

<b>What to WATCH</b>	<b>GTV &amp; STAR SPORTS4</b> Bangladesh v Zimbabwe Fourth T20I Live from 3:00pm	<b>CHANNEL 9</b> Bangabandhu Gold Cup FINAL Nepal v Bahrain	<b>Live from 5:00pm</b>	<b>TEN CRICKET</b> South Africa v England Fourth Test, Day 1	<b>Live from 2:30pm</b>	<b>SONY ESPN HD</b> Australian Open	<b>Live from 6:00am &amp; 2:00pm</b> Primera Liga Sporting Gijon v Real Sociedad Live from 1:30am (Saturday) <b>STAR SPORTS2</b>
<b>DAY'S EVENT</b>	<b>Bangladesh v Zimbabwe</b> Venue: Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, Khulna	Fourth T20I, Time: 3:00pm <b>Bangabandhu Gold Cup</b> Venue: BNS	FINAL Nepal v Bahrain, Time: 5:00pm <b>Bangladesh Cricket League</b>	Four-day Match, Day 4 Time: 9:30am Venue: Rajshahi			

# Hewitt fights one last time

## Fixing allegations cast shadow over emotional farewell

Former world number one Lleyton Hewitt slammed match-fixing allegations as an "absolute farce" on Thursday as his emotional retirement at the Australian Open was tainted by the corruption claims which have rocked tennis. Hewitt, after going down fighting to David Ferrer at his farewell tournament, rounded on an anonymous online blog linking his name to the explosive report which has overshadowed the year's first Grand Slam.



**Lleyton Hewitt waves to the crowd after his defeat in the men's singles third round match against David Ferrer during the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.** PHOTO: AFP

The 34-year-old Australian called it a "joke" and an "absolute farce" that he should be linked with the match-fixing allegations outlined by the original BBC and BuzzFeed report, which did not reveal any names. "I think it's a joke to deal with it. You know, obviously, yeah, there's no possible way," said Hewitt, after exiting in the second round. "I know my name's now been thrown into it. I don't think anyone here would think that I've done anything (like) corruption or match-fixing. It's just absurd. "For anyone that tries to go any further with it, then good luck. Take me on with it. Yeah, it's disappointing. I think throwing my name out there with it makes the whole thing an absolute farce."

It cast a shadow over an emotional night for Hewitt, who bowed out 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 in the second round in combustible fashion, earning a code violation for swearing and calling the umpire a "friggid idiot". Earlier Andy Murray made dealing with the world's fastest server look easy as he reached the third round alongside Ana Ivanovic. Murray, faced with the record-

breaking serve of the physically imposing Sam Groth, had all the answers as he won 6-0, 6-4, 6-1 in just 91 minutes against the flummoxed Australian. Ivanovic went through 6-3, 6-3 against Anastasija Sevastova in a match which was held up for 30 minutes when an elderly fan was badly injured by a fall on some steps inside Rod Laver Arena. Two-time champion Victoria Azarenka hammered Danka Kovinic 6-1, 6-2 to reach the third round. Progression was less smooth for world number three Garbine Muguruza, who struggled through an error-strewn first set against Kirsten Flipkens before finding her touch and winning 6-4, 6-2. China's Zhang Shuai had a 27th birthday to remember when she beat Alize Cornet to win only her second ever Grand Slam match, following her upset of Simona Halep in the first round. Japanese qualifier Naomi Osaka, 18, continued her stunning progress at her debut Grand Slam, beating Ukrainian 18th seed Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-4 to reach the last 32. Elsewhere, 2014 men's champion Stan Wawrinka beat Czech veteran Radek Stepanek in straight sets, while Bernard Tomic and John Millman both kept the Australian flag flying in the third round. Canada's Milos Raonic beat Tommy Robredo in unusual fashion when he secured victory with

# Ivanovic shaken up

REUTERS, Sydney

Former French Open champion Ana Ivanovic was shaken up when a spectator was injured falling down the stairs on Rod Laver Arena but recovered her composure to ease into the third round at the Australian Open on Thursday. The first set between the Serbian and her opponent Anastasija Sevastova was held up for 26 minutes as the woman was treated by medical staff in the stands of the showcourt. "I felt really bad because the sound of the lady falling was really loud. I could hear it. I stopped immediately," Ivanovic said after her 6-3 6-3 victory.

# Nepal aim to break 23-year jinx

SPORTS REPORTER

Nepal are looking forward to breaking their two-decade long international title drought at the senior level when they take on a youthful Bahrain in the final of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. The match will get underway at 5:00pm and will be telecast live on Channel 9. Nepal will appear in the final of any international tournament for the first time in 17 years since their appearance at the 1999 SA Games' football event in Kathmandu, where they lost to Bangladesh. They can take hope from their triumphant 1993 SA Games campaign, when they clinched gold after besting India in the final. They can take further inspiration from their coach Bal Gopal Maharjan, who is a remnant of that victorious '93 side. Nepal were far from favourites going into the tournament and their path to the semifinal was far from convincing as they won just once -- a 1-0 win over Sri Lanka -- while drawing the other two games against Bangladesh and Malaysia. However, their spectacular 4-1 demolition of Maldives in the semifinal puts the Himalayan nation firmly in the driving seat going into the final. Especially since their opposition

comprises of inexperienced players in their early 20s. "We have reached a major event's final after 17 years and want to make it a memorable one by winning the tournament. Apart from the success of Nepal, I also have a personal target to achieve from this tournament because I was a member of Nepal's winning squad at an international event also held in Dhaka in 1993," said Maharjan at the pre-match conference at the BFF House yesterday. "Preparation for the final has been done and the players are ready mentally and physically to overcome the challenge against Bahrain," continued Maharjan. "My boys executed the game-plan against Maldives well and I hope they will once again come up with proper execution of the plan to win the tournament." Bahrain's assistant coach Al Nasr -- who briefed the media due to head coach Marjan Eid's touchline ban for being sent-off in the semifinal -- was also upbeat about his side's chances of winning the tournament, although his charges performances were lacking through their group-stage matches and even in the semifinal against Bangladesh. "It will be a hard game for us, but we hope to be successful as our play has improved a lot since we came here," Nasr said.



**Nepal players practice during a training session at the Abahani Limited ground yesterday ahead of their Bangabandhu Gold Cup final against Bahrain.** PHOTO: STAR

# BOA rewards athletes

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) yesterday disbursed Tk 33 lakh among the winning athletes of the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Islamic Solidarity Games and Commonwealth Youth Games. Shooter Abdullah Hel Baki was awarded Tk 5 lakh for his silver medal in Commonwealth Games while archer Emdadul Haque Milon and Sraboni Biswas from Taekwondo received Tk 2 lakh and Tk 1 lakh respectively for silver and bronze medals in Islamic Solidarity Games. Archers Tamimul Islam and Nandini Khan Swapna received Tk 4 and Tk 1 lakh for gold and bronze medals respectively in the 5th Commonwealth Youth Games. Bangladesh women's cricket team were awarded Tk 10 lakh for winning the silver medal in Asian Games while Bangladesh national cricket team got Tk 5 lakh for winning bronze in the same games in Korea in 2014. Bangladesh women's kabaddi team were also awarded Tk 5 lakh for winning bronze in the Asian Games.

# Booters wary, but hopeful

SPORTS REPORTER

It will be hard to find people who will bet on the Bangladesh U-23 football team to retain their title in next month's South Asian (SA) Games following the recent performance of the booters at the international level. However, the team management is banking on the players to get out of their bad-patch to produce something better in the six-team football event. Under the guidance of Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic, hosts Bangladesh thrashed Afghanistan 4-0 in the 2010 SA Games in Dhaka to wrestle back the gold medal which they first grabbed in 1999 after beating hosts Nepal in Kathmandu. However, the recent performances from the booters have shown no hope. Even recently, Bangladesh failed to qualify for the semifinals of the Games twice in 2004 and 2006. With only two weeks left until the football event of the 12th SA Games gets underway, Bangladesh U-23s have yet to start their preparations, with the squad not even being finalized yet, although a team dubbed the Bangladesh Olympic team had played in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup as part of their preparation for the SA Games. In that tournament, their results -- two draws and one defeat -- painted a dismal portrait. "We will start the training within a couple of days at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan [BKSP] as we have yet to confirm three senior players in line with the demands of the coach [Gonzalo Moreno

Sanchez]. Shakhawat Hossain Rony has personal problems while Jamal Bhuiyan wants to join camp at the last moment upon his return from Denmark," said manager Sattayjit Das Rupu yesterday, adding that striker Nabib Newaj Jibon and midfielder Monaem Khan Raju may be drafted in place of Rony and Jamal. Apart from three senior players, seven players of the senior team -- Yeasin Khan, Tapu Barman, Raihan Hasan, Hemanta Vincent Biswas Sohel Rana, Jewel Rana and goalkeeper Raseel Mahmud Liton -- are ready to join the team. Though the players have not had the opportunity to practise together yet, manager Rupu opined that Bangladesh have a good chance to win gold. "With the inclusion of 10 players from the senior team, we have compensated the problems that were in the U-23 team, but it all depends on the players' performance. We can only inspire them but they have to perform on the field," said Rupu, who also believes the side need a bit of luck for a good outing. Hemanta Vincent Biswas, a key player of the squad, is also optimistic of reaching at least the semifinals, but says the side need to put up extraordinary performances to advance to the final. "The seven of us have been together since 2011 so we have a good understanding and we also know the other players well at club level," said Hemanta, who is also confident of qualifying for the semifinals ahead of Nepal and Bhutan. "Afghanistan are not coming and we are ahead of Nepal and Bhutan, but we have to prove ourselves on the field," said Hemanta. "I think we have lacked concentration because we have been playing without rest

# Barca edge Bilbao

AFP, Madrid

Holders Barcelona overcame the absence of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez to take a huge step towards the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 2-1 win at Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday. Messi was absent due to a hamstring problem, whilst Suarez completed a two-game Cup ban, but the visitors still took control of the tie with two goals in six first-half minutes from Munir El Haddadi and Neymar. However, Aritz Aduriz's 23rd goal of the season a minute from time handed Athletic hope for next week's second leg. La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid also have work to do to reach the semifinals after a 0-0 draw at Celta Vigo in their quarterfinal, first leg. Barca had hammered a 10-man Athletic 6-0 on Sunday and 3-1 in last year's final, and there was a familiar feeling for the

Basques despite a bright start from the home side. The European champions went ahead on 18 minutes thanks to a brilliant team goal that started with goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and ended with Ivan Rakitic's inviting low cross being swept home by El Haddadi for his fifth goal in the competition this season. Athletic contributed to their own downfall moments later, though, as goalkeeper Iago Herrerin missed the ball as he came flying out his goal and allowed Neymar to roll his 20th goal of the season into an empty net. The hosts dominated the second period but looked set to end the night empty-handed when Ter Stegen made a brilliant save to turn Aduriz's header over 10 minutes from time. However, Athletic finally got the goal their display deserved when Aduriz turned home Mikel San Jose's pass.

# Adidas should Cech the address

AGENCIES, London

Petr Cech's starring role in Arsenal's title challenge this term appears to have gone unnoticed by Adidas, with the goalkeeper's new gloves dropped off at Chelsea's training ground by mistake. Cech was expecting a new pair of gloves ahead of the match between the two clubs this weekend. But they were instead delivered to the Blues' Cobham training base, rather than Arsenal's London Colney home, although Chelsea did rectify the issue by flagging up the error.

# Novak denies deliberately losing match

REUTERS, Melbourne

Novak Djokovic has denied an Italian media report he deliberately lost a match in 2007 that has been linked to a wider scandal involving alleged corruption in tennis. The 28-year-old world number one, who easily beat French teenager Quentin Halys on Wednesday to advance to the Australian Open third round, was asked about a report in Italian newspaper Tuttosport that he had deliberately lost to now-retired French player Fabrice Santoro at the Paris Masters. "It's not true," the Serb said with a shrug and shake of his head. "What it is to say? I've lost that match. "Anybody can create a story about that match or for that matter any of the matches of the top players losing in the early rounds, I think it's just absurd." The opening days of the Australian Open have been overshadowed by revelations in a report by the BBC and online BuzzFeed News that 16 players who have been ranked in the top 50 had been repeatedly flagged to the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) over suspicions they had thrown matches in the past decade. Australian Open champion Djokovic was asked about the media reports on Monday, saying that he had indirectly been offered \$200,000 to throw a match while still a teenager.

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