

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN HD
Australian Open
Live from 6:00am &

UMPIRE DONS HELMET

Field umpire John Ward surprised many on Wednesday when he entered the field with a helmet on during the 4th ODI between India and Australia at the Manuka Oval in Canberra. In a first of its kind instance in international cricket, an umpire was seen officiating wearing a helmet. Last year in December, while officiating a Ranji Trophy match between Tamil Nadu and Punjab, the 53-year-old Ward suffered a severe blow on his head and was hospitalised. It seems that he did not want to take a chance this time around and decided to wear a helmet.

Bangladesh Cricket League Venue: Rajshahi

Four-day Match, Day 3 South Zone v Central Zone

Time: 9:30am Venue: Bogra

DAY'S EVENT



Roger Federer of Switzerland pumps his fist after victory in the men's singles second round match against Alexandr Dolgoplov of Ukraine during the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

Big guns cruise

AFP, Melbourne

Defending champions Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams stormed into the Australian Open third round on Wednesday as tennis authorities came under fire over their efforts to fight match-fixing.

Djokovic had a third-set tussle with French teenager Quentin Halys before winning their night match 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), joining Williams and Roger Federer in the next stage.

As a match-fixing controversy continued to reverberate at Melbourne Park, Williams swatted Hsieh Su-Wei 6-1, 6-2 to reach the third round as she seeks a record-equalling 22nd major title.

Williams eased lingering concerns over the state of her injured knee as she obliterated the Taiwanese, even pulling off possibly her first ever round-the-net shot for good measure.

Federer, who is trying to extend his record number of Grand Slam crowns to 18, then dismantled his 35th-ranked practice partner Alexandr Dolgoplov 6-3, 7-5, 6-1.

Separately a senior anti-corruption official told AFP that match-fixing was commonplace in tennis's lower levels and criticised the "opaque and secretive" Tennis Integrity Unit, which is tasked with finding cheats.

Chris Eaton, director of integrity at the International Centre for Sport Security in

Doha, was speaking after a report claimed several players suspected of being serial match-fixers had never been punished.

"Integrity is by definition open and transparent. The TIU is neither... by operating in the shadows they fail to practice what they preach," he said, calling for a "new independent and integrated integrity model".

The controversy is just the latest to hit the tainted sports world after claims of a doping cover-up shook athletics and multiple scandals engulfed football's governing body, FIFA.

Petra Kvitova became the latest women's top-10 player to fall, joining Simona Halep and Venus Williams on the sidelines when she was shocked 6-4, 6-4 by Australian giant-killer Daria Gavrilova.

In a positive evening for the hosts, the combustible Nick Kyrgios overcame a mix-up with his shorts to beat Pablo Cuevas and set up a showdown with world number six Tomas Berdych.

Agnieszka Radwanska's sky-high confidence took another leap upwards when she halted Eugenie Bouchard, back in form after suffering concussion at the US Open, 6-4, 6-2.

On court earlier was five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova, who had little difficulty dispatching 105th-ranked Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-2, 6-1.

Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori beat his close friend Austin Krajicek 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 as he pressed his bid for a first Grand Slam title.

BRIEF STORIES

AUSSIE JO

Britain's Johanna Konta said she wasn't tempted by a move back to Australia after shocking Venus Williams to reach the second round. Konta, who was born in Sydney and spent her childhood in Australia, would be welcomed back with open arms after a disappointing first round by Australia's women, with former US Open champion Sam Stosur among the casualties. "Ah, jealousy is not a good thing," chided the 24-year-old. "My home is Great Britain. It has been for a long time now, over a decade. Yeah, no, that's where my heart is," she added.

THE SERENA SHUFFLE

Serena Williams pulled out some new moves during her second-round win over Taiwan's Hsieh Su-Wei. Willing the ball to land in, she would stand on one leg and follow it with her body, creating some interesting contortions. "I just want to win every point when I'm out here so if my racquet doesn't do it, I just get my body to do it," the world number one shrugged afterwards. "Hey, I'm just trying my hardest!"

C'MON LLEYTON

Australia's great and good turned up for what could have been Lleyton Hewitt's final match - only for the veteran to beat Jack Duckworth and extend his farewell tournament into another round. Cricket's Michael Clarke and Adam Gilchrist, Formula One driver Mark Webber and tennis legend Neale Fraser were all in the crowd as Hewitt, wearing a shirt decorated with the Australian flag, beat fellow Aussie Duckworth to progress. Tuesday was christened 'C'mon Day' in honour of Hewitt's famous battle cry -- but now Thursday will also be 'C'mon Day' when he takes on Spain's David Ferrer.

-- AFP

Marchena hangs up his boots

AFP, Madrid

World Cup winner Carlos Marchena announced his retirement from professional football on Tuesday at the age of 36.

Marchena played 69 times for Spain and enjoyed the most successful period of his club career during a nine-year spell with Valencia, winning two La Liga titles, the Spanish Cup and UEFA Cup.

He also won the European Championships with Spain in 2008 before being part of the 2010 World Cup team, but was left out of the squad for the successful defence of Spain's Euro crown in 2012.

Marchena's European club career ended in 2014 when he left Deportivo La Coruna, after which he was unemployed for a full year before joining Kerala Blasters in the Indian Super League.

"It wasn't an easy decision, but that's life and now I'm going to head towards another stage (of life)," Marchena said in an open letter on the Spanish national team's website.

"I feel privileged to have gone through so many varied experiences."

Marchena started his career with Sevilla in the 1998/99 season and also went on to play for Benfica and Villarreal.

BFF meeting bypasses national team's state

SPORTS REPORTER

The executive committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday had a four-hour meeting to discuss different aspects of the game, but it had apparently no time to discuss the national team's shambolic performances in recent times.

The possible amendments of the BFF constitution ahead of April's election, its annual general meeting, the presence of the Prime Minister in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup final as the chief guest, reduction of Arambagh KS's punishment and holding the Sher-e-Bangla and Suhrawardi national tournaments were the focal points of the meeting, which however did not make any room to discuss the failures of the national team in two successive tournaments - the SAFF Suzuki Cup and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

In fact not only the BFF executive committee, also the National Teams Committee (NTC) comprising BFF vice presidents Kazi Nabil Ahmed and Tabith Awal, failed to lay out any

concrete plans as a roadmap for the team's improvement over the last four years as the committee spent most of their time to negotiate with foreign coaches over wage issues and the arrangements for national team's foreign trip. But there were apparently no steps from the NTC which could make the national team a strong one; one of three pledges BFF president Kazi Salahuddin made after being re-elected as the BFF president in April, 2012.

After the usual briefing on the outcomes of the meeting by senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy, the journalists approached the BFF president to know about the poor condition of the national team, but in vain. Salahuddin, however, promised that he would talk to them after the completion of the eight-team tournament.

The former Bangladesh international had earlier made an open apology for the disastrous performance of the national team in the SAFF Suzuki Cup and the question now arises whether he would keep apologising for the failures of the team or take proper steps to make it a strong one.

Epic collapse costs India

AFP, Canberra

A spectacular Indian batting collapse gave Australia a 25-run victory in the one-day international in Canberra on Wednesday, their fourth successive victory in the five-match series.

After winning the toss and choosing to bat, Australian openers Aaron Finch and David Warner both posted big scores to take the home side to a massive 348 for eight.

The Indians looked well on target when Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli put on 212 for the second wicket to reach 277 for one, smashing the attack all over Manuka Oval.

Neither batsman was in any trouble on a lifeless pitch and none of the Australian bowlers were spared.

But once Dhawan fell cutting John Hastings to George Bailey at point, the Indian wickets began falling regularly and the Australians began to assert control.

Skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni fell for a duck before Kohli hit a catch to Australian captain Steve Smith at mid-off, his only false shot in a magnificent 92-ball innings.

With four wickets down and in-form batsman Ajinkya Rahane hampered by split webbing on his hand, the Indians began to panic as they lost Gurkeerat Singh, Rahane and Rishi Dhawan in quick succession.

The tailenders put up little resistance and Australia took the last nine wickets for just 46 runs to wrap up an unlikely victory.

Dhoni said he took responsibility for the loss after failing to capitalise on the good start to the run chase.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 348 for 8 in 50 overs (Warner 93, Finch 107, Smith 51; Yadav 3-67, Sharma 4-77)

INDIA: 323 all out (Sharma 41, Dhawan 126, Kohli 106; Richardson 5-68, Hastings 2-50, Marsh 2-55)

Result: Australia won by 25 runs and lead the 5-match series 4-0.

Player-of-the-match: Kane Richardson (AUS)



KANE RICHARDSON....5-68

Messi passport video too hot

AFP, Dubai

A Dubai policeman could be jailed for at least six months for posting a video showing Barcelona star Lionel Messi's passport on social media, reports said Wednesday.

The incident took place at Dubai airport where Messi landed last month to attend the seventh edition of the Globe Soccer Awards, in which he received the prize of best team and best player, local dailies said.

The Emirati policeman wanted a photo of himself with the Argentinian footballer but was told the star was tired from the flight, the National daily reported.

"I then went to the passport control desk and noticed that Messi's passport had been left there, so I picked it up and shot a video of myself while holding it," it quoted the policeman as saying.

He posted the video on the Snapchat application and wrote: "This is Messi's (passport), he is here in Dubai, what do I do? Shall I burn the passport or just put it back! Ok Ok you can go!"

The policeman appeared in court where he "pleaded guilty and admitted that he was wrong when he posted Messi's passport details on social media," the Dubai-based Gulf News daily reported.

It said the policeman could face a minimum of six months in jail and a fine of up to 500,000 dirhams (\$136,000).

Prosecutors accused the policeman of "abusing the telecommunication system", the daily reported.

He was also charged with "breaching Messi's privacy," the National said.

A verdict is expected next week.

Mancini blasts Sarri

AFP, Rome

Furious Inter Milan coach Roberto Mancini blasted Napoli counterpart Maurizio Sarri a "racist" and claimed his rival called him a "poof" following a fiery finish to Inter's 2-0 Italian Cup victory on Tuesday.

Mancini and Sarri clashed on the touchline after Adem Ljajic killed off the quarter-final tie at the San Paolo stadium in Naples in injury time to add to Stevan Jovetic's opener.

"Maurizio Sarri is a racist and men like him have no place in football," fumed Mancini to RAI TV after the game.

"He used racist words. He started insulting me and then shouted at me, calling me a poof."

Mancini said Sarri had used the words "frocio" and "finocchio", both pejorative terms meaning homosexual.

The Inter coach added: "But if he's a man then I'd be proud to be a poof. From someone like him, who's 60, I can't accept that, he should be ashamed."

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