

What to WATCH FRIDAY Indian Premier League	SONY ESPN Indian Premier League Gujarat v Pune Live from 8:30pm	Delhi v Punjab Live from 8:30pm <i>Primera Liga</i> Levante v Espanyol Live from 12:30am (Saturday)	TEN 1 UEFA Europa League Sevilla v Bilbao Live from 12:00am (Friday)	TEN 1 HD UEFA Europa League Liverpool v Dortmund Live from 12:00am (Friday)	Draw SFs & Final Live from 3:30pm UEFA Europa League Draw SFs & Final Live from 4:30pm	TEN 3 UEFA Europa League Sparta Prague v Villarreal Live from 12:00am (Friday)	STARS SPORTS 2 Bundesliga	Stuttgart v Bayern Munich Live from 12:30am (Saturday)
	FRIDAY Indian Premier League	KFC Independence Cup FRIDAY, Venue: BNS	Muktijoddha v Uttar Baridhara Time: 5:00pm	Rahmatganj v Arambagh Time: 7:15pm				

Showstopper Ronaldo

AFP, Madrid

"Goals are in my DNA," concluded Cristiano Ronaldo after spearheading a famous Real Madrid comeback with a hat-trick to see off Wolfsburg and reach the Champions League semifinals for a record sixth straight season.

The three-time World Player of the Year's self-appraisals are rarely humble.

It is just six weeks since he called out his teammates for not matching his standards in a 1-0 defeat to local rivals Atletico Madrid.

Yet, it was hard to argue with Ronaldo's logic as he

Champions League season.

And he is now just one goal away from matching his own record of 17 in a Champions League season when Madrid ended a 12-year wait to win their 10th European Cup two years ago.

There was no holding back in the Madrid press' displays of affection for Ronaldo on Wednesday's front pages.

"How great you are," ran sports daily Marca.

Meanwhile, AS led with "how am I not going to love you," alongside a picture of Ronaldo celebrating his third.

"Little-by-little you are valuing me," Ronaldo responded when asked why despite 359 goals in just 342 games to streak ahead as the top scorer in Madrid's history, he still isn't universally loved in a season where he has even been whistled by his own fans.

"I am used to criticism. In Spain it is like this and it doesn't affect me."

"I am still young, but these things don't affect me at 31."

Having moved the wrong side of 30 there has been plenty of speculation that Madrid may consider cashing in on their biggest asset before his valuation plummets towards the end of his contract in 2018.

Yet, for those still in need of reminding, Ronaldo left another indelible night for his legacy with a new first as Madrid overturned a first leg deficit in the Champions League for the first time in 12 years.

"Cristiano deserved a magic night," said Madrid captain Sergio Ramos.

"He showed what he is, which is the best player in the world," added Zidane.

The debate over whether Ronaldo or Barcelona rival Lionel Messi deserves the title of the world's best has raged for a decade.

But despite his critics, and the presence of Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema, Ronaldo left no doubt he remains Madrid's number one and will be badly missed once he is gone.



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates his third goal against Wolfsburg during their Champions League quarterfinal at the Bernabeu on Tuesday.

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snapped back at critics that his barrel load of goals haven't come when Real have needed them most.

On the night coach Zinedine Zidane's admitted Madrid's season was "on the line", Ronaldo's treble overturned a 2-0 first leg deficit in a 3-0 win over the Germans.

"Considering this has been a bad season for me it has not been that bad," he added after taking his tally for the season in all competitions to 46.

"People can criticise me, but I just keep on going and the numbers are there for all to see."

The numbers are indeed spectacular. Ronaldo has now scored at least 45 goals in his last six seasons for Madrid.

Three more against Wolfsburg on Tuesday made him the first player ever to score three hat-tricks in the same

BSPA to honour female athletes

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) will honour country's female athletes who brought laurel from different international meets since the independence.

Under the title of 'indomitable women of sports', sponsored by Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, the BSPA will accord reception to 16 out of 19 gold-medallists at the National Sports Council (NSC) auditorium on Saturday. The journalists' association will also accord a special reception to Women's International Master Rani Hamid for her and her family's contribution to the country's sports.

Palermo get stadium ban

AFP, Rome

Serie A strugglers Palermo were on Tuesday handed a one-match stadium ban by the Italian football league for crowd trouble during last weekend's game against Lazio.

Palermo are sitting in the relegation zone, with irate fans throwing fire-crackers onto the pitch, causing two stoppages, in a 3-0 defeat to Lazio on Sunday.

De Bruyne sinks PSG

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City reached the Champions League semifinals for the first time after Kevin De Bruyne's fine 76th-minute goal earned them a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday.

A week on from their 2-2 draw in the French capital, City saw Sergio Aguero squander a first-half penalty after he had been felled by PSG goalkeeper Kevin Trapp, but De Bruyne's late strike settled the Etihad Stadium nerves and completed a 3-2 aggregate success.

Fifteen points off the pace in the Premier League and widely considered the tie's underdogs, City advance with hope intact that manager Manuel Pellegrini may yet bow out with a Champions League winner's medal around his neck before handing over to Pep Guardiola.

"It's a very great achievement for the club, not only to be in the best four teams of Europe, but also in the style of play that we never change," said Pellegrini.

"Kevin De Bruyne is an important player for us. We deserved a goal before he scored. We dominated the game from the beginning until the end."

But it was a bitterly disappointing evening for PSG coach Laurent Blanc, who lost Thiago Motta to injury and has now seen his team eliminated in the quarterfinals four seasons in a row.

The French champions' ambitious Qatari owners must once again content themselves with the pursuit of another domestic quadruple, while Zlatan Ibrahimovic, whose contract expires at the end of the season, may never grace the continental stage in their colours again.

"If we analyse the two matches, in our

strong moments we weren't clinical enough," said Blanc.

"City were much more clinical and that's why they qualified. Bravo to them. They're a very good team -- not spectacular, but very effective."

The burst of sky-blue tickertape that greeted the teams as they entered the pitch illustrated the importance of the occasion to both clubs, while PSG's shape at kick-off confirmed pre-match reports that they would be set out in an untested 3-4-1-2 system. With Angel di Maria operating in a free role, PSG had plenty of options in midfield and they made an assured start, City goalkeeper Joe Hart forced to make a finger-tip save from a zinging Ibrahimovic free-kick.

But as City began to probe, so they exposed fissures in PSG's new-look defence and after Aguero had twice shot wide, a loose pass from auxiliary right-sided centre-back Serge Aurier allowed Fernandinho to set Aguero clear.

Sliding out, Trapp felled the Argentina striker with his feet, but the presence of two covering defenders meant that he was only booked and from the penalty, Aguero placed the ball a foot wide of the right-hand post.

It was a let-off for the visitors, but after another careless Aurier pass had allowed Jesus Navas to curl wide, they suffered a further blow when Motta went off holding the back of his left thigh.

With Blaise Matuidi suspended and Marco Verratti injured, it left PSG without their entire first-choice midfield and Blanc promptly rejigged, sending on Lucas Moura and reverting to his trusted 4-3-3.

Although City, gamely, continued to push in search of a goal that would have given them an outright lead, PSG began to knock on the door at the other end.

Benzema to miss Euros

AFP, Paris

Embroided in the Mathieu Valbuena sex-tape scandal, France forward Karim Benzema will not be selected for Euro 2016, the player and the French Football Federation (FFF) confirmed on Wednesday.

"Unfortunately for me and for those who have always backed me and supported me, I will not be selected for our Euro in France," Benzema revealed on his official Twitter account.

Moments later, the FFF released a statement, confirming that the organisation's president Noel Le Graet had met with France coach Didier Deschamps to discuss Benzema's position.

They said that "sporting performance is an important factor but not the only one that decides whether a player is called up to the France squad."

"The capacity of the players to strive towards unity, within and around the squad, to be exemplary...are also taken into account."

"As a result, Noel Le Graet and Didier Deschamps have decided that Karim Benzema will not be able to participate at Euro 2016."

Benzema, 28, was indefinitely suspended from the France team in December after he was placed under investigation over an attempt to

blackmail France teammate Valbuena in relation to a sex-tape.

Benzema has been accused of complicity in the attempt.

Legal restrictions barring Benzema from coming into contact with Valbuena were recently lifted, but the case has not yet been resolved.

According to investigators, Benzema was approached by a childhood friend from Lyon, Karim Zenati, who asked him to persuade Valbuena to pay money to have the tape destroyed.

Instead, Valbuena went to the police.

Three men were arrested and held in custody over the demands to Valbuena, but they were subsequently released.

Benzema has denied any wrongdoing but could face a five-year jail term if found guilty.

Benzema, who began his career at Lyon before joining Madrid in 2009, made his France debut as a teenager in 2007 and has since gone on to win 81 caps, scoring 27 goals.

This latest blow follows on from previous major tournament disappointments for Benzema, who was not called up by Raymond Domenech to the France squad for the 2010 World Cup and made little impact at Euro 2012.

However, he did net three goals as France reached the quarterfinals of the 2014 World Cup.



Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne is ecstatic after scoring the winning goal against PSG during their Champions League quarterfinal at the Etihad Stadium on Tuesday.

Leicester tickets for £8,000

AFP, London

Tickets for Leicester City's final home game of the season against Everton are selling for almost £8,000 (\$11,396, 9,999 euros) online, it emerged Tuesday.

The Foxes need just three wins from their final five games to seal a remarkable Premier League title success after starting the season as 5,000/1 outsiders.

Season tickets sold out last May, with the club putting a cap of 23,000 in their 32,500 capacity King Power Stadium.

After the remaining tickets for the Everton match on May 7 sold out within 90 minutes on Monday, one online site was selling individual tickets for £7,869.14.

"Demand was higher for City's final home match and penultimate league fixture of an extraordinary campaign, with the vast majority of Gold and Family Fox Members able to secure their seat," said a club spokesman.

"The unauthorised sale of football tickets is a criminal offence under UK law."

"We encourage all supporters to report any such activity to the club."

Italy toasts Ranieri

AFP, Milan

Once rejected by Juventus and Inter Milan, Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri has been given the royal seal of approval by Italy's coaching hierarchy as the Foxes continue their unlikely run to the Premier League title.

Another fairytale weekend of football in England saw Ranieri's leaders secure Champions League football next season with a 2-0 win over Sunderland.

With a seven-point lead on Tottenham and on the cusp of upsetting the Premier League billionaires, it is no wonder post-match pictures of a teary Ranieri went viral over the weekend.

Both of Italy's biggest sports dailies, La Gazzetta dello Sport and the Corriere dello Sport, splashed Ranieri's exploits over the front and opening pages of Monday's edition.

Considered a relative failure in Italy, having been sacked by both Inter and Juventus when he failed to match expectations, Ranieri's biggest achievement in his homeland was steering Fiorentina to the Serie B championship in 1994 and the Italian Cup and Super Cup two years later.

Now, he is the world's most talked-about manager. For former Juventus and Italy coach Marcello Lippi, Ranieri is simply proving the old adage that 'Italians do it better'.

"Only an Italian coach could achieve a feat like this," Lippi, the first coach to win the Champions League on two different continents with Juventus (1996) and Guangzhou Evergrande (2013), told Gazzetta dello Sport.

"What he's doing is extraordinary. Last year, they (Leicester) avoided relegation by the skin of their teeth, and Ranieri has come

in and given some organisational backbone to the squad.

"Good results have instilled confidence and now we're all reading about the most incredible footballing story of the last 30 years."

As Juventus continue to lead the way for Italian clubs in Europe, making it to last year's final only to be outclassed 3-1 by Barcelona, Italian coaches are in increasing demand.

Italy coach Antonio Conte, who won three consecutive titles with Juventus, will become the latest Italian to join the Premier League ranks when he takes over at Chelsea after Euro 2016.

Currently, Ranieri and Swansea boss Francesco Guidolin are flying the flag in England's top flight.

But for the moment it is Ranieri, sacked as coach of Greece following a Euro 2016 qualifying defeat to the Faroe Islands, who holds the bragging rights.

Once at loggerheads with Jose Mourinho when the Portuguese was with Inter and he was coach of Juventus, Ranieri has even earned plaudits from the 'Special One' himself.

"He is a good man who I respect. In spite of bad words, he knows I like him very much and I would like him to win," Mourinho said prior to Leicester's win over Sunderland.

But with five games to play, former Roma, England and Russia coach Fabio Capello offered a word of advice.

"Leicester have to be careful, because when you rise to the top like that, the fear of not winning your next game starts to creep in," he told Gazzetta.

"Ranieri has to make sure tension stays out of the dressing room."