

STAR SPORTS 2
Premier League
Burnley v Tottenham
Live from 6:30pm
Sunderland v Newcastle
Live from 9:00pm

La Liga
Celta Vigo v Barcelona
Live from 1:00am (Monday)
STAR SPORTS 4
La Liga
Real Madrid v Granada

Live from 4:00pm
Valencia v Villarreal
Live from 9:00pm

Mercedes duo in private jet

Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton haven't always seen eye-to-eye in the past 12 months but the pair appeared to be singing from the same hymn sheet on Thursday. Fresh from being beaten by Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel at the Malaysian Grand Prix on March 29, the Mercedes teammates have been collaborating with their team to ensure the prancing horse doesn't gallop to victory at the next race in China. The duo attended Mercedes' Brackley base in the hope to find a winning formula come race weekend in Shanghai on April 10-12.

—MAIL ONLINE



Lifeline for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER



The new format of the World Cup Qualifiers for the Asian zone has given Bangladesh the opportunity to play as many as eight international matches and simultaneously, Bangladesh have the opportunity to play more international matches under the new format of Asian Cup.

A total of 40 nations from Asia, split into eight groups, will be competing for the World Cup Qualifiers, with eight group champions and the four best runner-ups advancing to the finals of the World Cup Qualifiers.

Of remaining 28 teams, 16 teams, on the basis of the World Cup Qualifiers' standing, will play the 24-team Asian Cup Qualifiers directly, while eight teams will join them after playing play-off matches. Bangladesh, who are ranked 34th in Asia, will have good chance to play the Asian Cup Qualifiers even though they failed to produce good results in the group stage of the World Cup Qualifiers, which begin from June.

"The lowest four teams among 40 in the World Cup Qualifiers were supposed to be excluded from the Asian Cup Qualifiers, which will feature 24 teams. But the new format gives each team a last chance to play the Asian Cup Qualifiers as eight teams among the lowest 12 will join after the play-off matches," explained BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday, adding that the AFC recently sent the new format of the Asian Cup Qualifiers.

The play-off matches will take place June 2 and 7, September 6 and October 11 in 2016 and the Asian Cup Qualifiers will be held in 2017.

The draw of the World Cup Qualifiers will be held on April 14 and the matches of group stage will take place from June to March next year.



Arsenal striker Alexis Sanchez celebrates after scoring the third goal against Liverpool during their Premier League encounter at the Emirates Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Miami comes for trials

SPORTS REPORTER

It has been a normal scenario in the last couple of years that footballers living abroad come to Bangladesh for trials in a bid to secure a place for the national team and this time a female footballer came for the trial ahead of Bangladesh women's national team's engagement in the upcoming Indo-Bangla Games to be held from May 7-14 in Dhaka.

Miami Rahman Shikdar, a 19-year-old girl, yesterday had a trial in the women's national football camp at the BFF Astro-turf.

Midfielder Miami, who communicated with the BFF through internet, lives in New York and plays the second division women's league in New York.

"She just attended the training after a long journey and I want to see her two to three more days and then I will make comments on her," said coach Golam Rabbani Choton.

Nat'l Hockey semis today

SPORTS REPORTER

Both semifinals of the ATN Bangla 30th National Hockey Championship will be held today at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium with holders Faridpur taking on Dhaka and Bangladesh Army play against national-players-studded Bangladesh Navy.

Faridpur are tipped as favourites over Dhaka, coming into the last four on the back of three wins and a draw, while Dhaka confirmed their semifinal berth with three wins and one defeat.

Though Bangladesh Army moved into the semifinals with 100 per cent wins record, Bangladesh Navy, who suffered in one match out of four, are considered favourites due to the presence of the national players like Chayan, Jimmy, Rana and Krishna.

Chelsea maintain lead

Arsenal blitz Liverpool

AFP, London



Chelsea weathered an extraordinary 65-yard goal by Charlie Adam to re-establish their seven-point lead at the Premier League summit with a 2-1 defeat of Stoke City on Saturday.

Arsenal had trimmed Chelsea's lead to four points by blitzing Liverpool 4-1 and a twist appeared in store when Adam cancelled out Eden Hazard's 39th-minute penalty in show-stopping fashion at Stamford Bridge.

A minute before half-time, the Scottish midfielder picked up a loose ball deep inside his own half and launched a raking shot with his left foot that Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut

Courtois could only help into the net.

It was a goal that brought to mind David Beckham's famous lob against Wimbledon in 1996 and Chelsea's cause was further harmed when Diego Costa limped off with a hamstring injury 10 minutes after coming on at half-time.

But Loic Remy gave Chelsea victory in the 62nd minute, tapping home a pass from Hazard after William had intercepted Asmir Begovic's throw, to leave Jose Mourinho's side seven points clear with a game in hand.

Arsenal had earlier dealt Liverpool's Champions League qualification hopes a massive blow with a stylish victory that lifted Arsene Wenger's side to second place.

Arsenal scored three times in a dizzying eight-minute spell immedi-

ately prior to half-time at the Emirates Stadium, with Hector Bellerin, Mesut Ozil, from a direct free-kick, and Alexis Sanchez on target.

Jordan Henderson hit back with a 76th-minute penalty, but after Emre Can was sent off for two bookable offences, Olivier Giroud slammed home Arsenal's fourth in stoppage time.

Beaten 2-1 by Manchester United before the international break, Liverpool have now lost twice in succession and were left seven points below the top four after United beat Aston Villa 3-1.

Champions Manchester City slipped to fourth place ahead of their trip to Crystal Palace on Monday after United sank Villa at Old Trafford to claim third place and move eight points clear of Liverpool.

RESULTS

Arsenal 4 (Bellerin 37, Ozil 40, Sanchez 45, Giroud 90+1) **Liverpool 1** (Henderson 76-pen)
Chelsea 2 (Hazard 39-pen, Remy 62) **Stoke 1** (Adam 44)
Everton 1 (Jagiella 16) **Southampton 0**
Leicester 2 (Cambiasso 12, King 86) **West Ham 1** (Kouyate 32)
Manchester United 3 (Herrera 43, 90+2, Rooney 79) **Aston Villa 1** (Benteke 80)
Swansea 3 (Ki 18, Gomis 37, 90+1) **Hull 1** (McShane 50)
West Brom 1 (Anichebe 58) **QPR 4** (Vargas 15, Austin 37, Zamora 43, Barton 90+5)

Ander Herrera scored twice for the hosts and Wayne Rooney found the net with a stunning shot on the turn, while Christian Benteke replied for Villa with a tame effort that crept underneath David de Gea.

Pjanic fires Roma

AFP, Milan



A first-half strike from Miralem Pjanic earned Roma a precious 1-0 win over Napoli to boost the capital side's Champions League qualifying hopes on Saturday.

Rome remain in second place but have closed the gap -- perhaps temporarily -- on leaders Juventus to 11 points and pulled four points ahead of Lazio, their closest rivals for the second automatic Champions League qualifying spot.

Champions Juventus host Empoli in Sunday's late game while Lazio are away to Cagliari later in the day.

A lengthy winless run which virtually ended Roma's title hopes came to an end two weeks ago when Daniele De Rossi struck to seal the points away to Cesena.

Rudi Garcia's men made it two wins on the trot thanks to Pjanic's 25th minute strike, although the hosts had 'keeper Morgan De Sanctis to thank for a string of fine saves in both halves.

Garcia left Francesco Totti out of his matchday squad for the 'Derby of the Sun', as the fixture is commonly known, and on the face of a determined all-round performance the hosts did not miss their iconic captain.

Miami brace for big final

AFP, Miami



Andy Murray will try to cap a milestone week, while Novak Djokovic is aiming for another hardcourt double victory when they square off in the Miami Open final on Sunday.

Murray will be gunning for his third Miami Masters title after beating Czech Tomas Berdych 6-4, 6-4 on Friday to secure his final berth. It marks the fourth trip to the championship match for Murray who earlier this week joined the elite club of players to win 500 career matches.

Djokovic, who defeated Murray in the Australian Open final earlier this year for his

second set to go up 2-1. Djokovic served brilliantly, blasting 10 aces and winning 80 percent of his first-serve points in the 90-minute match.

His two service breaks against Isner were the key as the towering American had not been broken coming into the semi-final contest.

"He is the best server we have in the game," Djokovic said of Isner. "He is 6'10" so he can hit any angle he wants. I didn't know what my preference was -- to have him hit his first serve in, or his second serve in. They are both equally good."

"I managed to get a lot of serves back. That was one of the keys of the match. To get into the rally and make him work extra hard."

With the win over Berdych, Murray evened his record against the eighth-seeded



ANDY MURRAY



NOVAK DJOKOVIC

eighth Grand Slam crown, beat hard-serving John Isner 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 in the other semi-final.

Djokovic, 27, is trying to become the first player to sweep the Indian Wells and Miami Masters hardcourt titles on three separate occasions. He achieved the US hardcourt double in 2011 and again last year.

"We have very similar games," Djokovic said of Murray. "We already played twice this year, and in a big match in Australian Open final which was very, very physical and very close."

"I expect a battle, long rallies, and I know what is expected of me on the court. I know his game pretty well, as well as he knows mine."

Djokovic won the first set against Isner in a tiebreaker then got the early break in the

Czech at 6-6 and backed up his victory in the semi-finals of the Australian Open.

"I thought it was a high quality match," said the 27-year-old, who is set to return to number three in the world next week.

"We played some good points. I thought it was a pretty clean match. I felt like I just played a bit better than him. That was the difference."

The two sets unfolded in identical fashion, Scotland's Murray opening with a break of Berdych's serve, dropping his own serve then breaking again.

That second break in each set proved enough for Murray, who is now poised to battle for his first Masters level title since he lifted the trophy here at Crandon Park in 2013.

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