Arsenal v Sunderland Live from 9:00pm STAR SPORTS2 Bundesliga Wolfsburg v Dortmund Live from 11:30pm SONYSIX

Serie A Torino v Roma Live from 8:00pm Inter Milan v Genoa Live from 1:45am (Sunday) **SONY KIX** Primera Liga

Real Madrid v Getafe Live from 9:00pm Granada v Atletico Madrid Live from 11:30pm Valencia v Barcelona Live from 1:30am (Sunday) Deportivo v Sevilla

## Platini to be quizzed

AFP, Lausanne

The FIFA ethics committee will question Michel Platini "most likely between December 16 and 18", a source close to football's world governing body said Friday.

Platini's lawyer said at the end of November that the ethics body's investigatory chamber wants the UEFA chief banned for life over a suspect \$2.0-million payment he received from FIFA's now suspended leader Sepp Blatter in 2011.

Platini and Blatter "have asked to be heard, and this will be granted," a source close to FIFA told AFP.

"Michel Platini will be heard most likely between December 16 and 18".

The 60-year-old Frenchman, until recently the favourite to take over football's world governing body, is set to appear before the FIFA ethics committee's adjudicatory chamber.

No further information has been released from Blatter's legal team concerning his own hearings.

Like Platini, Blatter was handed a provisional 90-day suspension on October 8 while an investigation is held into the suspect payment.

That has ruled the onetime France international player out of the race for the FIFA presidency.

### R'dinho to open academy in Singapore

AFP, Singapore

Brazilian legend Ronaldinho will arrive in Singapore next week to establish a football academy in the soccer-mad city-state, a local club said Friday.

The World Cup winner will partner with local football club Tampines Rovers and the International Football Group to jointly establish the Ronaldinho Football Academy, a Tampines Rovers statement said.

A memorandum of understanding to establish the soccer school will be signed at a ceremony next Thursday.

Ronaldinho was part of the Brazilian team that won the 2002 World Cup and also took home the FIFA World Player of the Year award in 2004 and 2005.

#### Alves unhappy with 3-man shortlist

AGENCIES, Barcelona

Barcelona full-back Dani Alves believes that Cristiano Ronaldo does not deserve to be on the threeman shortlist for this year's Ballon d'Or - and has called for Real Madrid to be kicked out of the Copa del Rey after they fielded an ineligible player.

Alves, 32, has long been a thorn in the side of Real expressing his delight on social media when Barcelona's recent Clasico victory meant he became the individual player with more wins against the capital side than any other

in history. The Brazilian international believes that Lionel Messi should win this year's Ballon d'Or, narrowly ahead of teammate Neymar - and believes Ronaldo does not warrant his place on the podium.

"Messi is a bit ahead, because of his influence on the game," Alves told reporters. "I think at this moment, Neymar is second

best in the world. "Cristiano Ronaldo doesn't deserve to be among the Ballon d'Or finalists. It's not only about scoring goals."

## Real expelled from Copa

GOAL.COM



Real Madrid have been expelled from the Copa del Rey after they fielded the ineligible Denis Cheryshev in Wednesday's 3-1 win over Cadiz.

The Russian winger picked up three yellow cards in the competition last season while on loan at Villarreal the third in the semifinal defeat to Barcelona - and was supposed to be suspended for the first game of this season's Copa.

However, Madrid did not realise and Rafael Benitez, taking advantage of his squad, played him from the start against the third division side.

Cheryshev opened the scoring, but was taken off at halftime as word spread that he was not eligible to play.

Cadiz confirmed on Wednesday they had made a complaint to the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) regarding Cheryshev's involvement.

And Francisco Rubio Sanchez, the competition committee judge at the RFEF, has ruled in favour of the Segunda B side, expelling Los Blancos from the competition. Madrid are now likely to appeal the decision and fight for

their right to remain in the Copa del Rey, as Perez suggested they would do during a press conference on Thursday evening. "The penalty Cheryshev was given while playing for Villarreal is ineffective in our view, no one had mentioned

the sanction to the player'" the Madrid president said. "As Article 41 of the RFEF's disciplinary code states, the

punishment is not effective unless it notifies those to be punished. "Real Madrid did not know of its existence, no one reported it - neither the player nor Villarreal nor the RFEF."

The club's first move will be to take it to the Appeals Committee, with the option to then take it to the Court of Arbitration for Sport if they are knocked back.

Earlier, Real Madrid President Florentino Perez said: "Real Madrid didn't know [about the ban]. No one told us and if we admit the ban was in effect then it would be



Real Madrid players jog during a training session at the Valdebebas training ground in Madrid yesterday ahead of their La Liga match against Getafe.

рното: AFP

# Vardy eyeing 12th

AFP, London



weekend.

Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy can make history for the second weekend running when the Premier League's early-season overachievers visit slip-sliding Swansea City on

Saturday. Vardy's goal in the 1-1 draw against Manchester United saw him set a new Premier League record of scoring in 11 consecutive matches, eclipsing the mark set

by United old boy Ruud van Nistelrooy in 2003. Should he score at Swansea, Vardy will equal an even more historic mark: Jimmy Dunne's English top-flight record from

1931-32 of scoring in 12 successive games for Sheffield United. But the England striker has played down the significance of the new milestone, telling Sky Sports: "I just have my eyes on helping Leicester get three points at the

"If someone else gets the winning goal, then I am more than happy."

While Leicester go into the weekend level on points with leaders Manchester City, Swansea are just four points above the relegation zone following a run of one win in 10 matches.

Manchester City have an opportunity to put pressure on the chasing pack as they visit Stoke City, their fellow League Cup semifinalists, in the Saturday lunchtime fixture.

With progress assured in both the League Cup and the Champions League, Manuel Pellegrini's side can plough all their

resources into the league campaign ahead of a sequence of six matches in 24 days.

"Now it is the most difficult time in the league with games coming thick and fast, one after the other," said City forward Raheem Sterling.

"We basically have to take it slow, win game after game and get a good run going." Third-place Manchester United could be

forgiven for having their thoughts elsewhere as they gear up for Saturday's home game against West Ham United. On Tuesday they visit Wolfsburg for a

match they are likely to have to win to secure a place in the Champions League last 16, leaving manager Louis van Gaal with a dilemma over who to select for the visit of West Ham. But injuries have already forced his hand,

with Phil Jones, Marcos Rojo, Jesse Lingard and Ander Herrera all doubtful, while Luke Shaw and Antonio Valencia are long-term absentees.

Another manager ruing a long injury list is Arsenal's Arsene Wenger, who will be without star forward Alexis Sanchez and

midfielder Santi Cazorla -- to name but two

#### **FIXTURES**

Saturday

(1500 GMT unless otherwise stated): Arsenal v Sunderland, Chelsea v Bournemouth (1730),

Manchester United v West Ham United, Southampton v Aston Villa, Stoke City v Manchester City (1245 GMT), Swansea City v Leicester City, Watford v Norwich City, West Bromwich Albion v Tottenham Hotspur

Sunday Newcastle United v Liverpool (1600 GMT) Monday

## Wazza to be missed

AGENCIES, Manchester

Wayne Rooney has been ruled out of Manchester United's upcoming games against West Ham and Wolfsburg because of an ankle injury.

Louis van Gaal confirmed the striker's injury, which he suffered in the 1-1 draw at Leicester, was worse than feared.

The 30-year-old, who has played 499 games for the club, will miss Saturday's home game against West Ham and the crucial Champions League fixture in Wolfsburg next Tuesday.

"It's a nasty injury. He shall not play his 500th game [on Saturday] because he is more injured than I thought so we have to wait for that game," the United manager said.

"He has to do a lot of exercises to make his ankle stronger. He needs more time."

Tuesday's game in Wolfsburg, is a must win for United who need to win in order to guarantee their place in the knockout stages of the Champions League.

## Swimming in a tangle

SPORTS REPORTER

While swimmers preparing for the South Asian Games seek a perfect platform to judge their performance, the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) has scratched its national swimming championship this year, citing it has been instructed to do so by the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA).

A total of 24 swimmers have been preparing for the SA Games since August and the timing of the swimmers in practice have reportedly improved under Korean coach Park Te Gun, who took charge in early November. However, due to the lack of competitive events, the swimmers' real standard could not be tested as yet. "We have been preparing well in the camp, but it would

have been better had we been given an opportunity to take part in competitive events before the SA Games," Shahjahan Ali Rony, who won 50-metre breaststroke gold medal in the 2006 Colombo SAF Games and silver medal in the 2010 Dhaka SA Games, told reporters yesterday. The BSF held its last national championships in October,

2014 and since then they only organised age-level competitions and long-range championships, a platform the senior swimmers were not allowed to participate in.

"We could not hold the national championships because the BOA has verbally instructed us not to interrupt the national camp," said BSF general secretary Rafiz Uddin Rafiz.

BOA training and development committee's member secretary Rafiqul Islam, however, gave a different explanation. "We have asked the federations to complete their national

championships by October so that the players could fully concentrate on training for the SA Games," said Rafiqul. Rafiz Uddin could not provide any satisfactory answer to

Rafiqul's claim but promised to hold an international tournament before his tenure expires in 2017.

Several other federations like athletics, shooting, volleyball, kabaddi and weightlifting have already completed their national championships while boxing and handball

### the price AGENCIES, Millan

Jovetic pays

Inter forward Stevan Jovetic has paid for a stranger to have cruciate ligament surgery in his native Montenegro.

Milivoje Raičević of Budućnost Podgorica tore the ligaments in his knee in August, and his club could not afford to pay the bill.

However, in an interview with UEFA's official website, the 22-year-old reveals that Jovetic, who he had never previously met or spoken to, stepped in to foot the bill.

"When he heard what had happened and discovered that my club doesn't have enough money to send me to Augsburg following a misdiagnosis in Montenegro, Jovetić called me and offered his help,"

Raičević explained. "He arranged for me to meet a doctor who helped him when he had the same injury [in 2010].

"Jovetić covered all examination costs and also paid for surgery, which I had

a few days ago in Serbia. "All I can do is say many,

many thanks and promise to Stevan that I will be back next season, scoring goals for him.



Wendell Lira (L) of Brazil's Goianesia celebrates his goal that was nominated for the prestigious Puskas Award for the best goal of the year.

#### AFP, Sao Paulo



When Wendell Lira soared through a rainy night sky to score the opening goal of a mid-

season match in a Brazilian regional football league, there were 342 people in the stands.

None of them could have imagined that the unknown forward, who was released by his club, Goianesia, several months later, would end up competing with Lionel Messi for the Puskas

Lira, 26, was startled when he found out -- quite literally.

He had just left his house in Goiania, in the heart of Brazil, on Monday morning when a car suddenly pulled up and blocked his path.

He thought he was about to be opening round of the contest. robbed.

But the driver got out, asked him for a photo, and told him his stunning bicycle kick against defending champions Atletico Goianiense eight months back had returned from the past to past year. change his life.

believe it at first. Then my wife called me, crying, and I started crying with her. I couldn't believe it. It was very emotional," Lira told AFP, still dazed by the news.

Lira vies with Messi

Lira, a journeyman footballer schooled in the humble stadiums of Brazil's lesser leagues, will share the stage on January 11 in Zurich with Barcelona superstar Messi and Roma's Alessandro Florenzi, the other two finalists for the coveted award.

The prize, whose past winners include Cristiano Ronaldo, Zlatan Award, FIFA's prize for the best goal of Ibrahimovic, Neymar and James Rodriguez, will be awarded during the Ballon d'Or ceremony for best player of the year -- a star-studded, red-carpet gala watched in millions of homes around the world.

The journey since that raindrenched March night led first to the

Lira learned on November 6 that world football's governing body had shortlisted his goal as one of the 10 best scored and captured on video in official tournaments worldwide in the

At the time, Lira -- who earned "When I got the news, I didn't about \$1,300 a month when he scored

the goal of his life -- had been unemployed for three months, since the end of his season with Goianesia and a brief stint at third-tier side Tombense.

He was in the process of searching for a new club to continue making a living from the game he loves -- like many of the working-class players who scrape by in football-crazed Brazil's lower leagues.

An estimated 20,000 professional footballers in Brazil go unemployed each year when the regional leagues

end in May. "Life is complicated for a footballer who's not in the first division. You go through a lot. A lot of times you don't receive your paycheck, and we have to support our families," said Lira, who has had to find odd jobs to pay the bills in the past.

When Lira's nomination started generating buzz, a leading club in his hometown, Vila Nova, signed him as its star recruit for its return to Brazil's second-tier league next year.

"It's changed my life. People know me, they want to take photos with me, they ask for my autograph and I've had new job offers. But thank God, now I've got a job. It's crazy," he said.

PHOTO: AFP