

<h1>What to WATCH</h1>	CHANNEL 9 Bangladesh Premier League Abahani v Mohammedan Live from 4:45pm	CHANNEL 9 & SET MAX Indian Premier League (ELIMINATOR) Bangalore v Rajasthan Live from 8:30pm	STAR SPORTS4 English Premiership Arsenal v Sunderland Live from 1:00am (Thursday)
	DAY'S EVENT Bangladesh Premier League Venue: BNS Abahani v Mohammedan	Time: 4:45pm Sk Russel v Rahmatganj Time: 7:00pm	

KITS FOR NEPAL

Valencia's players turned out for their game against Celta Vigo on Sunday wearing their names in Nepali on the back of their kits in a bid to raise money for victims of the massive earthquakes that have devastated Nepal in recent weeks. The players' kits will be auctioned off in the coming days with all the proceeds from their sales going directly to the Red Cross.

--INTERNET



(L) Abahani coach Goerge Kottan will hope Wahed Ahmed turns a similar performance today like he did against Sheikh Jamal in the previous match while (R) Mohammedan coach Joshimuiddin Ahmed will look to his youthful squad to turn the heat on their perennial rivals.

PHOTOS: STAR

Juve shift focus

AFP, Milan



Juventus midfielder Claudio Marchisio insists the Turin giants are firmly focused on ending their 20-year wait to lift the Italian Cup as their Champions League final date with Barcelona looms.

Juventus, who defended their league title a fortnight ago, remain in contention for a treble of trophies this season.

If successful, Juventus would emulate the feats of Jose Mourinho's Inter Milan in 2010.

Juventus face Barcelona in Berlin on June 6 aiming to win Europe's premier club competition for just the third time, but Marchisio insists they are fully focused on winning their first 'Coppa Italia' since 1995.

"Our number one target at the moment is the Coppa Italia. After that we can start thinking about the Champions League," said Marchisio.

Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri said last week: "Making the Champions League final is a great achievement, but we can't lose sight of a very important objective, the Coppa Italia, which Juventus hasn't won for 20 years."

Marchisio, who scored from the penalty spot at the weekend as Juve came from behind to beat Inter Milan 2-1 at the San Siro, is one of two key players missing from Massimiliano Allegri's side for Wednesday's clash.

Alvaro Morata, the Spanish striker whose late leveller against Real Madrid proved decisive for Juve in the second leg of their Champions League semi-final, will also be missing due to suspension.

Otherwise, Allegri has a full squad at his disposal having rested a number of key regulars -- including Gianluigi Buffon, Patrice Evra, Andrea Pirlo, Arturo Vidal and Carlos Tevez -- for Saturday's win at the San Siro.

However Juventus are up against a Lazio team who have vastly improved since suffering a 3-0 league defeat at their shared home ground of the Stadio Olimpico at the end of November.

Stefano Pioli's men failed to get the better of Juve on their visit to Turin last month, losing 2-0, but they have been one of the strongest teams in the second half of the season and fought their way into contention for a place in next season's Champions League.

While Juve have lost three Cup finals since their 1995 win, losing in 2002 (Parma), 2004 (Lazio) and 2012 (Napoli), Lazio have made the most of their Cup final chances.

They go into their eighth final having triumphed in six of their seven previous attempts, notably winning four Cups since 2000.

It's pace versus possession

Title race on the line as Abahani take on Mohammedan today

SPORTS REPORTER



It will be a battle of pace versus possession when the country's fiercest football rivalry between Abahani and Mohammedan takes centre stage at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Even though the two traditional foes have lost a bit of ground in this season's Manyavar Premier League title race, already trailing leaders Sheikh Jamal DC by six points; both the sides have drawn attention of the spectators and media with their unique style of play.

Four-time champions Abahani, under their new Austrian coach George Kottan, have been playing some beautiful passing football, with Shahedul Alam and Emon Babu playing vital roles in the midfield to

bridge the gap between the defence and forwards.

The weakness of the former champions, though, is their attack which scored a total of 13 goals in nine matches, six less than today's opponents Mohammedan. The season-ending injury to Hungarian attacking midfielder Szabolcs Csorba has further decimated their potency in attack.

However, the way they upended Sheikh Jamal in the previous match will give Sky Blues a lot of confidence ahead of this crucial fixture.

Mohammedan, under the guidance of their former player Joshimuiddin Ahmed Joshi, have been displaying entertaining football with a lot of pace and the youthful side have racked up the highest number of goals (19) in the league so far.

Young Jewel Rana and Mohammad

Ibrahim have been threatening down the flanks while Guinean striker Ismael Bangoura and veteran Towhidul Alam Sabuz have cashed in on the relentless crosses to bag four out of five they scored against Rahmatganj MFS in their last match.

"Playing any match is a nerve-racking experience, but it becomes manifold when the game is against Abahani," said Joshi. "There are many factors like physical, mental, tactical and technical which vital role during the 90-minute game and the team that will do better in all those departments, will come out victors."

"At the moment, Abahani are playing eye-catch football with neat passing. Despite that Mohammedan will play organised football and if we can play according to the plan, I believe we can win the match," said the former national

winger.

Joshi's counterpart, Kottan, is not worried with the pace of Mohammedan and believes his side can win the game.

"I saw them (Mohammedan). They play pressing football but I believe our players will keep control of midfield and we will win the match if the wingers can put up their usual performance," said Kottan.

An outright victory for any side will put them three points behind Sheikh Jamal on 20 points but a draw will see both of these sides finish the first leg five points off the pace.

If history is anything to predict the outcome of such an important affair, Abahani have the upper hand with five wins, seven draws and three defeats in 15 encounters between the two sides in the professional football league so far.

Hattricks galore in JFA C'ship

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight hattricks were recorded as the JFA Under-14 Women's Football Championship kicked off with a goalfest across different venues yesterday.

Sanjida, Marzia and Sajeda, all national players of the under-14 age group, struck hattricks to power hosts Mymensingh to a massive 13-0 win over Habiganj at the Mymensingh Stadium while national under-14 player Swapna, Moushumi and national discard Roksana slammed hattricks to steer Rangpur to an emphatic 12-0 win over Gaibandha at the Thakurgaon Stadium.

A treble from Suraiya helped Meherpur to a 5-0 win over Jhenaidah while Anu Ching struck five goals to power Narayanganj to a 6-0 win over Narsingdi in Faridpur.

In the day's other two matches, Sirajganj and Patuakhali defeated Joypurhat and Jhalakathi by identical 2-0 margin.

CBF denies allegations

AGENCIES, Sao Paulo

The Brazilian Football Federation (CBF) has denied reports that commercial partner ISE effectively picks the Brazil squads for international friendlies.

Sao Paulo-based newspaper Estadao claimed this past weekend to have obtained a contractual agreement between the CBF and ISE, a firm based in the Cayman Islands with no employees, which suggested the former has a huge influence on the Selecao.

The CBF has now denied that there is any truth in Estadao's claims and insisted that Dunga is free to pick whichever players he wants.

"The coaches will always be the ones in charge of picking the players."

Napoli stay in hunt

AFP, Milan



A brace by Belgian international Dries Mertens helped Napoli to an unconvincing 3-2 win over relegated Cesena but still saw them close to within three points

of Lazio and remain in the hunt for a Champions League spot on Monday.

Napoli surprisingly went behind on the quarter-hour when Frenchman Gregoire Defrel beat 'keeper Mariano Andujar to score the first of a brace of goals at the San Paolo.

But the hosts replied in style, Mertens levelling from close range following a defensive mix-up and Manolo Gabbiadini pulling the hosts in front only two minutes later.

Napoli's enterprise in attack, however, was not matched in defence and in the dying seconds of the opening half Defrel was left unmarked to fire home his second after a cutback from the right wing that went through Mertens' legs and evaded the entire Napoli defence.

The hosts lifted their game after the break and should have pulled in front only for

RESULTS

Fiorentina 3 (Rodriguez 13, Gilardino 30, Salah 56) **Parma 0**
Napoli 3 (Mertens 19, 57, Gabbiadini 21) **Cesena 2** (Defrel 15, 45+2)

Mertens to flash an angled drive just wide of Federico Agliardi's far post.

Mertens made amends soon after, forcing his way down the left flank, cutting inside and playing a one-two with Jose Callejon to bundle past Agliardi for what proved to be the match-winner.

The result keeps Napoli still in the hunt for a Champions League place with Lazio just three points above them in third -- which gets them a place in the qualifying rounds for Europe's premier club competition.

Earlier on Monday, Fiorentina coach Vincenzo Montella revealed he could leave the club in the summer if negotiations with owner and president Andrea Della Valle over its future direction do not bear fruit.

Beaten semifinalists Fiorentina took a major step towards a place in next season's Europa League with a 3-0 rout of relegated Parma to reclaim fifth spot.

Xavi heading to Qatar

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona's captain Xavi Hernandez will leave the club he has served since boyhood for Qatari side Al Sadd at the end of this season, his father said on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old midfielder is a stalwart of the Catalan side over recent years and one of the heroes of Spain's Euro and World Cup-winning squads.

His father Joaquin Hernandez told the Cope radio station Xavi had decided "the moment has come to say goodbye".

He said the contract with Al Sadd would allow Xavi to train as a coach as well as playing.

"He is lucky to have received a really impressive offer where he can continue playing football, train as a future coach and also rest a little."

He will give a farewell press conference on Thursday, Barcelona sports daily El Mundo Deportivo reported, citing unnamed club sources.

His contract with the Spanish league champions runs until next year but he has reportedly decided to leave after the end of the current season.

Barca sealed their league victory on Sunday with a 1-0 win away over Atletico Madrid.



From delight to despair

THE TELEGRAPH

In Iran's Persian Gulf Pro League, heading into the final round of fixtures, Tractor Sazi sat top of the league, ahead of their opponents Naft Tehran on goal difference, and a point clear of Sepahan.

Things started well for the Tractor Boys, who were 3-1 up after an hour. Then, however, things started to turn for the worse. Amid the growing excitement Naft Tehran had drawn level at 3-3 in the 81st minute.

Tractor Sazi then tried to cling on for the point, keeping the ball in the corner, before the final whistle sparked celebrations among their 90,000-strong support.

What nobody seemed to have gathered was that Sepahan, in third place at the start of the evening, were winning 2-0 and had leapfrogged both of their rivals to clinch the title by a single point.



Referee Mike Jones shows Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas (2nd from R) the red card during their Premiership against West Bromwich Albion at the Hawthorns on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Red card angers Jose

AFP, West Bromwich



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho expressed his frustration after Cesc Fabregas was sent off in bizarre fashion as the champions were defeated 3-0 at West Bromwich Albion.

The Spanish midfielder is set to miss the first two matches of next season plus the final game of this campaign at home to Sunderland on Sunday following his first half dismissal after he kicked the ball against Chris Brunt.

Mourinho felt that a more experienced referee than Mike Jones would have resolved the situation with a mere lecture after tempers flared following a Diego Costa and Gareth McAuley off the ball coming together 29 minutes into the action at the Hawthorns.

"I've not seen a sending off like that," said Mourinho.

"I would like to see it again. What is this for a sending off? Where is the danger of the situation to get a red card in a friendly game almost?"

"I don't understand. Darren Fletcher was aggressive yes, he pushed in the chest. He's experienced. It was much more aggressive than what Fabregas did."

"A top referee with big personality has a few words and controls the game. It's a bizarre red card."

Lazio v Roma fixture moved

AFP, Milan

Serie A officials have bowed to an appeal by Lazio to postpone an upcoming league clash with Roma, moving the city derby forward a day to May 25.

The match was scheduled to be held on May 24, although Lazio argued they did not have enough time to prepare for the clash following their Italian Cup final on Wednesday.

Lazio will meet Juventus in the Cup final on May 20 at Rome's Stadio Olimpico. The final was originally set for June 7 but was moved to the midweek date after Juventus qualified for the Champions League final against Barcelona on June 6.

Serie A officials have not released a statement.

The Lazio v Roma game, which could be decisive for both sides as they look to secure the league's second automatic qualifying spot for the Champions League, will kick off at 1600 GMT.

When you play since August with motivation and commitment and feeling the pressure, when you are champions you breathe and everything changes.

"It is difficult to play. Let's blame the players a bit, myself and the top contenders for the title as they were not good enough to fight with us. This is a consequence of being champions so early."

West Brom manager Tony Pulis insists any criticism of Chelsea is unwarranted.