

CHANNEL 9

Bangabandhu Gold Cup
Bahrain v Bangladesh
Olympic Team
Live from 2:45pm

SONY KIX

Primera Liga
Villarreal v Gijon
Live from 5:00pm
Sociedad v Valencia
Live from 9:00pm

Getafe v Real Betis
Live from 11:30pm
Celta Vigo v Atl. Madrid
Live from 1:30am
(Monday)

SONYSIX

FA Cup
Tottenham v Leicester
Live from 10:00pm
Serie A
Sampdoria v Juventus
Live from 1:30am (Monday)

Bangabandhu Gold Cup

Venue: Shamsul Huda Stadium, Jessore

Bahrain v Bangladesh Olympic Team

Time: 2:45pm

DAY'S EVENT

A YELLOW FOR ATTEMPTED PANTS-ING

Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti joked he was trying to pull Axel Ngando's shorts down with his cynical foul in his side's win over Bastia. Verratti, 23, tugged at Ngando's shirt and picked up a yellow card in PSG's 2-0 victory at Parc des Princes on Friday. The Italy international's booking was just his second of the Ligue 1 season and he said Ngando's shorts were his target. "I will not make a mistake with the feet because it is dangerous to the opponent," Verratti said after the win. "I tried to take the shorts. It was not a good choice. I had lost the ball and we were outnumbered. I didn't want to be at fault for a goal." -- AGENCIES



Nepal goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu catches the ball comfortably to thwart one of Malaysia's attacks during their Bangabandhu Gold Cup match at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Nepal hold Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER from Jessore



Nepal held Malaysia XI to a goalless draw in the second Group A fixture of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

The stalemate left hosts Bangladesh on top of the group with three points, two ahead of joint second-placed Nepal and Malaysia XI while Sri Lanka are at the bottom with no points.

Both defending champions Malaysia and Nepal had a number of opportunities to notch a win, but the forwards of both sides squandered the chances.

Malaysia, comprising FELDA United FC players, dominated the first half and produced a couple of good chances but national midfielder Ahme Syamim Yahya failed to beat Nepal goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu with a free-header in the ninth minute before Bobby Gonzales floated his header over the bar in the 19th minute.

Nepal, comprising 10 players from the recent SAFF Suzuki Cup campaign, looked

better in the latter part of the first half and launched two good attacks but Malaysia goalkeeper Farizal Harun thwarted the efforts from Bikram Lama and Nawayuy Shrestha.

The second half belonged to Nepal, who were deprived of the lead after a drive from Jagajit Shrestha came off the post in the 63rd minute. Two minutes later, Anjan Bista saw goalkeeper Farizal deny him. The Malaysian goalkeeper once again rescued his side thwarting an effort from Bimal Ghatri Magar in the 79th minute as the two sides shared the spoils of a goalless draw.

Both the coaches were happy with the result and hoped to improve match by match.

"This was our first game, but I am happy with the performance of the boys even though we could have scored many goals," said Malaysia coach Irfan Bakti.

"I am quite happy with the performance but the result did not suit us. We got many chances to score but the forwards could not convert those. We are looking forward to qualifying for the next round as we still have two matches left," said Nepal coach Bal Gopal Maharjan.

Barca forced to clarify

AGENCIES, Barcelona

Barcelona have been forced to clarify they do not share Dani Alves' claim that the Press treat footballers as "objects".

The right-back accused the Press of making him feel "ashamed to be part of this sport" in a profanity-fuelled Instagram post on Friday.

"I become more and more ashamed to be part of this sport with each passing day," he wrote.

"I thought our only purpose was to defend the colours of our teams or go home either happy or sad with how the team did."

"We're objects used by the Press to benefit them, so they can sell newspapers."

"There's more rubbish and less talk about tactics, moves, dribbles, goals, saves and the game itself."

In a statement on their official website, Barca replied: "Dani Alves published a critical message about the media on Instagram, to the extent that he used offensive language."

"Aside from the views, which the player can express freely, Barcelona feel the need to clarify that we do not share the expressions which have been published."

Zidane issues warning

AGENCIES, Madrid

New Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane has warned the "BBC" that "you can't have two or three players who don't defend".

Speaking at his first Press conference on Friday ahead of Deportivo La Coruna a day later, the Frenchman made it clear Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo would no longer be entitled to free roles in attack.

"[Ronaldo] is more than non-transferable," he began. "He is the soul of this team and won't be going anywhere while I'm in charge."

"I've seen a focused team, who want to put things right."

"I won't reveal [my team], apart from that three will play up top."

"[James Rodriguez and Isco] are important and very good players, and I've given them my affection and faith."

"Still, the most important thing is for them to remember that the team comes first. That was my experience as a player."

"[Raymond Domenech] is entitled to his opinion. He knows what I think of him and I won't comment further."

PSG go 22 points clear

AFP, Paris



Paris Saint Germain began the second half of the Ligue 1 season in comfortable fashion on Friday, goals from Thiago Motta and Maxwell seeing Laurent Blanc's champions to a 2-0 win over Bastia.

PSG went into the winter recess boasting a yawning 19 points cushion -- a new record points tally up to Christmas in France.

And two first half goals moved them 22 points clear of Monaco and maintained their unbeaten record in all domestic competitions since last March.

"We are the only team which also thinks a little bit about the future," said Blanc as he looked ahead to the rest of the season which also includes a Champions League last-16 clash against Chelsea.

"There are heavy legs in January but we have big goals for February, March, April and May, I hope."

"You have to work hard in January, the weather conditions may not be great. This is one reason why the game tonight gave me much pleasure."

Bastia turned up sitting just three points clear of the relegation zone but having only lost just one of their last six games.

As for their well-heeled hosts PSG had laboured to a 1-0 victory against fourth-tier minnows Wasquehal in the French Cup last weekend.

Blanc elected to start Brazilian winger Lucas Moura instead of Edinson Cavani and Kevin Trapp in goal.

For Bastia, Brazilian Brandao was making his return to the Parc des Princes where in 2014 he headbutted Motta for which he picked up a six month ban.

The visitors began brightly but as the half hour approached PSG's Angel Di Maria sent in a corner from the right with Bastia's bumbling defence allowing Thiago Silva's header to be nudged over the line by Motta.

Argentine star Di Maria was at the heart of the hosts' second goal ten minutes later, helping to set up left-back Maxwell to fire an angled shot into the Bastia netting.

FA Cup Arsenal, Man City through

AFP, London

Aaron Ramsey and Olivier Giroud scored as Arsenal started their FA Cup defence by coming from behind to defeat Sunderland 3-1 in the third round on Saturday.

Arsenal were joined in round four by Premier League title rivals Manchester City, who won 3-0 at Norwich City, but Southampton and Newcastle United were both eliminated and West Bromwich Albion survived a huge scare.

Sunderland took a 17th-minute lead at the Emirates Stadium through Jermain Lens, but Joel Campbell equalised eight minutes later before second-half goals by Ramsey and Giroud gave Arsene Wenger's men victory.

Premier League leaders Arsenal are seeking to become the first team to win three FA Cups in a row since Blackburn Rovers between 1884 and 1886.

Manchester City strolled through at Carrow Road, where Sergio Aguero put the visitors ahead in the 16th minute with a driving run and emphatic shot.

A Messi masterclass

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi warmed up for his anticipated fifth World Player of the Year crown by scoring his first hat-trick of the season to move Barcelona back to the top of La Liga by cruising past Granada 4-0 on Saturday.

Messi effectively ended the contest within the first 15 minutes with two easy finishes before completing his hat-trick after the break to take his tally to 12 goals in 10 games since returning from knee ligament damage in November, while Neymar completed the rout late on.

The European champions lead Atletico Madrid, who travel to Celta Vigo on Sunday, by a point and are now five clear of Real Madrid.

Real begin a new era under Zinedine Zidane later on Saturday when they host Deportivo la Coruna at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Messi is expected to beat off teammate Neymar and current holder Cristiano Ronaldo to the Ballon d'Or on Monday after leading Barca to a second treble of La Liga, Champions League and Copa del Rey in six years last season.

And despite the fine form of Neymar and Luis Suarez in his two-month absence, Messi again demonstrated he is Barca's main man as Luis Enrique's men

bounced back from drawing three of their last four La Liga games.

Arda Turan made his first league start for the hosts after Barca's year-long ban from registering new players was lifted earlier in the week, and the Turkish international provided his first assist for the club with a lovely through ball for Messi to slot home after just eight minutes.

Barca's all-star front three combined to perfection six minutes later as Neymar's cross was helped first time by Suarez into the path of Messi to roll past the helpless Andres Fernandez.

The hosts should have been much further clear by half-time than 2-0 as Suarez inexplicably fired wide with the goal at his mercy after a neat one-two with Neymar.

Fernandez also produced a fine save to temporarily deny Messi his hat-trick before Neymar drilled a volley into the side-netting.

The Brazilian was frustrated again just before the hour mark when he fired against the post from a narrow angle, but Messi followed up to complete his hat-trick.

Neymar finally got his goal seven minutes from time when Messi cleverly let Suarez's cross roll across the area knowing he was in an offside position and Neymar took his time before blasting the ball into the roof of the net for his 18th goal of the season.

Blatter, Platini free to appeal bans

AFP, Geneva



FIFA's ethics tribunal said Saturday it had provided Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini with the reasons for its decision to ban them from football for eight years, clearing the way for them to appeal against the decision.

"The adjudicatory chamber of the independent Ethics Committee... has notified Mr Joseph S. Blatter and Mr Michel Platini of the grounds for the decisions passed in December 2015," the body said in a statement.

Platini's lawyer Thibaud d'Ales said the UEFA president had indeed received the reasons behind the ban.

"We'll read them, analyse them and launch an appeal on Monday," d'Ales said.

In December, the ethics tribunal banned the FIFA president and vice president from football for eight years, saying they had abused their positions over a \$2 million payment made to Platini in 2011 for work carried out between 1999 and 2002.

Blatter, who has headed FIFA since 1998, was also fined 50,000 Swiss francs (\$50,000/46,300 euros) while Platini, the head of UEFA, Europe's governing body, was fined 80,000 Swiss francs.

At the time of the verdict, which heightened further the crisis rocking football's scandal-plagued world body, the court insisted there was "no legal basis" for the payment that Blatter authorised for Platini in 2011.

The tribunal did not provide further details Saturday of the reasoning behind its decision.

Instead it stressed it had now "fulfilled its commitment to provide the grounds for the

respective decisions to Mr Blatter and Mr Platini within the first half of January 2016."

"After receiving the grounds for the decisions, both officials may lodge an appeal with the FIFA Appeal Committee," the statement said.

If that appeal is rejected, the two men can appeal further to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the highest tribunal in sports.

At the time of the verdict, both men angrily vowed to fight the bans, which started immediately.

The tribunal decision promises to end 79-year-old Blatter's four decades with FIFA in disgrace.

It also dealt a devastating blow to 60-year-old Platini's hopes of taking over as head of FIFA in an election on February 26.

The UEFA president pulled out of the race earlier this week, saying the ban has made it impossible for him to put together a campaign to take on the sport's most powerful job.

He told French sports newspaper L'Equipe that he no longer had "the time nor the means to go to the voters, to meet people, to fight against the other candidates."

"In withdrawing, I am dedicating myself to my defence."

FIFA has since last May be rocked to its core by a cascade of corruption charges and arrests that culminated with the implication of the two long considered world football's most powerful men.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi scores the second goal against Granada during their Primera Liga encounter at the Nou Camp yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mancini loves one-nil wins

AFP, Milan

Champions League-chasing Inter Milan are happy to keep on scraping wins in Serie A this season if it means collecting all three points, says coach Roberto Mancini.

Inter have won nine of their 17 games so far by a scoreline of 1-0 and host Sassuolo on Sunday looking to protect their one-point lead over Fiorentina and Napoli.

Although winning a first Serie A title since 2010 would be welcomed by the club and its fans, Mancini's prime objective is to secure qualification for next season's Champions League for the first time since the 2011-2012 season.

The Italian, speaking to media on Saturday, said he is unconcerned by his side's lack of goals as long as they come up with the three points.

"I love a 1-0 win and if we win the next 15 matches by that scoreline then that would be perfect," Mancini said.

"There is so much chatter but we like hearing other people talk about us."

Inter have topped the league since before Christmas but in what is the tightest Serie A race since the 1993-94 season, the Nerazzurri are sure to face a tough second half of the campaign.

Fiorentina, Napoli and champions Juventus have shown title-winning credentials and slips-ups from here on will prove costly.

Sassuolo, considered one of the league's toughest 'smaller' sides, moved up to sixth place at 11 points behind Inter last week.

Azarenka wins Brisbane title

AFP, Brisbane

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka stormed to her second Brisbane International title when she downed Germany's Angelique Kerber in straight sets on Saturday.

Azarenka, who won her maiden WTA title in Brisbane in 2009, overwhelmed the fourth-seeded Kerber, winning 6-3, 6-1 in 73 minutes, her sixth win over the German in six meetings.

It was Azarenka's first title since she won in Cincinnati in August, 2013.

She sustained a foot injury in 2014 and only played nine tournaments. In 2015, she suffered a thigh strain that saw her slip down the world rankings.

But she steadily improved in each round in Brisbane and showed in the final she will be a serious contender for the Australian Open.