to arrive in Bangladesh by March 12.

Saiful Bari Titu, assistant coach of the national team, informed that they might call up 28 to 30 players for the camp including the current senior national players who are eligible to play for the U-23 team.

The former Bangladesh international said that he has identified some young talents like winger Rabbi of Brothers Union, striker Afsar of Rahmatganj, left-back Faisal and midfielder Jony of Mohammedan during the ongoing Federation Cup, but would call up players as per de Kruif's advice and those who had been in camp previously under de Kruif, would get priority.

Keita denies Juve

AFP, Milan



Seydou Keita salvaged a share of the points for 10-man Roma in a 1-1 draw with Juventus that saw the champions retain their nine-point lead at the top of Serie

A on Monday.

Carlos Tevez curled a free-kick over a Roma wall for his 15th goal of the season that took him top of the Serie A scoring charts. But the veteran Keita equalised in the 78th minute to secure a club record sixth straight home draw.

Roma welcomed the Bianconeri to the Stadio Olimpico desperate for the win that would maintain their unlikely title challenge.

Rudi Garcia's men had drawn six of their last seven league games but had never drawn six times consecutively at home, until Monday. Under the circumstances, Roma -- who have been ravaged by injuries to key players and only recently welcomed back Ivorian striker Gervinho from the Africa Cup of Nations -- would be happy with a point.

However Juventus remain unbeaten against Roma this season and with a nine-point advantage look to have one hand on what would be a fourth consecutive title.

Roma started with influential midfielders Radja Nainggolan and Juan Iturbe on the bench while Juventus were without Andrea Pirlo and Paul Pogba -- two

of their most creative players -- as they sought to make it two wins from two over the Giallorossi following a bad-tempered 3-2 win in Turin early in the campaign.

After an insipid first half without clear-cut chances, the hosts suffered a blow just after the hour when Vasilis Torosidis saw red for a second bookable offence.

In the absence of free kick specialist Pirlo, who is out for three weeks with a calf injury, Tevez stepped up and delivered in style, shooting over the defensive wall with Morgan De Sanctis rooted to the spot.

Tevez almost had his second minutes later but Kostas Manolas's boot blocked after the Argentinian unleashed a half-volley to the right of goal.

Despite their disadvantage, Roma pressed for the equaliser and almost found the breakthrough when Claudio Marchisio caught the heel of Miralem Pjanic on the left flank.

Alessandro Florenzi, who came on for Adem Ljajic just after Torosidis's sending-off, crossed the ball to Manolas whose glancing header forced Gianluigi Buffon to tip the ball to safety down low.

Roma's insistence finally paid off.

Iturbe won a free kick to the right of the area after a solid challenge from Giorgio Chiellini. The Colombian's free kick found Keita at the back post and the Malian's header bounced over the line past the foot of Marchisio.

Tevez can't replace Pirlo

AFP, Milan

Carlos Tevez confirmed he will not be taking over free kick duties from Juventus specialist Andrea Pirlo despite scoring from his first Serie A setpiece on Monday during a 1-1 draw with Roma.

With Pirlo out for three weeks due to a calf injury, Tevez stepped up for a free kick just after the hour mark of the top-of-the-table clash at Roma's Stadio Olimpico.

To general surprise, the Argentinian curled his effort over the wall superbly, leaving Roma goalkeeper Morgan De Sanctis rooted to the spot as Juventus took a 1-0 lead.

Tevez, meanwhile, said: "I train alongside Pirlo every day and try to copy the things he does. He still has priority on the free kicks!"

"He is the specialist and I have to respect that."

Tevez's 15th goal of the campaign means he took the sole lead in the race for Serie A's 'Capocannoniere' award.

Duo failing to live up to price tags

AP, Manchester



Juan Mata and Angel Di Maria are the two most expensive players in Manchester United's history, costing a combined

97 million pounds (\$150 million) last year as the club looked to regain their status as England's top team.

Mata, bought for 37.1 million pounds (\$57 million) by David Moyes, has mainly been used as a substitute by new manager Louis van Gaal this season despite a decent scoring record when he has started for United. A World Cup and European Championship winner with Spain and twice Chelsea's player of the year, the playmaker is a forgotten man at Old Trafford these days.

Di Maria took over from Mata as United's costliest player when he was signed from Real Madrid for 59.7 million pounds (\$92 million), but his form has dipped after an encouraging start.

Van Gaal hasn't found the best position for the Argentina midfielder, who admitted before the 2-0 win over Sunderland on Saturday that he was still in the "settling-in

process" in English football. Di Maria was poor by his high standards against Sunderland and was substituted at halftime -- quite a fall from grace for a player who was man of the match in last season's Champions League final.

"I cannot deny what I see and we have to give Angel a little bit more time to adapt to the Premier League," Van Gaal said.

"The rhythm of the game is so high here, much higher than in other countries. He has to adapt to the culture and we have to give him time to adapt and also to lift his confidence again."

With Adnan Januzaj impressing as Di Maria's replacement against Sunderland, the Argentine may even find himself on the bench at Newcastle as Man United look to keep their place in the Champions League qualification places.

United's fight with Arsenal and Liverpool for third and fourth place looks set to go to the wire this season, with the three clubs separated by two points. It could be more exciting than the title race, as Chelsea have a five-point lead -- and a game in hand -- over second-place Manchester City heading into the full midweek program in the league.

Twin blow for Milan

AFP, Milan

AC Milan midfielders Riccardo Montolivo and Nigel De Jong are set to miss the embattled Serie A club's upcoming games after being sidelined by injury during a scoreless draw away to Chievo on Saturday.

Italy international Montolivo has "suffered hamstring problem" while Dutchman De Jong "suffered a muscle injury in the back of his thigh", according to a club statement.

It added that club captain "Montolivo (...) will undergo further medical tests in a week's time" while the fitness of De Jong "will be re-assessed in around 10 days' time".

Reports in Italy suggest Montolivo will be out for around two weeks with De Jong possibly sidelined for up to a month.

Milan have won only twice in their past 10 league games, a run which has left the seven-time European champions languishing in 10th place, 23 points behind leaders and champions Juventus.

Chelsea aim to extend lead

AFP, London



Having claimed the season's first major trophy, Chelsea will attempt to tighten their stranglehold on the Premier League title race when they visit West Ham United in mid-week.

Chelsea beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-0 at Wembley on Sunday to lift the League Cup and they were given double cause for celebration by Manchester City's 2-1 defeat at Liverpool earlier in the day.

Chelsea now lead second-place City by five points with a game in hand, leaving manager Jose Mourinho well placed to repeat the feat from his first season at the club, 10 years ago, when his side followed up success in the League Cup by romping to the title by a

12-point margin.

But Mourinho, who had gone two and a half years without winning a trophy, said that it was too early to declare the title race over, and pointed to the form of Manchester United and a resurgent Liverpool as proof.

"It's in the hands of everyone," he said.

"We have lots of difficult matches to play. City have difficult matches. United are third (actually fourth), right? They are in the title race, too."

FIXTURES

(1945 GMT unless otherwise stated)

Wednesday
Liverpool v Burnley (2000 GMT), Manchester City v Leicester City, Newcastle United v Manchester United, Queens Park Rangers v Arsenal, Stoke City v Everton, Tottenham Hotspur v Swansea City, West

Liverpool, I predicted that."

Chelsea won 3-0 on their last visit to Upton Park last season and would appear to have little to fear from a West Ham team who have slipped to ninth place in the table after a run of one win in 10 games.

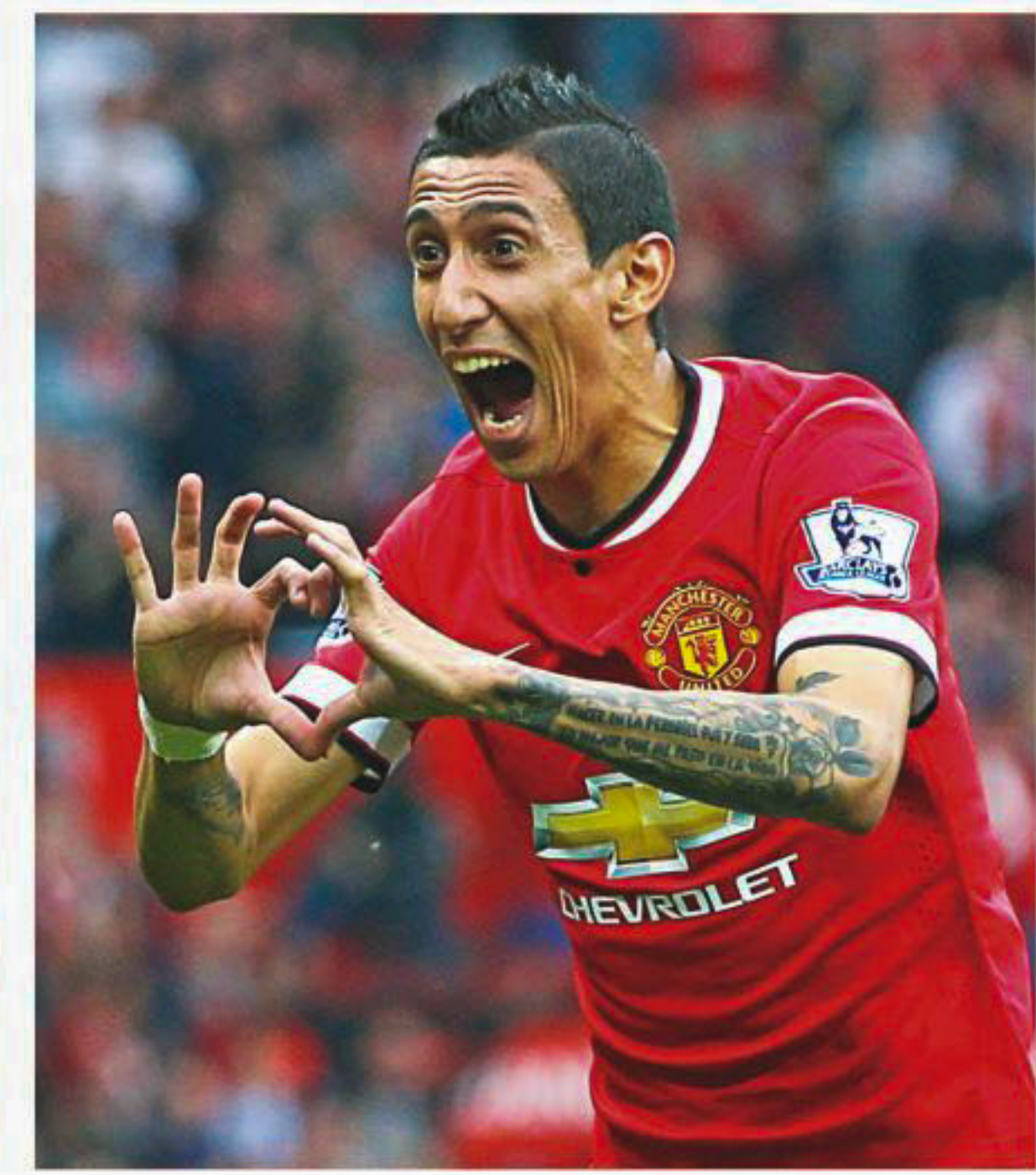
Bottom club Leicester City are the visitors to the Etihad Stadium and City could scarcely have asked for more suitable opposition in the wake of their loss at Anfield, but with last week's Champions League defeat by Barcelona also fresh in the memory, manager Manuel Pellegrini has urged his team to hit back.

"We will see in the reaction in the next game," said the Chilean. "The only way to see is the way we play again on Wednesday."

"I hope that the team will recover and we can win on Wednesday. Every point we drop is more difficult."



JUAN MATA



ANGEL DI MARIA

Johnson in hot water

AFP, London



Sunderland suspended England winger Adam Johnson on Monday after he was arrested on suspicion of having sex with an under-age girl.

Johnson was held in custody after his arrest and, with police saying he was helping them with their enquiries, the 27-year-old was suspended by the Premier League club pending the outcome of the investigation.

"A 27-year-old man was arrested earlier today on suspicion of sexual activity with a girl under 16," a Durham police statement said.

According to several newspapers, Johnson had sex with a 15-year-old and was arrested at

his mansion on Monday morning.

Three unmarked cars, a police van, plain clothes officers and crime scene investigators were reported to have been at the player's home.

Johnson was due to travel with the rest of the Sunderland squad to Hull for Tuesday's league match.

But the club's statement read: "Sunderland AFC has confirmed that Adam Johnson has been suspended from the club, pending the outcome of a police investigation."

"No further comment will be made at the present time."

Later on Monday, reporters were told that Johnson had been bailed and was no longer at Peterlee police station.

Mile accepts 4-game ban

AFP, London

Crystal Palace captain Mile Jedinak will serve a four-game ban after accepting a charge of violent conduct for elbowing West Ham United's Diafra Sakho, the Football Association announced on Tuesday.

The Australian midfielder appeared to deliberately elbow Sakho in the face towards the end of Palace's 3-1 win at Upton Park on Saturday in an incident missed by the referee.

Proteas overpower Irish

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De Villiers said he was very happy with the performance against Ireland, especially the batting in which they piled up 411 for four and then bowled out the rivals for 210.

The charge was led by Amla and du Plessis with a 247-run stand for the second wicket.

South Africa's total was the second highest total in World Cup history, just two runs behind India's record 413 for five against Bermuda in 2007.

It was the second successive 400-plus total for the Proteas in the current tournament, following their 408 for five against the West Indies in Sydney last week.

The Irish were reduced to 21 for three by the fifth over and slipped to 48 for five by the 11th before Andy Balbirnie (58) and Kevin O'Brien (48) led a late revival by adding 81 for the sixth wicket.

With victory almost assured, de Villiers used eight bowlers -- including himself -- ahead of tougher games

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