

# What to WATCH

**SONY SIX**  
**FIFA World Cup Qualifiers**  
 India v Turkmenistan  
 Live from 6:30pm  
 Argentina v Bolivia  
 Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)  
 Int'l Friendly  
 England v Netherlands

Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)  
**SONY ESPN HD**  
 Int'l Friendly  
 France v Russia  
 Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)  
**FIFA World Cup Qualifiers**  
 Venezuela v Chile  
 Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)

**SONY ESPN**  
 Int'l Friendly  
 Germany v Italy  
 Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)  
**FIFA World Cup Qualifiers**  
 Paraguay v Brazil

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON?

Cristiano Ronaldo has big plans for his son, whom he believes could become as good a footballer as him when he grows up. "I want my son to be a player. I am a footballer and I want him to be one too," the Real Madrid star told the Chinese channel Zhejiang Satellite TV. "I think he has something of an athlete about him, he has athletic characteristics. Obviously he is very young, a baby, he's only five but he loves football, that is a big plus. He is always with the ball and he loves it. Obviously I



Brazil players hand over gifts to children on the occasion of Easter in the midst of a training session in Viamao, Brazil on Sunday. The five-time world champions will face Paraguay in a World Cup qualifier in Asuncion tonight.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

## Court rules against move of 8 players

SPORTS REPORTER

A high-court bench yesterday directed the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president and general secretary not to allow eight footballers to play in any team except for Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

All the eight footballers - Mamunul Islam, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Sohel Rana, Raihan Hasan, Yeamin Ahmed Munna, Shahidul Alam, Alamgir Kabir and Jamal Bhuiyan - played for Sheikh Jamal last season but have signed for other clubs this season. Mamunul, Nasir, Sohel, Raihan, Yeamin signed for Chittagong Abahani while Shahidul signed for Dhaka Abahani. Alamgir and Jamal have been roped by Sheikh Russel KC in the just concluded players' transfer window.

"The court issued a ruling asking why the BFF's failure to return the eight footballers to the club [Sheikh Jamal] on 19th January, 2016 should not be declared illegal," advocate Ruhul Quddus Kazal said, adding that the respondents have been asked to reply within four weeks.

"The respondents [BFF president and general secretary] have been directed not to allow the eight players to play in any team except for Sheikh Jamal, which means those eight players will only play for Sheikh Jamal until this case is solved."

"We have heard about the move of Sheikh Jamal but we still don't know anything officially. We will also take the legal steps once we are officially informed," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

The players' status committee of BFF is currently handling the matter and it was supposed to reach a decision on those eight players by last night.

## Hockey's Club Cup deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

The Club Cup hockey tournament has been deferred by more than two weeks as the season's curtain-raiser would now start on April 25 instead of previously announced April 7.

The decision was made at yesterday's meeting of the league committee after Mohammed SC, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Bangladesh Sporting Club and Wari Club requested the game's governing body to defer the tournament by a few days due to their lack of preparation.

## Brazil face Paraguay sans Neymar, Luiz

Argentina take on Bolivia; Uruguay host Peru

AFP, Montevideo



Brazil will be without Barcelona star Neymar and Paris Saint-Germain defender David Luiz on Tuesday when they face a tricky 2018 World Cup qualifying trip to Paraguay with renewed uncertainty swirling around their campaign.

The Brazilians are licking their wounds after the disappointment of Friday's 2-2 draw with Uruguay, when they squandered a two-goal lead and finished the game clinging on for the point.

For the opening half hour in Recife, Brazil were irresistible, attacking with precision and purpose in what looked like being their best performance since their 2014 World Cup semi-final debacle against Germany.

But Uruguay's fightback, begun with Edinson Cavani's superb volley and completed by Luis Suarez's predatory strike after half-time, has reawakened all of the old concerns about Brazil's brittle defence, humiliated in the 7-1 thrashing by the Germans two years ago.

The frustration of allowing Uruguay back into the game eventually got the better of Neymar, who was cautioned for a petulant kick on Alvaro Gonzalez, meaning he will now be suspended for Tuesday's trip to Asuncion.

Former Chelsea centre-back Luiz also earned a booking on Friday that will see him miss the game against Paraguay, who are level on eight points with third placed Brazil after five matches.

Brazil coach Dunga has called up Santos's exciting teenage striker Gabriel Barbosa, a star of the Olympic team, to replace Neymar while Corinthians defender Felipe will come in for Luiz.

Gabriel, 19, known widely as "Gabigol" and regarded as the heir apparent to Neymar, will be making his first senior appearance for Brazil after starring for the Under-23s last year where he scored six goals in four matches.

"I will be realizing a dream that I did not expect so soon," Gabriel said. "I'm happy for the opportunity."

Paraguay meanwhile will be looking for all three points against opponents whom they have caused repeated problems in recent years.

Paraguay knocked Brazil out of the Copa America quarter-finals in 2015 and 2011 and will be quietly confident of another win on Tuesday.

The Paraguayans were deprived of what would have been a deserved victory against Ecuador on Thursday when a dubious late equaliser saw the surprise qualifying leaders snatch a 2-2 draw.

Coach Ramon Diaz believes the performance against Ecuador augurs well for the clash with Brazil.

"We showed that we're a competitive team who can fight against anyone," Diaz said. "I hope that the team will continue to grow."

In other matches on Tuesday, Argentina face Bolivia in Cordoba aiming to continue their recovery with a third consecutive victory following away wins over Colombia and Chile.

Argentina are currently fifth in the standings with eight points from their opening five matches, but will be strong favourites to notch another win against a Bolivian side who are second bottom with three points from five games.

Elsewhere, Ecuador face a demanding trip to face Colombia in Barranquilla while Uruguay host Peru in Montevideo.

Chile will aim to bounce back from the disappointment their home defeat by Argentina last week when they travel to bottom side Venezuela, who have only one point from five matches.

The top four teams from South America's round robin qualifying league qualify automatically for the World Cup in Russia in two years time.

The fifth-placed team faces a play-off against a qualifier from the Oceania zone.



STAR ECONOMICAL BOWLER: South Africa pacer Kyle Abbott (C) bowled a miserly spell of two for 14 in 3.3 overs as Sri Lanka were bundled out for 120 in New Delhi last night.

PHOTO: AFP

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## Germany host Italy tonight

AFP, Munich

Shell-shocked Germany hunt a rare win over bogey side Italy in a friendly international in Munich on Tuesday as the world champions seek to bounce back from their defeat to England.

Joachim Loew's Germany threw away a two-goal lead in Berlin on Saturday to slump to a 3-2 loss against Roy Hodgson's England.

"That was a wake-up call," fumed Germany's captain Sami Khedira, a stand-in for Bastian Schweinsteiger ruled out of the Italy friendly with a knee injury.

Most worrying for Loew was the way his defence buckled without his World Cup-winning centre-backs Mats Hummels, who went off injured, and Jerome Boateng, who is nursing a groin problem.

Loew will demand an improved performance against Italy at Munich's Allianz Arena in his final international before naming his squad in May for Euro 2016, which runs from June 10-July 10.

Germany are still waiting for a first win over Italy at a major tournament -- they have won none of their three meetings at European championships or five at the World Cup.

In the 32 meetings between the two European powerhouses, Germany have won just seven games, all friendlies and qualifiers, with Italy winning 15 and the other ten games drawn.

Germany left Warsaw empty handed when the sides last met nearly four years ago at Euro 2012 as two Mario Balotelli first-half goals sealed their 2-1 semifinal win.

Antonio Conte's Italy warmed up for the Munich match with a 1-1 draw against defending European champions Spain in Udine on Thursday.

The draw ended Spain's six-match winning run as Lorenzo Insigne gave Italy a second-half lead before veteran Spanish striker Ariz Aduriz equalised just three minutes later.

## Ibra confirms EPL contact

AFP, Stockholm

Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic confirmed Sunday that Premier League clubs have indicated an interest in signing him from French champions Paris Saint-Germain.

The 34-year-old has been linked with a move to the likes of Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal and is out of contract with PSG at the end of this season.

"There is an interest, yes. I can confirm that and we will see where it leads," Ibrahimovic told reporters on Sunday in Stockholm where he is preparing for Tuesday's friendly international against the Czech Republic.

"I think the Premier League is the most high-profile league in the world. It is making most of the headlines.

"But it would have to be like a marriage -- both sides have to want it as much." Ibrahimovic has won league titles in four different European countries.

He arrived in Paris in July 2012 from AC Milan but after helping PSG to a fourth successive league title earlier this month he appeared adamant that he would not be in the French capital next season.

"For the moment I am not at PSG next year," he said before cheekily adding: "If they replace the Eiffel Tower with a statue of me, I will stay at PSG. I can promise that!"

## Spain held on Casillas' night

AFP, Cluj-Napoca



Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas equalled the record of most international caps for a European player on Sunday as two-time defending European champions Spain drew 0-0 against Romania in Cluj.

Casillas, who made his national team debut in June 2000, returned after sitting out Thursday's 1-1 draw in Italy to move level with former Latvia midfielder Vitalijs Astafjevs on 166 appearances.

Romania meanwhile took to the field for the warm-up wearing training tops featuring maths problems, rather than shirt numbers, as part of an initiative aimed at combating the country's poor school dropout rate.

Barcelona midfielder Sergi Roberto was handed his Spain debut as Vicente del Bosque made wholesale changes to the side that played in Udine three days ago, with their opening game at Euro 2016 just over two months away.

Gerard Pique and Pedro Rodriguez tested Romania keeper Ciprian Tatarusanu early on, while Casillas -- still well shy of Egyptian Ahmed Hassan's all-time record of 184 international caps -- was twice forced to turn away efforts from Nicolae Stanciu.

Pique fired straight at Tatarusanu just after half-time after a corner found the Barcelona defender unmarked beyond the far post, but Spain found a Romanian defence that conceded just twice in 10 qualifying matches difficult to break down.

Romania, who qualified for the finals in France as runners-up in Group E, stretched their unbeaten run to 16 matches -- a sequence which includes five goalless draws -- with Spain now turning their focus towards a third straight European crown.



Spain's Alvaro Morata (R) vies for possession against Romania's Cristian Sapunaru during their international friendly in Cluj Napoca Romania, on Sunday which ended in a goalless draw.

PHOTO: AFP

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