

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1

Premier League
Arsenal v Stoke City
Live from 8:00pm

STAR SPORTS 2

Bundesliga
Bayern v Augsburg
Live from 7:30pm
Frankfurt v Koln
Live from 10:30pm

STAR SPORTS 4

Premier League
Everton v Chelsea
Live from 5:45pm
Palace v Man City
Live from 8:00pm
Man Utd v Liverpool
Live from 10:30pm

SONY KIX

La Liga
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Live from 8:00pm
Gijon v Valencia
Live from 10:30pm
Atl. Madrid v Barcelona
Live from 12:30am (Sunday)

Betis v Sociedad

Live from 2:30am (Sunday)

TEN SPORTS

US Open Women's
Singles Final
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)



She fought long and hard, but in the end Serena Williams' quest for a calendar Grand Slam ended with tears falling on her home soil, as Italy's Roberta Vinci defeated her in the semifinals of the US Open at Flushing Meadows yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

One dream dashed, another fulfilled

Vinci defeats Serena to set up all Italian final

AFP, New York



Serena Williams saw her dream of a calendar year Grand Slam title sweep destroyed Friday as Italy's Roberta Vinci shocked the world number one to reach the US Open final against compatriot Flavia Pennetta.

Vinci battled back to stun the three-time defending champion 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, ending Williams' 33-match US Open win streak and 27-match Grand Slam win streak.

In Saturday's final, Vinci will face 26th-ranked compatriot Pennetta -- who upset Romania's second-ranked Simona Halep 6-1, 6-3 -- in the first all-Italian Grand Slam women's final in the Open Era.

It was a shocking end to Williams' run at not only a sweep of the year's four major titles, a feat that hasn't been done since Steffi Graf's 1988 effort, but her bid for a 22nd Grand Slam title to match Graf's Open Era career record and a fifth Slam crown in a row.

"I don't want to talk about how disappointing it is for me," said Williams in a brief post-match news conference.

"I don't feel pressure. I never felt pressure.

I never felt that pressure to win here. I said that from the beginning."

Vinci was overjoyed by her shock win.

"It's an incredible moment for me," Vinci said. "It's like a dream. I'm in the final. I beat Serena. It's an amazing moment. It's incredible. I think it's the best moment of my life."

Vinci apologized to the crowd for ending Williams' Grand Slam sweep dream.

"Sorry for the American people, for Serena, for the Grand Slam and everything. Today is my day. Sorry guys."

In the matchup of first-time Slam finalists, Vinci has a 4-5 career mark against Pennetta, who took just 59 minutes to dispatch Halep.

Pennetta, 33, broke Halep in the fourth game and again in the sixth when the Romanian netted a forehand on the way to taking the first set in 28 minutes.

Pennetta and Halep traded breaks to open the second set and again in the fourth and fifth games of the second set.

Halep led 3-1 but double faulted to surrender a break and Pennetta held and broke twice more for the victory.

If she hoists the trophy in her 49th Slam appearance, Pennetta would have the most tries of any Grand Slam women's champion.

Zia draws against Russian Super GM

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman drew against Russian Super Grandmaster Evgeny Tomashevsky in the first game of the first round in the Chess World Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan yesterday. Zia played with white pieces in Queen's Pawn Opening system and forced his opponent to a draw after 43 moves, said a press release from the Bangladesh Chess Federation. Tomashevsky is the 12th seeded player of the event and has a FIDE rating of 2758 while unseeded Zia has a rating of 2500. Zia will play his second game in the first round against the same opponent with black pieces today.

Avik wins jnr chess title

SPORTS REPORTER

Avik Sarker emerged unbeaten champion in the Union Insurance 35th National Junior (Under-20) Chess Championship yesterday. FM Fahad Rahman finished runners-up in tie-break after Avik and Fahad had earned 6 points each. In the girls' section, Zahoratul Zannat Zisha emerged champion with 4.5 points.

Goal-shy rivals collide

AFP, Manchester



Anthony Martial is set to make one of the most eagerly awaited debuts in recent Premier League history when his new club Manchester United cross swords with Liverpool on Saturday.

Martial, 19, signed from Monaco on transfer deadline day for a reported initial fee of £36 million (\$55.1 million, 49 million euros) that could rise to £58 million and the French striker will be expected to enliven an attack that has scored only three goals in four league games.

Liverpool are also short of goals, having netted only twice so far this season, and with each side looking to steady the ship after defeats, there will be pressure to perform on both sets of players.

"Liverpool is the perfect game to have to come back to after the international break," United assistant manager and former scourge of Liverpool Ryan Giggs said at a supporters' event this week.

"Old Trafford will be bouncing for a late kick-off. All the players are looking forward to it and I'm sure the fans are, too."

"Liverpool is always a special game and it's even more special when you win, so we can't wait."

Martial, who will wear the number nine shirt, stands to become the first United player to make his debut in a home game against Liverpool since Ernie Thompson in November 1936.

United manager Louis van Gaal has described the fee for Martial as "ridiculous", but despite having spoken of the need to give him time to settle in, the Dutchman could do with the teenager finding his feet quickly.



ANTHONY MARTIAL

Of the three goals United have scored in the league this season, one was an own goal by Tottenham Hotspur's Kyle Walker and the other was scored by Adnan Januzaj, who is no longer at the club.

And while Wayne Rooney returns to Old Trafford after setting a new England scoring record of 50 against Switzerland on Tuesday, he is without a league goal since April.

Van Gaal must also decide whether to restore goalkeeper David de Gea to his starting XI, having sidelined him citing concerns about his focus prior to the collapse of the Spaniard's proposed move to Real Madrid on deadline day.

In midfield, Michael Carrick is a doubt after withdrawing from England

duty with a calf complaint.

While United have looked reasonably solid in defence, it will not have escaped Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers' attention that makeshift centre-back Daley Blind was bullied by Bafetimbi Gomis during their 2-1 defeat at Swansea City.

Liverpool have a bruising forward of their own these days in Christian Benteke, who scored twice against United for Aston Villa last season, and are likely to look to isolate him against the lightweight Blind.

Liverpool have problems of their own in attack, however, and will be without Brazilian playmaker Philippe Coutinho through suspension after he was sent off in their chastening 3-0 loss at home to West Ham United.

Daniel Sturridge has returned to training after undergoing hip surgery in May but may not be risked, while there are doubts over midfield trio Adam Lallana (thigh), Jordan Henderson (ankle) and Joe Allen (hamstring).

Liverpool enjoyed a 3-0 win at Old Trafford amid the embers of David Moyes's ill-fated reign as United manager in March 2014, but were beaten twice by their old enemies last season.

After losing 3-0 in Manchester in mid-December, Liverpool went on a 13-game unbeaten run that appeared to have resurrected their season, only for Van Gaal's men to inflict a 2-1 defeat upon them at Anfield in March.

"We have to try to approach it the same way we approach every single game, but we know there is a lot of talking and the fans are more excited about it," says Liverpool midfielder Lucas Leiva.

"For the players that have never played the fixture, they just have to try to approach it the same way they always do."

Courtois blow for Chelsea

AFP, London

Chelsea's troubled start to their Premier League title defence suffered a fresh blow on Friday when it emerged that goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois required surgery on a knee injury.

"Courtois was injured in a training session with the goalkeepers and I cannot tell you much, but I can tell you that he needs surgery in his right knee," Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho said.

He added: "As a consequence of that he will be out for quite a long time. I cannot be at this moment more specific about the injury or the time he will be out."

De Gea makes remarkable U-turn

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea, who came within minutes of joining Real Madrid last week, signed a new four-year contract with the English Premier League club on Friday.

The announcement caps a remarkable turn of events after the Spain international was on the verge of signing for the Spanish giants only for the transfer to collapse because of paperwork arriving past the permitted deadline.

Juve aim to rebound

AFP, Milan



Champions Juventus host surprise Serie A leaders Chievo on Saturday hoping to kickstart their season while Mario Balotelli is eyeing his first start for AC Milan when they face Inter in the Milan derby.

Juventus's start to the fledgling season has been anything but positive, Massimiliano Allegri's men slipping to two consecutive defeats to sit in the unfamiliar reaches of the table's bottom four.

Given Juventus, the four-time consecutive champions, have never succumbed to two opening defeats, the vultures are already circling above Turin.

"Something has changed," former AC Milan and Inter player Andres Guglielminpietro told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"Juventus underwent major changes during the summer. In Italy right now, a lot of the big teams have started the season on a level footing, and with the belief they can win the scudetto."

Only months after Juventus capped a rare league and Cup double-winning season by progressing to the Champions League final, where they were beaten by Barcelona, the champions are certainly stuttering as they adapt to life without three players who proved crucial in recent campaigns -- Arturo Vidal, Andrea Pirlo and Carlos Tevez.

Juventus lost to chief rivals Roma a fortnight ago and with Inter Milan and AC Milan threatening to challenge this season, the pundits can smell an upset.

Allegri has been quick to allay fears, and Brazilian midfielder Hernanes believes recent setbacks were a blip.

"There won't be any talk of a transition season," Allegri said in midweek. "For us, the season starts now."

FIXTURES

(times GMT)

Saturday
Frosinone v Roma, Fiorentina v Genoa (1700), Juventus v Chievo (1945)

Sunday
Verona v Torino (1130), Sassuolo v Atalanta, Sampdoria v Bologna, Empoli v Napoli, Palermo v Carpi (all 1400), Lazio v Udinese (1700), Inter Milan v AC Milan (1945)

Barca's Atletico test

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid have a great opportunity to show their La Liga title challenge is to be taken seriously this season when an under-strength Barcelona visit the Vicente Calderon on Saturday.

Both sides took the maximum six points from their opening two league fixtures last month, but it is Atletico after a summer of heavy investment in the transfer market that have looked the more impressive.

Diego Simeone's men won 3-0 at Sevilla last time out and are at full-strength as left-back Filipe Luis has recovered from the hamstring problem that kept him out the trip to the Sanchez Pizjuan.

"Although they have some players out the Barca squad is practically the same as last year, they have plenty of options to choose from and they are favourites for every match," said Luis.

"We have the advantage of playing at home and I am sure it will be a great, hard and intense game. We have a lot of confidence and we need to continue in the same way as the previous two games where we have won and not conceded a goal."

By contrast, Barcelona are likely to be without three first team regulars as Dani Alves and Claudio Bravo miss out through injury, whilst Gerard Pique is suspended unless a last minute appeal to Spain's administrative court for sport is successful.

Pique endured a testing time during the international break as he was booed by sections of the home support during Spain's 2-0 win over Slovakia after mocking Real Madrid during Barca's treble winning celebrations at the end of last season.

However, he is desperate to get back on the field for the first time on league duty this season.

"It is always a difficult place to go, one of the most difficult of the season," he said on Thursday.

FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

Saturday
Espanyol v Real Madrid (1400), Sporting Gijon v Valencia (1615), Atletico Madrid v Barcelona (1830), Real Betis v Real Sociedad (1900)

Sunday
Granada v Villarreal (1000), Athletic Bilbao v Getafe (1400), Celta Vigo v Las Palmas (1615), Malaga v Eibar (1830)

Monday
Rayo Vallecano v Deportivo la Coruna (1830)

Messi becomes a dad again

AGENCIES, Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi has become a father for the second time on Friday after the birth of his son Mateo.

The Argentina international missed training on Friday to attend the birth of his son, but will be available for Barcelona's meeting with Atletico Madrid.

The Barcelona star's brother, Matias Messi, confirmed the news on Twitter.

"Mateo has just been born, he is beautiful," Matias Messi wrote.

"We're savouring this moment of happiness."

"Messi is available although he didn't train," Barcelona head coach Luis Enrique told reporters on Friday. "He is on the list. The club gave him permission not to train today for personal reasons."

Messi already has one son, named Thiago, with girlfriend Antonella Rocuzzo.



Mohammad Ishtiaq serves during the boys' singles final of the Bengal Plastic Asian U-14 Tennis Series at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday.

PHOTO: BTf

Ishtiaq, Popy win double crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ishtiaq and Popy Akter won double crown in the first round of the Bengal Plastic Asian U-14 Tennis Series, which concluded at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday. Ishtiaq beat Zubin Omar in 6-4, 6-2 games in the boys' singles final before Ishtiaq paired up with Naimul Islam to win the boys' doubles final in 6-3, 6-3 games against Mehedi Hasan and Arnab Saha pair.

In the girls' singles, Popy Akter raced to the title with a 6-1, 6-2 win in the final over Fabiha Lamisa Shuchona while Popy and Ity Akter pair had earlier won the girls' doubles crown.

The qualifying phase for the second round will start today at the same venue.